

Introduction to Sustainable Design and Development		DES-150
		MW 12:20 - 1:15
		JHSW 141

Reading 1

Rogers, P. P., Jalal, K. F., and Boyd, J. A. (2007) *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*. Earthscan, London, p 9-11.

FOREWORD

The concept of sustainable development has been evolving for more than 30 years. The 1972 United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, contributed to this evolution by emphasizing that protection of the human environment is a crucial element in the development agenda. As a result of that conference, the United Nations Environment Programme Secretariat was established to promote international environmental cooperation. On the national front, countries throughout the world began to set up or improve their respective environmental institutions. Earlier, in 1970, the United States had already established the Environmental Protection Agency for a cleaner, healthier country.

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by then Prime Minister of Norway Gro Harlem Brundtland, issued a report entitled *Our Common Future*. Also known as the Brundtland Report, this landmark document suggests that creating separately existing environmental institutions is not enough because environmental issues are an integral part of all development policies. They are crucial to economic considerations and sector policies and should be integrated as part of energy decisions, social issues, and other aspects of development work.

The next milestone in the evolution of sustainable development occurred at the 1992 UN Conference of Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, also known as the Earth Summit. Its major contribution was to give equal importance to the environment and development. It endorsed Agenda 21, both a think piece and a program of action governing human activities with an impact on the environment. It also endorsed the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the Statement of Forest Principles.

Most importantly, the Earth Summit helped finalize the UN Climate Change Convention and the Biodiversity Convention, both signed by a great number of heads of state. The UN Climate Change Convention and the recently ratified Kyoto Protocol have made significant contributions to the evolution of sustainable development. Article 4 of the UN Climate Change Convention provides that "the Parties [to that Convention] have the right to, and should, promote development." The Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism is designed in part to assist participating developing countries "in achieving sustainable development."

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, heads of state and world leaders committed to implement Agenda 21. They also decided to carry out a plethora of partnerships to promote sustainable development. These endeavors in our common cause have made sustainable development a part of everybody's vocabulary and agenda. Once of concern only to environmental specialists, sustainable development has become a concept that concerns everyone.

Since the phrase “sustainable development” gained prominence after the 1987 publication of *Our Common Future*, it has been defined in many ways, as described in the first chapter of this book. When did the concept of sustainable development reach the academic world? In the 1960s, a broadly conceived concept of sustainable development was unheard of in the halls of academe. By the 1980s, courses dealing with environmental impacts of industrial activities, especially problems arising from air pollution and toxic waste, were introduced into the curriculum.

During the same decade, the idea of conservation was gathering momentum. People were becoming more aware of the value of wildlife—of birds, of fish and other marine species, of plants and forests. As the importance of looking at all aspects of natural life gained wider appreciation, environmental programs were broadened to include natural resources management.

Taking conservation a step further, while looking at the plants, water, and air, people began to ask what place they themselves have in the environment. Should not people also be a part of the environmental picture? People observed that many of the poor were becoming poorer. Some of them were suffering from destroyed forests or declining stocks of fish. Still others were becoming poorer as a consequence of being resettled to facilitate development projects. A great many people were adversely affected by pollution. Should not environmental concerns also encompass social concerns? As a consequence, not only have studies in environmental and social fields begun to dovetail, but the study of environmental economics has emerged with clearer definition. In like manner, environmental law, environmental journalism, and other related disciplines have developed.

From my perspective at the Asian Development Bank (ADB), where we deal with investments, we have to be realistic. If ADB is to loan more than \$6 billion in a year, such loans have to make sense. Otherwise, there will be no takers.

It is the same with sustainable development. The concept has to be adapted to the real world so that it makes sense to finance ministers, economists, entrepreneurs, environmentalists, anthropologists, investors, traders, and other development people. In this way everyone who is concerned will make investments as well as produce, consume and participate in creating what is needed in a sustainable manner.

In the 1980s, ADB established an Office of the Environment. By the 1990s, ADB had an Office of Environment and Social Development headed by Kazi Jalal, and I worked for him as manager of the Environment Division. In 2002, ADB established the Department of Regional and Sustainable Department, which I headed until last year. My work experience has taught me a few lessons.

First, every development project and program must be economically and financially viable. This is why economic and financial considerations are integral factors in making sustainable development decisions.

Second, every development project and program must be environmentally sound. We cannot have projects or programs with unacceptable impacts on our environment, because such impacts can overwhelm the benefits of any development.

Third, we have to take into account social issues. People and the environment are part of every development program and project. Clearly, people and the environment do not exist apart

from each other. Any significant change introduced into the environment will likely change people's lives, including those of women, indigenous peoples, and the youth of the world. Also of key importance are how to achieve and maintain good governance and sustainable institutions. If a program or project is not governed properly, or if concerned institutions provide insufficient support, any related development program or project will not be sustainable.

In sum, sustainable development has many aspects, including economic and financial, environmental and ecological, as well as social.

I recommend this book because it deals with all of these aspects. The authors designed it to help the reader to learn the key ideas and tools of sustainable development. Accordingly, they present a holistic concept of sustainable development.

This book can help us learn better, more sustainable ways of producing, consuming, investing and otherwise participating in projects and programs in both the developing and the developed world. In this way we can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and respond affirmatively to the call in Our Common Future for "a new development path" for "sustained human progress not just in a few places for a few years, but for the entire planet into the distant future."

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AN INTRODUCTION TO
S U S T A I N A B L E
D E V E L O P M E N T

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