SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Prof Vibha Arora, HSS, IIT Delhi January 2023

Lecture Slides: 3-4

MY LIFE <-> SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL WORLD

- Let me think about myself (individualism)
- 2. Which society? How do I locate myself?
- 3. Let market decide (market allocation of resources)
- 4. Why should I consume less? (I can pay for it why shift)
- 5. Who decides for me and my country? [decision-making and regulation]
- 6. Why think about future? [my time in the world present]
- 7. Do I have any responsibility?
- 8. What kind of life am I living and want to live?

>>>>>>Big words, Big ideas, Small Shrinking World



- Environmental conservation is paramount concern & challenge – how do people maintain the natural capital from which development can draw an income"
- What is sustainable development?
- Meaning is there common agreement or several interpretations are circulating?
- Conceptual variation requires close attention (convergence and divergence in meaning and implications)

WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (WCED) -BRUNDTLAND

Watershed in paradigm:

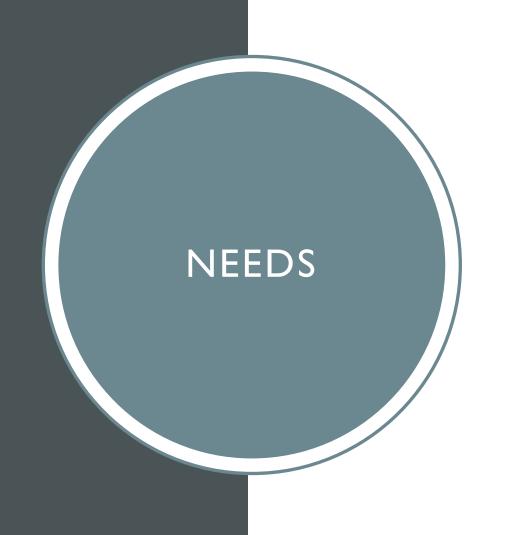
- I. What is the relationship between social, economic, and biological systems, and their inter-relationships?
- II. How do we ensure ecological stability given the growing human population? Need for ecological conservation
- III. How do we strike balance between population and consumption? Population growth and need of developing world to equally benefit from development benefits
- Our Common Future (1987) was published as an outcome of UN sponsored WCED Commission chaired by Gro
 Harlem Brundtland and these deliberations have given us the most popular and widely used definition of sustainable
 development

"development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"



The concept of sustainable development does imply **limits** – not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities.

Bold call to recalibrate institutions, ideas, and practices at local, regional, national, and global level.



- Constant reference to "needs" but how do we define them? Needs can be absolute and relative based on parameters of calculation and perception
- SD would enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations
- Human-centric definition and focus ecological limitations & distribution issues were not given adequate importance
- Redclift analyzes divergence in conceptions of SD and emphasis
- l) ecological
- 2) political economic

I. ECOLOGICAL PARAMETERS

- Radical ecologists focus on the sustainability of natural resource base and stewardship tradition wherein humans are merely tenants on the earth holding resources in trust for the future.
- Argue that the threat to earth comes from unsustainable use and extraction of scarce resources, and degradation due to pollution which are destructive for the planet.
- Rees argues that the "emerging ecological crises reveals the fatal flaws in the prevailing world view. Our mechanical perception of the biosphere is dangerously superficial and our continued belief in the possibility of sustainable development based on the growth-oriented assumption of neo-classical economics is illusory"
- This perspective begets 3 inter-related questions:
 - I. How can development activities maintain ecological processes and not exceed the capacity of these processes?
 - 2. How can development processes conserve genetic variety, in nature and in the laboratory?
 - 3. To what degree are renewable resources being replaced? Is the natural capital stock being given priority over the flows of income which it makes possible? [reflected in current debates and even how the Middle east is shifting from fossil fuel sales to investing in solar energy farms to generate revenue and meet energy demands]

II. POLITICAL ECONOMIC PARAMETERS

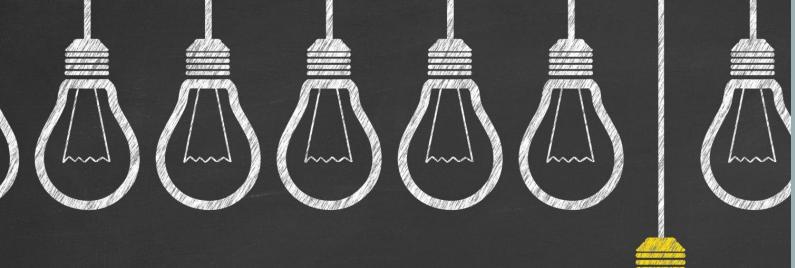
- Political economic parameters: focus is on the present and future levels of production and consumption and meeting socio-economic objectives than environmental conservation.
- Neo-classical economists emphasize on the market mechanism to redistribute and allocate resources
- How do we understand needs (relative and cultural conception)?
 - **Barbier** argues that primary purpose "is to reduce absolute poverty of worlds poor through providing lasting and secure livelihoods"
 - **Pearce** involves maximizing the net benefits of economic development subject to maintaining the services and quality of natural resources over time.
 - **Bartelmus** argues that it maintains a particular level of income by conserving the sources of that income, the stock of produced goods (human-made) and natural capital.

SUSTAIN LEVELS OF PRODUCTION IN FUTURE

Process of development itself creates and defines "needs" – we need to focus:

- Is per capita resource consumption declining or increasing and at what level? There are differences between consumption and income levels between North and South
- Is non-renewable energy use increasing? Is there any significant investment in renewable energy use and technology which is leading to scaling down exploitation of non-renewable energy resources?
- 3. Are cleaner technologies being transferred from the North to the South as per capita energy consumption rises there?
- 4. Do production statistics measure the environmental costs of resources over their lifetime or merely at the point of sale? Do they reflect utilization values rather than simply market values?





CULTURE & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



- Demands vs choices
- Factoring ecological costs and degradation vs socio-economic gains [balance]
- Owning and implementing sustainable development practice(s) – variation and policy agreement
- Sustainable development and needs need to be defined by people themselves [cultural variation]

 ongoing process of self-realization and empowerment
- Poor and under-privileged need to have access to secure livelihood and subsistence
- Environment becomes an arena of struggle and ecological conflict [life vs choices]

HOW TO CARE FOR "OUR" EARTH?

- Underlying principles were discussed and elaborated in second World Conservation strategy Caring for the Earth (1991)
- "One earth, One world, Our common world": global issue as SD has international implications and requires global interventions and changes in attitudes and social values

First – recommended reductions in resource consumption in the Northern industrialized countries

Second – assist developing countries of the South in adopting resource efficient technologies but which require and depend on financial and technical transfer of appropriate "green" technology [eg. Renewable energy – reduce fossil fuels and shift to EV]

Third – education for sustainable development to enhance public participation and internalization of values

EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY [PRINCIPLES, ACTION POINTS AND PRACTICES]

- I. Limit the human impact on the biosphere to a level that is within the carrying capacity [needs of future generations inter-generational focus]
- 2. **Maintain** the stock of biological wealth (life-support services, preserving the variety of life forms [biological diversity] and conserving renewable resources within the capacity for renewal)
- 3. Use non-renewable resources at rates that do not exceed the creation of renewable substitutes
- 4. A more equitable **distribution** of benefits and costs of resource use and environmental management
- 5. **Promote** technologies that increase the benefits from a given stock of resources
- 6. Use **economic policies** to help maintain natural wealth
- 7. Adopt anticipatory and cross-sectoral environmental policies and planning [preventive safeguards rather than remedial action]
- 8. Promote and **support cultural values** compatible with sustainability through more emphasis on environmental education and cultural values [eg. Locally situated indigenous knowledge]

Priority level:

- I. Global and or local scale [can environmental degradation and damage be reversed?
- 2. How to make policies effective, workable, and persuade others to participate?
- 3. What incentives are required?

CONSENSUS IS NOT AN EASY TASK

Reduction of poverty and equitable distribution of resource use and consumption

Challenge of moving to a position - Environmental improvements are equivalent to economic improvements and lead to increased social satisfaction (Pearce 1989)

- I) Structural inequalities and wide differences between North and South since "green" concerns in North (lifestyles; environmentalist of the affluent; willingness to pay principle) can be inverted in the South where environmental degradation and destruction itself is a strategy to survive, secure livelihood & assure themselves of basic subsistence (not a selfish concern; environmentalism of the poor; sacrificing environment for development or sacrificing development to conserve environment)
- 2) Divergence persists then how to bring consensus
- Nature can put a constraint & biosphere imperatives: can technology fix and provide us with these solutions?
 [political economists]
- We should examine "ends of development" as human progress has severe environmental implication's so we need to factor environmental costs and losses [radical ecologists, eco-socialists, eco-feminists, deep ecologists]

MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS: ECONOMIC

- Nature is not infinite (conception of finite-infinite, renewability has evolved and changed over time) while human population is growing at a faster rate
- J S. Mill in classic work *Principles of Political Economy* (1873) had argued that we need to protect nature for unchecked growth for human welfare, as diminishing returns of degradation would undermine availability of resources.
- **Malthus** had indicated the population paradox and many argued need to control human population consuming available resources while **Ricardo** had optimistically argued that science and technology would find solutions and human population over-consuming resources.
- Neo-Malthus & Neo-Ricardian views have followed largely an economistic perspective of evaluating available resources (demand and supply) and been criticized by idea of limits to carrying capacity forwarded by Club of Robe (early 1970s).

MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS: POLITICAL

- **Human agency**: Environment is managed by various institutions and politics is integral to governance of resources and relating to it.
 - * Following Giddens, agency is central to understanding how people and groups connect, use, exploit, and perceive the resources and environment at large. People are not inert but also collectively organized in different groups and institutions and possess knowledge to apply.
- **Power**: Connected with this is idea of knowledge and power and how it shapes our relationship with the environment and other groups & dominant world view prevalent.
 - * Human beings dominate natural resources 'allocate' and dominate other humans and groups and treat them as resources 'authoritative' so environmental issues are equally about distribution conflicts and ways people themselves get exploited and dominated. Follow Foucault to understand domination and resistance:
 - 1. resistance against marginalization from production relations in rural societies (pastoralists, farmers) with changes in market domination;
 - 2. resistance based on ethnic and gender identity whereby some get dominated and sidelined (others occupy a superior polyposition);
 - 3. poor rural people resist environmental managerialism and domination perspective passively by not cooperating and refuse to follow "alien" views

MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS: EPISTEMOLOGICAL

- Knowledge is cultural and fragmented and there is a hierarchical relationship
 - Feyerband (1987) argues it is not uniform and what we term science has roots in western culture and Judeo-Christian tradition which separated church, science/knowledge, and state and economy
- World views are cultural and the 'abstraction' of western perspective [north and capitalist economies] has come to dominate and regarded as scientific and having near universal applicability versus other forms of environmental knowledge that arise from small-scale and less industrialized societies
- Epistemological perspectives from South (historical traditions) are *culturally sensitive and locally rooted* so many times are given lower status and not regarded as being scientific enough (indigenous perspectives, local and traditional view-points of rural groups which are more rooted in experience and continuous engagement with environmental resources)
- Ethno-knowledge: Rituals and traditional wisdom encode local knowledge medicinal properties of neem
 or tulsi are recorded and our relationship with nature is not merely an economic one. Hinduism as a
 perspective is more eco-centric and can inform our local knowledge (Ayurveda, Tibetan medicine) and yet
 regarded as being knowledge of lower order or sometimes tribal knowledge is declared to be superstition and
 non-knowledge

FURTHER DELIBERATIONS

 1992, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [UNCED] held at Rio de Janeiro known popularly as the Rio Earth Summit

Rio summit ushered in liberal environmentalism [Bernstein 2002] and inserted sev key elements

- 1. pays mechanism for managing State sovereignty over resources in political sphere
- 2. Advocacy of free and open markets in economic sphere
- 3. Polluter g environmental degradation and the precautionary principle
- 2002, World Summit on Sustainable Development [WSSD] at Johannesberg
- 1. Divisions and differences between Northern and Southern countries widened
- 2. Rift and contradictions between market and business interests and environmentally oriented civil society and NGOs widened

REDIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Over time – it is a normative concept and it has increased in temporal importance [Sneddon et al 2006]

- I. Guiding principle of institutions (globally and nationally) connecting ecology, equity, and economy internationalization and legal inclusion [indicated by number of accords, laws and regulations, safeguards]
- 2. Concrete policy goal and imperative for freedom oriented development international development policy and aid extension
- 3. Focus on political-economic struggles and acknowledgement of power relations

Economic and ecological contradictions have intensified

- * UNDP vs WTO [multilateralism has declined with US dominance; rise of private capital in MNCs and TNCs]
- * Globalization and control of common pool resources (commodification and privatization) by private capital

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Early critics had failed to account for several historical developments post-Brundtland {rethinking} [Sneddon et al 2006] – "decline in universal approach and understanding of development"

- 1. Decline in authoritative science and replacement with idea of decentralized discursive and democratic science recognition of imp of indigenous knowledge and their integration [AYUSH]
- 2. Philosophical demise of dominant market principle
- 3. Grassroots opposition to globalization
- 4. Rise of ecological economics and new development theories of political ecology
- 5. Rise of fundamentalism, strengthening of particularistic social identities, and social movements [religious fundamentalism and affirmation of ethnic identities, strengthening of libertarian and individualistic identities in West, increasing conflict, violence and terrorism)

IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING PRACTICES IN 21 CENTURY

Challenges – 8 have been identified:

- Internalize development sensibilities going beyond gloomy scenario to pro-active participatory action [simple to complex]
- 2. Lack of integration into policy and program [initiatives have not been effective and persuasive]
- 3. Technology transfer [sustainable materials, green technology, energy storage and transmission]
- 4. Development aid to developing countries [resource investments and subsidies]
- 5. Debt relief [sacrificing environment and selling cheaply resources to overcome global debt imperial control of MNCs]
- 6. Decline in terrorism to enable shift of resources to social welfare [health, education, livelihood]
- 7. How do we measure implementation of goals of sustainable development in different countries? New indicators and goals have been evolving over time and there has been an internationalization of environmental policy.
- 8. Variability in local impact of unsustainable development growth is increasingly evident [deforestation, soil contamination, mining and resource loss, fragile mountain environment, declining fisheries]

**** progress has been inadequate, limited in impact, and ineffective! changing direction and achieving equality of growth have been modest.

Challenges to shift to SD ideals effectively and in practices in both North and South have been considerable [Lafferty and Meadowcroft 2006b]

GOING BEYOND "BIG WORDS"

- Much more needs to be done as is evident with studies
 - environmental degradation is rising at an alarming level while economic inequalities have widened overall between developed and developing and within each nation
- Need to foster multilateralism and international cooperation, which sadly are on the decline with US
 hegemony, security concerns post-9/11 and growth of terrorism, growing importance of WTO, growth of MNCs and
 liberalization, and reduced capacity of UN agencies to advance global agenda of SD

Four factors identified to understand contemporary globalization [Arrighi and Silver 1999]:

- I. **US** hegemonic dominance in international discussions and capacity to influence political-economic arrangements, financial commitments, and agreements
- 2. **Decline of nation-state and rise of private capital** (MNCs,TNCs) as dominant player in international political economy and global politics
- 3. **Decline and disempowerment of non-state actors** (NGOs, social movements) and marginalized groups due to expansion of global political economy and decline of state power
- 4. Shifting alignments of **global political forces along civilizational and racialized lines**, which have made environmental considerations secondary to global and national security

ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMA'S

- * Dryzek [1999] argues SD is a discourse of and for international civil society or global civil society
- Number of laudable community and civil society efforts to achieve and ground SD have been documented [rise of environmental justice movements, etc), but...

SD as a "globalizing force" is impacted by 2 concurrent processes [Rosenau 2003]:

- Integration (defined as the value of preserving the env and maintaining its viability is widely shared by every community and nearly every level) so generating consensus has become difficult
- Fragmentation (defined as pervasive and divisive fragmentation and fracturing within groups, communities, nations, international systems) between developed and developing world has led to actions being largely ineffectual and sometimes controversial

CRITICS - SHAM

- Discourse on SD is a tale about a disenchanted world about its sad condition [Escobar 1996]
- Critics point at "watering down" despite being grounded in discourse of international treaties and advocacy by NGOs
- Contradictions between expansionist market economy and lack of political will to restrict adverse impact on ecology
- Concept diverts attention from demands and needs of marginalized sections of the planet in name of green development
- Continues to be quite anthropocentric & unable to dissolve boundaries (humans & ecological sphere)
- Basic contradictions widening between market-dominated growth discourse and increasing environmental
 pollution, loss of biodiversity, and unsustainable ecological degradation destroying the planet
- State-dominated institutions as an agent of change have given dismal results so focus on civil society and behavioural changes of people

PLURALISM

• Sneddon et al (2006) argue that local-global politics of sustainability can only be achieved by **embracing pluralism** and including valuation of ecosystem services [combining insights from ecological economics, political ecology and freedom oriented development]

EE

- Normative shift: Ethical commitment across generations and enhancing social justice as part of development practices
- Incorporating: Broadening perspectives and including environmental values in economic calculations and rigorous analysis of ecological considerations

PE

Incorporating power dimension between different actors who come into conflict over resources and resource allocation and distribution [tribals, women, peasants and industry, state and so on]

- Shifting priorities and structural power relations: Series of case studies emerging from Third World detail in varying detail environmental conflict and "actual" benefits from resource exploitation [fisheries, forests, water, agro-ecosystems, etc)
- Limits to conceptual limits of SD practices strong voices about degrowth and anti-development gaining

DF

Equity and ecological balance: Social welfare, social justice and dignity to all and respect for biodiversity as being integral to freedom to develop

REFINING AND MOVING FORWARD

From sustainable development to sustainable development goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The 17 SDGs are integrated—they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.

- https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals, accessed on 19 Jan 2023
- https://sdgs.un.org/goals, accessed on 19 Jan 2023

Key concepts of SDGs





Share the Super Goals (=SDGs) ← Accept various ways to achieve them

⇔ Before: International regime approach ← Set the Universal Rule (=<u>Fix the way first</u>) (e.g. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948)

Inclusive approach

"No one left behind" ← Pay attention to "the last mile"

⇔ Before: Universal indicator approach ← Overlook "the last mile"



Before SDGs...: Millennium Development Goals

- Based on the **Millennium Declaration** adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in Sept. 2000 in NY, USA.
- A comprehensive approach to development for <u>developing countries</u>.
 - ≒ A new kind of "aid"?
- → Quick introduction of MDGs (1min-video spot created by UNDP)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npGOcqaJkXI

21 targets & 60 indicators

















SUSTAINABLE GALS DEVELOPMENT GALS 17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

169 targets & over 230 indicators







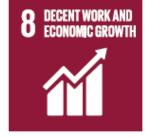
































DAVOS 2023 [PRIVATE CAPITAL VS STATE ACTION]

The world is in urgent need of solutions to the world's most pressing crises that **only the private sector can deliver**. This need represents a burgeoning market for business innovation, creativity and new technologies. **Private sector leadership and multi-stakeholder partnerships are vital to creating the transformational change that humanity so desperately needs.** Our participation in Davos aims to challenge and inspire the private sector to accelerate action on the Sustainable Development Goals to bridge the gap between converging challenges — a global pandemic, climate crisis, inequalities, conflict and disruptions in the global economy and supply chains — and the ambitious goals that can help businesses tackle them at scale.

https://events.unglobalcompact.org/Davos23, accessed on 19 Jan 2023

As we approach the midpoint to accomplish the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, one thing is clear: the world is not delivering progress towards the 17 SDGs at the necessary pace and scale.

Contrast ---- Joshimath 2023 – refer to https://www.thethirdpole.net/en/energy/joshimath-disaster-of-ignoring-risks-in-the-himalayas/, accessed on 19 Jan 2023

CONCLUSION

- Breaking dichotomy between first and third world
- Global recognition of importance of ecological interconnectivity
- Local conceptions and variations interact with global norms of development, economic growth, and ideas of knowledge
- To be effective sustainable development as a concept has to find local cultural resonance and we need political will at different levels
- Solution is to foster deliberative democracy

Compulsory Reading: Redlcift [1992] and Sneddon et al [2005] and assigned videos