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See also: *Sustainability*

Sustainable development

(SD) refers to a mode of **human development** in which **resource use** aims to meet human needs while preserving the **environment** so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. The term 'sustainable development' was used by the **Brundtland Commission** which coined what has become the most often-



Solar power towers utilize the natural resource of the Sun, and are a renewable energy source. From left: PS10 and PS20 solar towers.

quoted definition of sustainable development: "development that



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Sustainable development (SD) refers to a mode of **human development** in which **resource** use aims to meet human needs while preserving the **environment** so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. The term 'sustainable development' was used by the **Brundtland Commission** which coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."^{[1][2]}

Sustainable development ties together concern for the **carrying capacity** of **natural systems** with the social challenges faced by humanity. As early as the 1970s, "sustainability" was employed to describe an **economy** "in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems."^[3] Ecologists have pointed to *The Limits to Growth*,^[4] and presented the alternative of a "**steady state economy**"^[5] in order to address environmental concerns.

The concept of sustainable development has in the past most often been broken out into three



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The concept of sustainable development has in the past most often been broken out into three constituent parts: environmental **sustainability**, **economic sustainability** and **sociopolitical sustainability**. More recently, it has been suggested that a more consistent analytical breakdown is to distinguish four domains of economic, ecological, political and cultural sustainability. This is consistent with the UCLG move to make 'culture' the fourth domain of sustainability.^[6] (See below under **Culture**.)



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Sustainability

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Sustainability is the capacity to endure. In **ecology** the word describes how biological systems remain **diverse** and productive over time. Long-lived and healthy **wetlands** and **forests** are examples of sustainable biological systems. For humans, sustainability is the potential for long-term maintenance of well being, which has ecological, economic, political and cultural dimensions.

Healthy ecosystems and **environments** are necessary to the survival and flourishing of humans and other organisms. There are a number of major ways of reducing negative human impact. The first of these is **environmental management**. This approach is based largely on information gained from **earth science**, **environmental science** and **conservation biology**. The second approach is management of human **consumption** of resources, which is based largely on information gained from **economics**. A third more recent approach adds cultural and political concerns into the sustainability matrix.

Sustainability interfaces with economics through the social and environmental consequences of economic activity. Sustainability economics involves **ecological economics** where social aspects including cultural, health-related and monetary/financial aspects are integrated. Moving towards sustainability is also a social challenge that entails **international** and national **law**, **urban planning** and **transport**, local and individual **lifestyles** and **ethical consumerism**. Ways of living more sustainably can



Achieving sustainability will enable the earth to continue supporting human life.

- Groombridge, B. & Jenkins, M.D. (2002). *World Atlas of Biodiversity*.

- Wilson, E.O. (2002). *The Future of Life*. New York: Knopf. ISBN 0-679-45078-5.

External links

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- Sustainability ^{at the Open Directory Project}
- Ensure Environmental Sustainability by 2015 | UN Millennium Development Goal ^{curated by the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at Michigan State University}
- Integral Sustainability Center [🔒]
- Principles of Sustainability ^{University of Idaho-Washington State University 50-Part HD/Surround Sound Doculecture Open Course}
- GPM Global ^{Project Management organization dedicated to decoupling environmental degradation from economic growth.}
- Carbound ^{An initiative promoting sustainability in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Levant, with a focus on the built environment}
- Compilation of Fact Sheets ^{published by the University of Michigan's Center for Sustainable Systems}
- Sustainable Pacific Rim Cities ^{at Berkeley California, with a focus on applied research on environment, economy and urban planning}
- Elements of sustainability ^{at Microdocs of Stanford}

University

- Sustainability in Higher Education ^{guidance}
- Sustainability ^{at The College of William and Mary}
- Center for Sustainable Enterprise and Regional Competitiveness ^{at University of Massachusetts Boston}
- The Department of Sustainable Biomaterials ^{at Virginia Tech}
- Programme For Sustainability Leadership ^{at the University of Cambridge}
- Sustainability: Principles and Practice ^{Massachusetts Institute of Technology Short Course}
- Centre for Sustainable Heritage ^{at the University College London}
- Institution of Sustainability Professionals ^{ISP - Professional Body for those working in the field of sustainability}
- Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy ^{open access e-journal published by ProQuest}
- Sustainability: The Journal of Record ^{professionally oriented magazine for sustainability professionals, published by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.}

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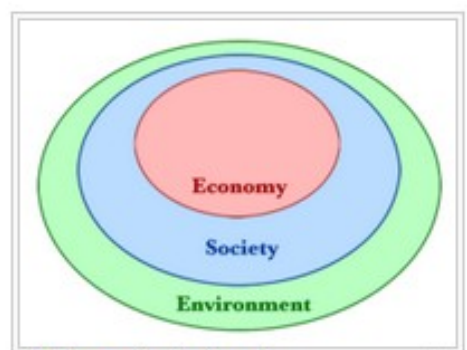
Definition

[edit]

The word sustainability is derived from the Latin *sustinere* (*tenere*, to hold; *sus*, up^[verification needed]). Dictionaries provide more than ten meanings for *sustain*, the main ones being to "maintain", "support", or "endure".^{[3][4]} However, since the 1980s *sustainability* has been used more in the sense of human sustainability on planet Earth and this has resulted in the most widely quoted definition of sustainability as a part of the concept *sustainable development*, that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations on March 20, 1987: "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."^{[5][6]}

At the 2005 World Summit on Social Development it was noted that this requires the reconciliation of environmental, social equity and economic demands - the "three pillars" of sustainability or (the 3 Es).^[7] This view has been expressed as an illustration using three overlapping ellipses indicating that the three pillars of sustainability are not mutually exclusive and can be mutually reinforcing.^[8] The three pillars have served as a common ground for numerous sustainability standards and certification systems in recent years, in particular in the food industry.^{[9][10]} Standards which today explicitly refer to the triple bottom line include Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade and UTZ Certified.^{[11][12]} The triple bottom line is also recognized by the ISEAL Alliance - the global association for social and environmental standards.

Sustainable development as defined by the UN is not universally accepted and has undergone various interpretations.^{[13][14][15]} What sustainability is, what its goals should be, and how these goals are to be achieved are all open to interpretation.^[16] For many environmentalists 'sustainable development' is an



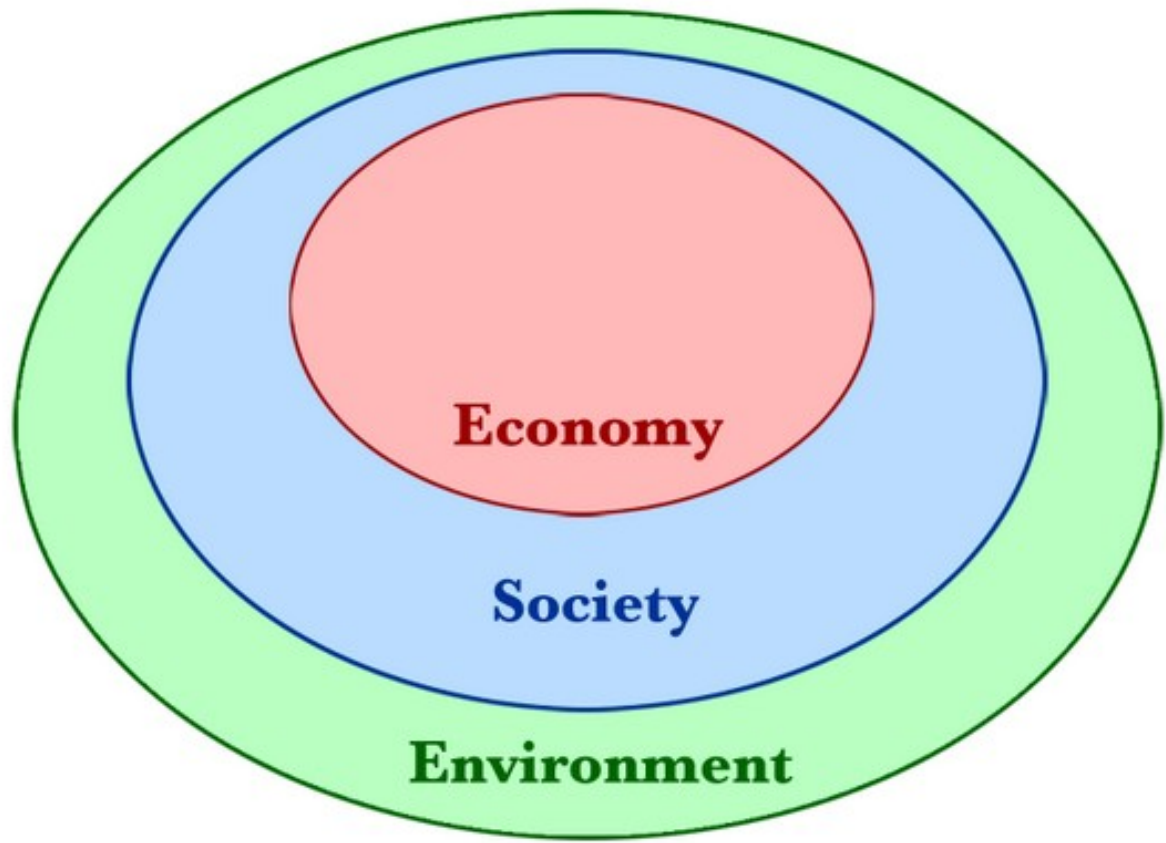
A diagram indicating the relationship between the three pillars of sustainability suggesting that both economy and society are constrained by environmental limits^[1]





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