

## THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND LIFE QUALITY

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**Abstract.** *The sustainable development and life quality have lately become subjects of major interest to the human kind. The concept of sustainable development has crystallized from the reconciliation of the environment and economy, the two working together in order to achieve all levels progress. We intend to tackle a wide-ranging approach of the subject on all levels, approaching issues related to a healthy lifestyle, maintaining environmental integrity, citizens' well-being, cohesion, social inclusion and equal opportunities for all. Through the carried analyse, taking into account the economic and social fields and the environment, and by using qualitative data, we are concerned with finding ways in which society's needs can be met without compromising the environment and without cancelling the needs of future generations. The aim of the paperwork is to identify healthy development models that will support the future generations' orientation towards a higher quality living.*

**Keywords:** sustainable development, quality of life, balance, systemic thinking

### 1. Introduction

The idea, the concept of sustainable development first appeared in the field of forestry, in Germany of the 17th century, and this came out as a rule, constraining people that when cutting of the trees, they had to plant new ones, while the raw material had to be used in a responsible and sustainable manner, as Birnbacher and Schicha (1996) assert.

Therefore, the concept of sustainable development soon became grounded in different nuances. The World Commission on the Environment and Development (CEMD, 1987) defines the sustainable development as meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs and aspirations. The sustainable development, in relation to the economic growth, is seen by some authors as a factor that distracts the attention from the limits of the environment (Daly, 1996).

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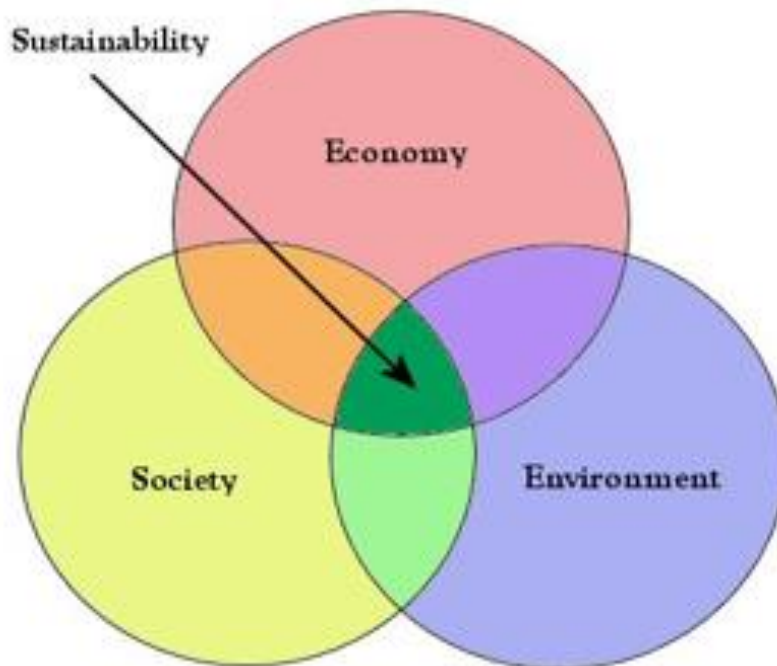
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## 2. General considerations

The sustainability implies that the economic development does not suffer over time, it does not stagnate. The sustainable development requires eternity. This is a process based on the theory that natural resources are not allowed to deteriorate.

The quality of life is an evaluation concept, the result of reporting the living conditions and activities that make up human life, human needs, values and aspirations. It refers to both global life assessments (how satisfying the lives of different people, social groups, collectives are) and the assessment of the different conditions or spheres of life: the environment, work (professional life), interpersonal relationships and the family. The link between sustainable development and life quality is represented as it follows in Fig. 1.

**Fig. 1.** Sustainability and life quality



Source: Schafer et. al (2000)

Sustainability is strongly influenced by physical and economic components. The interaction between them is presented through the three major pillars: economy, environment, society. There are three levels of sustainable development linked to the quality of life: sustainability of survival, maintaining the quality of life, improving the quality of life.

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The sustainability of survival is a basic level of sustainability. The definition of sustainability is related to the function of natural systems, to producing what is necessary so that ecology remains balanced. Over the history, there are several examples of civilizations that have affected their own environment and seriously affected their own survival.

The sustainability takes into account the way we can live in harmony with nature, protecting it from damage and destruction (Goodland, 2002). It is widely recognized that many societies have collapsed due to an inability to adapt to the conditions imposed by these unsustainable practices.

### **3. The pillars of sustainability**

The sustainability implies the completion of a series of issues such as:

- Convergence between the entropic and the natural environment;
- Equal opportunities between generations that coexist and succeed in time and space;
- Green security as the first objective;
- General welfare - focusing on the quality of sustainable economic growth;
- Promoting a strategy with a natural-human face, in which the objectives of economic and social development are subordinated both to man's development and to the environment's recovery.

In fulfilling these aspects, we take into consideration the reference pillars Education and the Success Model of the Five Capitals.

#### **3.1. Sustainable education**

We believe that for the creation of a sustainable future, education is the primary factor from which everything starts. At the United Nations conferences, education has always been the subject of sustainable development. Its importance, raising the awareness of the population about sustainable development through education is the first step towards a sustainable future.

McKinsey & Co (2004) highlighted in a study that by improving the education process, a high-level education has a major impact on key dimensions such as: the acceleration of the economic development, strengthening social cohesion, improving health and self-confidence, diminishing crime and the costs of justice and strengthening democracy.

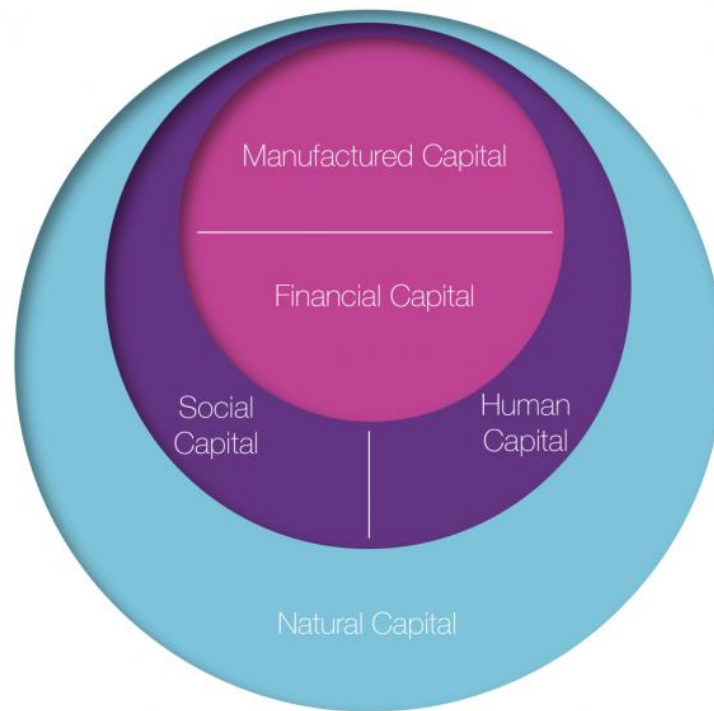
#### **3.2. The Five Capital Model**

The Five Capital Model is widely accepted as a practice of expressing the principles of sustainable development. Also, the public-sector organizations use

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five types of capital in order to deliver their services. A sustainable organization must maintain and where it is possible to consolidate these stocks of assets capital rather than diminishing or degrading them.

**Fig. 2.** The Five Capital Model



Source: Forum for the Future

The community is healthy and sustainable when five types of capital are present in people's lives, as shown in the figure below:

- 1) The natural capital known as ecologic refers to the quality and productivity of the natural environment. Here there are the stocks or flows of energy and matter that generate valuable goods and assets. The natural capital is not only a base of production but also of life;
  - 2) The human capital combines aspects of health, knowledge and motivation. This includes life skills, social skills and technical skills that give people self-efficacy to lead autonomous lives;
  - 3) The social capital: shaped as structures, institutions, networks and relationships that allow people to maintain and develop their human capital in partnership with
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others, thus making them more productive. This includes families, volunteer web organizations, trade unions, clubs and societies, and others;

4) The manufacturing capital: includes housing quality, medical and welfare services, affordable transport, food distribution systems and communications infrastructure;

5) The financial capital involves access to cash and fair wages.

The Capitals model provides a basis for understanding sustainability in terms of the economic concept of capital creation. The Five Capitals model can be used to enable organizations to develop a vision of a sustainable approach to its own operations and services.

This vision is developed taking into account the needs of an organization to maximize the value of each capital. However, an organization must consider the impact of its activities on each aspect of the five presented, avoiding "compromises". By using the model like this, for making decisions, can lead to more sustainable results.

## Conclusions

The sustainable development aims to ensure a "good" living for all people living today and also for the future generations, in harmony with the environment, and the quality of life, with its many physical, mental, social and spiritual components, referring to how well the desires and needs of satisfied people are effective (Eckersley, 1998). We believe all of these are achievable over time.

Even if it is a lasting process and the most difficult process the population has to go through is the awareness of the importance of the work done today that can bring repercussions on tomorrow.

We encourage the Capitals model to be used in all segments, and we also offer some reference lines for the educational process:

- Encouraging and stimulating young researchers, PhD students or students;
- Improving the educational system that guarantees quality and provide training to the teachers, supporting their ongoing training;
- Developing the quality management system;
- An educational process based on sustainable development and aspects related to the personal development;
- Good collaboration and complementarity between the educational levels (formal, informal and permanent).

A systemic thinking, where each process takes into account the other one, ensures the success. Balancing the needs and aspirations of the population and protecting

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the environment, creating the right framework for healthy and sustainable development will pave the way for progress.

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