



Perceptions and definitions of sustainable development

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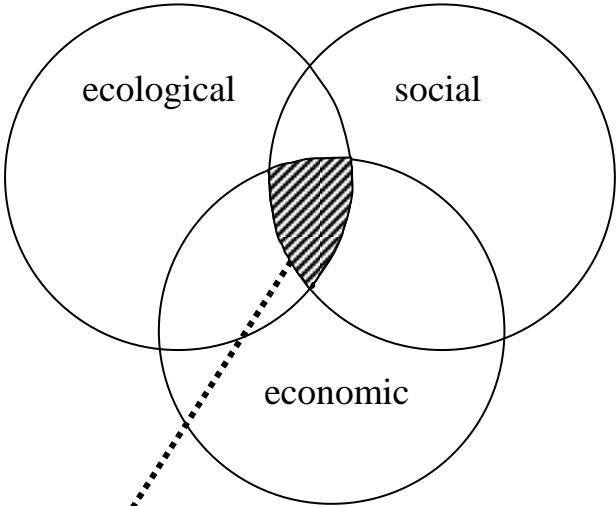
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"Project part-financed by the European Union"

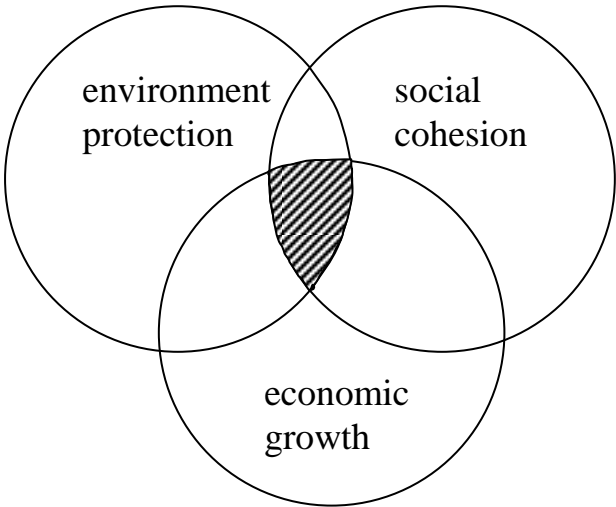
1. The Brundtland and Rio model of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is defined as the intersection of three components of equal weight: social, economic and ecological sustainability:



When all three conditions are simultaneously fulfilled we have SD
The “conflict between ecology and economy” is said to be resolved by this model. Economic growth is considered not only necessary for resolving social and environmental problems but the goals are also considered to be intrinsically compatible. The existence of win-win solutions is the basis for assuming that there is in fact an area of overlap between all three sustainability components.

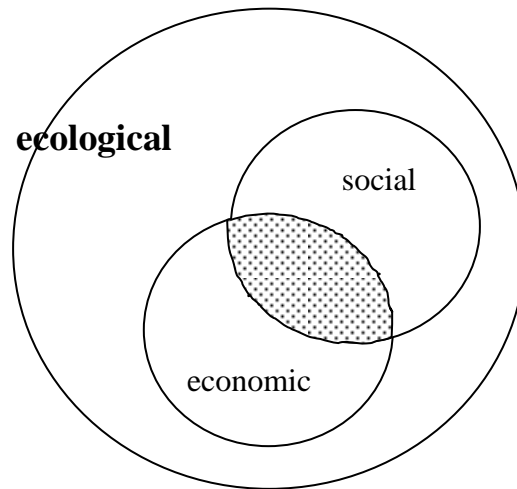
2. Sustainable development in EU policy terms



The three policy areas are of equal importance in the sustainability policy

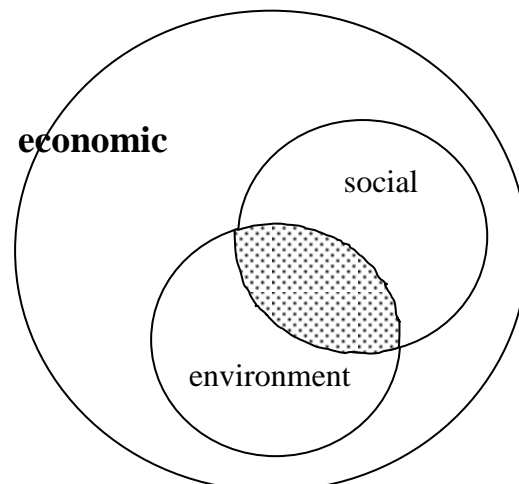
3 Two opposing views

The ecologist view: “Ecology sets the limits for human societies”



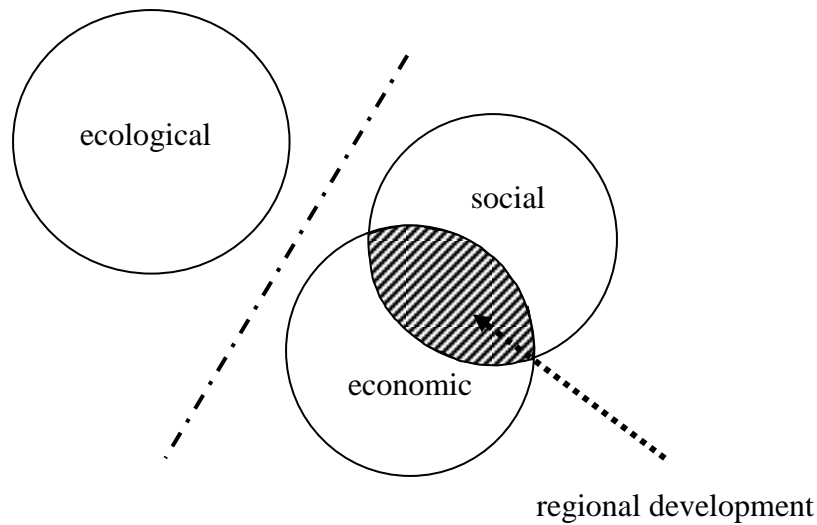
The notion that Nature sets limits to human societies and that the challenge of sustainable development is to find socio-economic sustainability within those limits was the lead thought of much of the environmental discourse “pre-Brundtland”. It dominates much of the culture of environment protection and results in the divide in figure xx. In a theoretical sense there are ultimate outer limits to the expansion of human activity on the globe: the ultimate definition of sustainability is negative and global. We can understand what is globally unsustainable. The problem is to translate this into operational and meaningful sustainability at lower levels and shorter time frames.

The economic view: “Economic growth is fundamental to environment protection and social cohesion”



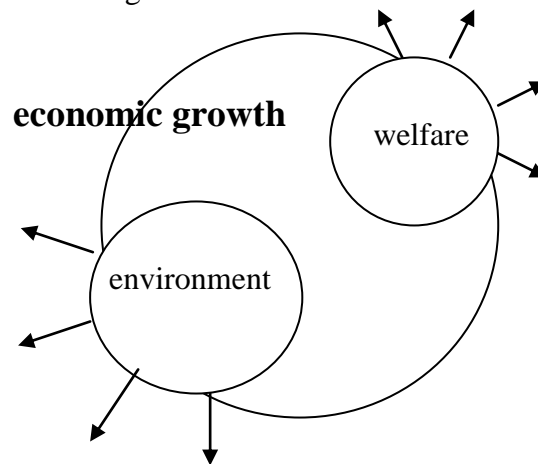
Economic growth is seen as a necessary precondition to both environment protection and social policies. This is in dominant view in the practice of EU-policy. Environment protection or health measures are limited by economic consideration, often viewed as infringements of free trade.

4. A divide between environment protection and socioeconomic development – a perception in regional development



In regional development and growth programmes environment protection/ ecological sustainability is in practice often absent or an external restriction on policy and programmes. It is often seen as imposed from higher (national or supranational) levels and to have no overlap with local and regional perceptions of what development is feasible and desirable from the socio-economic point of view.

5. The EU model: a sectorised society with welfare and environmental policies inside the economic framework – or threatening to burst it



In practice policy areas usually have little coordination with each other. Growth is regarded as primary – often a goal in itself not just the means to an end. Welfare and environment may be seen and may be threats to economic growth. Either, superficially, because welfare and environmental policies are seen as threats to economic growth. Or more fundamentally that environmental problems and lack of welfare may threaten economic growth. With the latter interpretation *the picture is a metaphor for the EU sustainability strategy: threats to the Lisbon strategy posed by threats to health, inability to uphold the welfare model for demographic reasons, poverty and inequality, infrastructure problems leading to traffic congestion and inefficiencies and climate change and pollutants.*