

**POST-TRUTH ERA – A TIME TO RECONSIDER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT****ANDREEA CONSTANTINESCU***SENIOR RESEARCHER III, INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL ECONOMY, BUCHAREST, ROMANIA*

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**Abstract**

*Current development policies are farther away from established economic patterns and corresponding ethical requirements, resulting in post-modern society parasitism by the post-truth of actual facts. It distorts both the form and content of issues of general interest by exacerbating secondary factors. The best example is the distortion of the political criteria of scientific evidence proving climate change due to human activity. However, we must not let ourselves overwhelmed by massive manipulation of economic and climate data, which are analyzed in good faith by experts. In terms of managing sustainable development, monitoring the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is no longer sufficient to have a clear picture of progress in the field. The paper presented here wants to demonstrate that real meaning of data can be protected by systematically analyzing all data on a subject, from different sources, that can aggregate, with applicability on sustainable development.*

**Keywords:** *sustainable development management, post-truth, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Human Development Index (HDI).*

**Clasificare JEL:** *Q01, Q56, Q 58, B41*

**1. Introduction**

Even though the relevance of the concept of sustainable development no longer needs to be highlighted, its ability to connect it to other concepts requires some clarification. This capacity implies, on the one hand, conceptual resistance to the pressures exerted by the exponents of simplifying policies and, on the other hand, the existence of methodological valences that allow it to develop durably to connect and / or assimilate other notions, in this case, the one of human development.

It is only when we achieve these objectives that we can see to what extent the analysis of the links between sustainable development and human development adds value to the consolidation of their dominant position among the many aspects of development.

In addition, this paper is not only a proposal to interpret the issues as accurately as possible, but also to change a current of opinion formed within society, not revolutionary, of course, but in a pragmatic and realistic way, so that it benefits from acceptance among specialists [5].

There are favorable conditions for affirming sustainable development worldwide and hence its resistance to the post-truth assault, represented mainly by 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, signed in 2015 and the late 2016. Unfortunately, the progress in establishing joint targets globally are ignored by the media, at best, because they are not able to feed the need for sensational and daily anchor [17].

In order to obtain the result sought in this paper - namely, aggregating methodologically the objectives of sustainable development by integrating parameters of human development - we mapped out a specific framework, which is a logical model and, of course, the possibility of practical application.

## 2. Sustainable Development or what else?

Economists are in consensus that an interruption of economic growth is not acceptable since it would actually lead to denial of sustainable development and emergence of an unwanted generalized forms of sustainable poverty [13].

Without reaching conclusions under law of entropy in economy [10], sustainable development calls for a radical change in mentality and mode of production, by diversifying technology and introducing future generations interests in economic solutions - impossible to apply today in the framework of economic liberalism and capitalist economy.

With this apparent incompatibility sustainable development of capitalist interests had to give ground and accept some compromise political solution, taking into account that transition to radical solutions would require a level of civic culture unattainable in short term. Thus sustainable development recognizes the need for immediate action against the demographic explosion, in the context of resource depletion and climate change, accepting, however, terms and conditions that are imposed by the market economy.

Still young, the concept of sustainable development is accused of failing to consolidate an unanimously accepted interpretation among experts. Thus, the paradigm of sustainable development has been questioned about its realism in terms of the ability of development policies around the world to conform to the requirements of a unitary development policy, at the same time oriented towards man and nature, because each society has its own way of preserving within its economic, social and environmental balance, according to tradition, culture, human and economic capacity etc. [13].

Once it passed the critical stage, sustainable development could propose a new vision of the world based on trust and respect between nations, which are called to work together to affirm the reality that we live better even using less conventional resources. The set of common values that underpin the notion of sheds new light on the idea of wealth leads to recognition of flows of substance in neoliberal economic and political system and its embellish concepts.

That is why the competition that eco-development and green capitalism have tried to make for sustainable development could not be a matter of substance because the theoretical principles from which the former is settled are based on an economic vision of development that does not use, in a first phase, its normative dimension to reduce inequalities [23].

If the economic component of sustainable development is its main strength, the socio-cultural component still remains its weak point, for reaching a global consciousness that assumes human relations with nature on other bases than anthropogenic domination is very difficult to manage [18].

In the new tradition of alternative facts established in the post-truth era, economic denial sustains pre-eminence of some major principles, on behalf of which it denies the actual reality, trying to distort economic science, keeping however the appearance of application of methods accepted by specialists in the field. Overcoming empirical approaches in economics is no longer beneficial, when math is used to measure, for example, only the average values of an indicator without evaluating the economic side-effects that can significantly change results [2].

Interdisciplinary approaches open to experts from various fields the ability to conceptualize problems in ways as well different as difficult to harmonize, within the transdisciplinary research. In terms of the effort to put the concept of sustainable development in relation to other areas, research is hampered by the multiplicity of cross-disciplinary relationships [9].

When many scientific disciplines work together to accomplish a specific project, his unity is subject to alternative facts. Considering that the adjective sustainability can be attached with too much ease to almost any field, none of the various disciplines that enhance the interactivity of sustainable development can offer an unique and definitive perspective on the subject [8].

Sustainable development had notable difficulties in uniting the environmental sciences, mainly due to different understanding of the concept of environment. Until the incorporation of environment in a uniform manner in sustainable development applications, it of was required, including, in legal terms, a clarification of environmental protection idea.

Another special case is that of concepts whose similarity is found in the implementation of their goals. Such a situation is represented by circular economy, where the efforts to promote it are interwoven with issues associated with sustainable development in economic terms. Both leave from the need for preservation of environmental assets in order to produce economic wealth [7].

On interdisciplinary grounds, another challenge for sustainable development came from green economy - a set of social, economic and environmental relations clearly representing the concern to maintain a clean environment. In a green economy, environment becomes a factor of economic growth and human welfare.

Since poorer countries are most dependent on natural resources for securing survival, thus less able to focus on the health of the environment, green economy, in turn, promotes equitable growth. Far from being replaced during transition to green economy, sustainable development appears in this respect, as an actual destination [4].

### **3. A Sustainable Approach of Human Development**

Human development can be considered a humanization of sustainable development, by switching from global issues to individuals, which highlights perception level and participation in creating personal and social well-being. A fundamental feature of human development is contribution to economic and social development, oriented to improve individuals, based on education and culture.

Just like sustainable development, human development is both a process and a result which falls within a very broad framework and aims at extending the personal rights and freedoms in accordance with improvement of social structures, which must be ensured and guaranteed [8].

Therefore, the particular models of development should be adapted to enable a sustainable human development-as a universal way of recognition of the primacy of this concept in front of all others, whether we are talking about the market, Governments and institutions requirements, or even the majority of contemporary society [1].

Human development corresponds to increased need for citizens to participate actively in the political life of their societies, in support of a fair and moral guidance, seeking balance between respecting individual freedom and collective security.

Based on these considerations, sustainable human development is considering not just a development that generates economic growth, but a redistribution of wealth in an equitable manner, respect for the environment and list but not last promoting sustainable solidarity [14].

From a general point of view, development represents a step forward for the purpose of positive and irreversible accumulations in order to replace structures which no longer correspond to the present realities.

In terms of economic development, it is a continuous process of replacing economic structures which occurs from within, by replacing the old elements with new ones. On human plan, development takes into account the social and mental shifts that we find at community level [6].

The continuous growth of exchange quality leads to transformations that alter the expectations and behavior of individuals, depending on their ability of accumulation of new knowledge and skills.

Thus, the human development process exceeds in complexity the economic development, going far beyond the performance of the latter. Therefore, human development, including communities progress, includes economic development includes, which, in turn, includes growth [5].

### **4. Sustainable Development and its Connections**

Even if there is an effort to accredit the idea of sustainable development failure, from a post-truth perspective, and the need to restrict it, at best, to an ecological economy, the general direction towards durability post-2015 must continue. Although it is no longer possible to return the international environmental policies to their original radicalism without urgent changes, in particular, regarding the replacement of fossil fuels, the reorientation of economic growth in

neoliberal capitalism and its harmonization with a fairer distribution of social welfare, sustainable development cannot cope with false or partial responses coming from green embellishment of the economy [5].

This indicates possibilities for human development to become more sustainable and for sustainable development to become "more human". Without neglecting economic development for basic human needs, both human development and sustainable development recognize that the wealth of a nation and its citizens cannot be described only by statistical indicators, however complex it may be, without reference to spirituality [13].

Sustainable human development means an extension of people background liberties of contemporary generation, fairly, to future generations and it assimilates 2030 Agenda objectives. Sustainable human development arises a process that eventually leads to responsible holistic management of humans in relationship with the environment, while promoting this vision, beneficial to mankind [15]. It follows that sustainability allows both sustainable development and human development to become two sides of the same universal ethics that claims life in a high quality standard [11].

Reaching the necessary consensus, not only for acceptance but also for internalizing human sustainable development throughout society, goes through orientation of citizens' attitude and behaviour towards a culture of solidarity and efficient management of all related processes [16].

Must be kept in mind that promoters of alternative truths question the unique outlook offered by global sustainable economic development on the grounds that the international economic cycle cannot be geared towards sustainable development in all countries around the world. And, as long as achieving the highest rate of economic growth is the main objective of a country's macroeconomic policy and wage growth is arbitrary, without analysing to what extent they contribute to the general prosperity of the community and to improve its living standards, sustainable development is threatened.

Among these threats should be considered, firstly, accelerated economic growth, leading to depletion of natural resources and, consequently, worsening environmental pollution problems [5].

## **5. Sustainability Perspectives**

Having as starting point the need to find methodology appropriate for overall interpretation (not just economic) of limitation of current generation wellbeing, so that it does not compromise the one of future generations, indicators measuring sustainable development on societal level currently complies with requirement for bottom-up approach by allowing analysis of each indicator composing the overview of society placement towards sustainable development.

The place of Romania in international statistics monitoring sustainable development and human development is modest, below our human and economic potential. Poor valorisation of this potential is due to the inefficiency of the Romanian political system and the faulty government [19].

Human development focuses on countries capacity to create conditions for improving the lives of their citizens, the automatism that states growth necessarily leads to increased welfare for all citizens. In addition to income, from the perspective of human development, it is at least equally important to ensure the continuity of development process to support productive and creative values of society [22].

Ten years after Romania joined the EU, while European Union is reconfiguring its financial perspective, it became obvious that achievement of sustainable development goals cannot be done without a change of mentality - both individuals and communities - in the sense of being able to use resources rationally and efficiently, thus understanding that prosperity also passes through the achievement of social cohesion (despite the obstacles present in the post-truth era). These aspects guide the management of sustainable development towards finding and implementing a new type of organizational development and managerial culture [3].

It can be competed with political solutions, as an antidote against post-truth, represented by continuous democracy, in which the participation of all citizens is encouraged by facilitating

general deliberation on important issues present in society. Requirement for such a form is embodied by expanding the area of intervention of citizens over the electoral cycle, which allows for effective political activity of the people, through continuous control of leaders actions [20].

Economically speaking, establishing a stable connection between fundamental concepts of development is a way to strengthen their defense against alternative facts. In this case, we tried to achieve this by establishing the emphasis on sustainability, both for human development and for sustainable development.

## 6. Conclusions

Assessing sustainable development in the post truth era may represent not just a methodological challenge, but also an opportunity to increase solidarity, expressed in the unity of researchers when occurs the need to denounce deception at economic level [21].

Post-truth era has already become a reality of our contemporary culture, dominated by conflicts likely to radicalize and threatening the very foundation of our values by developing alternative approaches [12]. Standards for this type of civilization has descended to the level of deception and lack of honesty, just as easy as they move in video games from one level to another, without having finished the previous one.

In sustainable development, acceptance of dishonesty can have serious consequences, when incompatibility between economic liberalism and sustainable development is not stopped.

The weak point of sustainable development remains social and cultural component, because achieving objectives in this area requires a global and individual consciousness. Thus, highlighting the connections between sustainable human development and sustainable development in the post-truth era has the gift to keep these fundamental forms of development on the path required for sustainability.

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