
FROM "(R)EVOLUTION" TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CURRENT FEATURES AND PERSPECTIVES

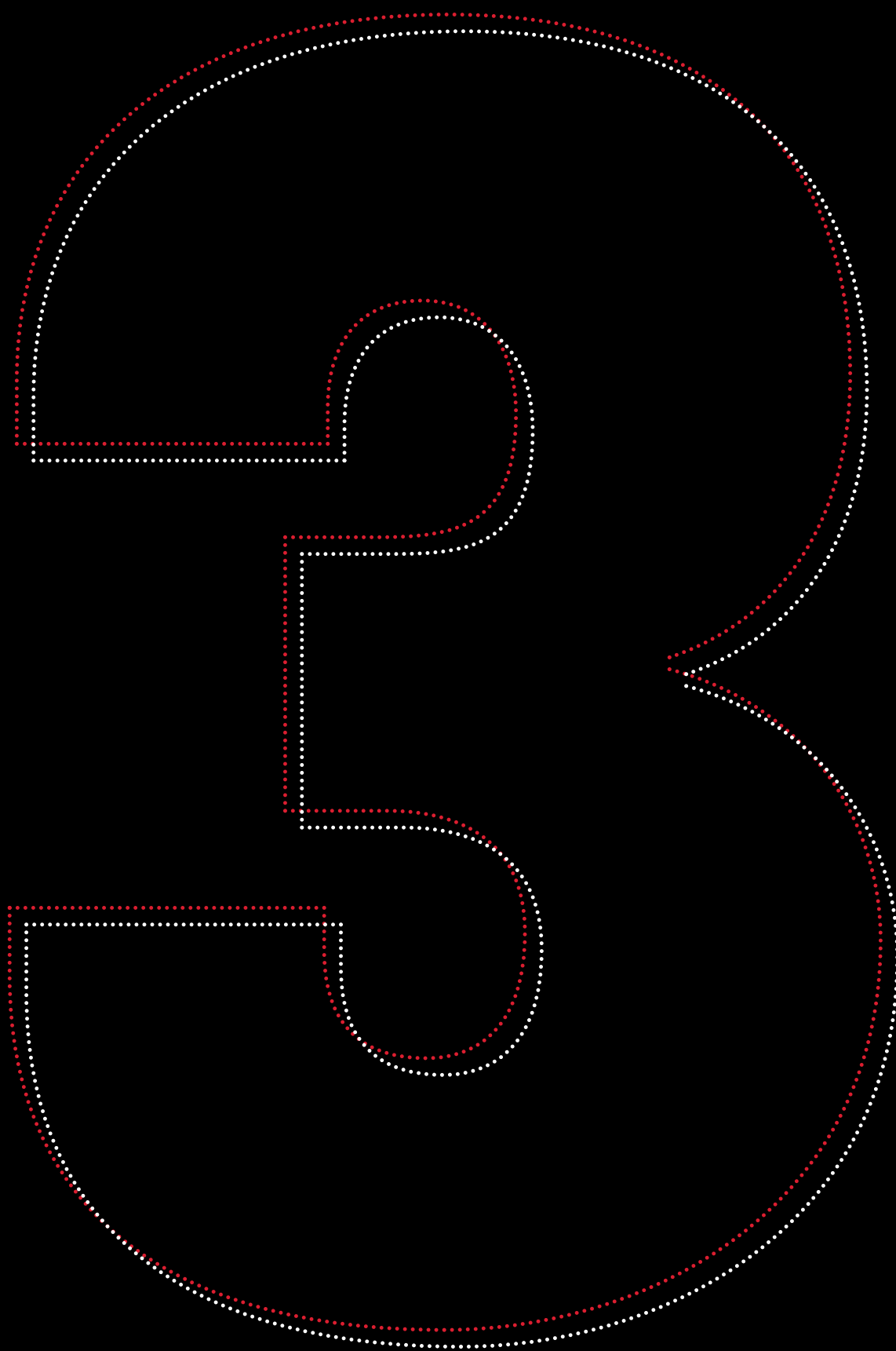
ABSTRACT This article aims to address the issue of Sustainable Development (SD) in an evolutionary perspective within its multidisciplinary scope. The complexity of developments for sustainability has frequently proven difficult in its implementation, evaluation and effective communication. It was our intention to provide an outline of the diverse views on the subject, focusing on globalization as a change of attitude towards sustainability. It is a review of terminology associated with the SD and its multiple interpretations. It is referenced the apparent and irrelevant impact of initiatives to solve the economic, social and environmental problem. It emphasizes the influence and importance of strategies and the positioning of SMEs on the way to SD in the policy of act local think global.

KEYWORDS

Strategy
Sustainable development
Sustainability, SMEs

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1. INTRODUCTION

“(R)Evolution or Death”, adapted from the revolutionary slogan used and popularized by the Cuban regime, serves as motto for the urgent need to transform our production and consumption systems and our standing towards the environment around us.

In essence, Sustainable Development (SD) is a concern for creating opportunity and welfare conditions, today and tomorrow, equally in the aspirations of man and his basic needs, as well as respect for the environment in which he interacts. SD is also a stated aspiration of governments, organizations and society in general, in regard for a better future (e.g., Bell & Morse, 2003; Hak et al., 2007; Epstein, 2008; Gibson et al., 2005).

Like the big revolutions, an environmental revolution will demand sacrifices. It will also change the face of the earth and institutions as we know them today, it will probably modify human relationships, cultures, hierarchies, economies, but the expected gains are incalculable. Will this (R)Evolution take place? There is no guarantee. The certainty ahead is the ecological and economic impoverishment of culture and civilization, which will certainly experience many difficulties in adapting to their environmental needs.

Nearly two decades ago, William Ruckelshaus, the founding administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States, raised the issue on the enormity of the challenge:

“Can we move nations and people towards sustainability? Such a move would represent a change in society comparable in scale to only two other changes: the Agricultural Revolution of the late Neolithic and the Industrial Revolution of the last two centuries. These revolutions were gradual, spontaneous and for the most part unconscious. The aim of this revo-

lution will have to be a fully conscious operation, guided by the best know-how that science can provide. If we are really doing it, it will be an absolutely unique corporation in humanity's stay on Earth (Ruckelshaus, W. 1989; Bozuwa, P. 2006).

The stories and the work on SD have been consistently cemented, discussed and debated in literature over the past 35 years (Mebratu, 1998; Leiserowitz et al 2006; Graham M. 2008). This evolution has driven research into priority in a mission line of attack, in building science and sustainable technology (Holdren 2008). The area under discussion has put together an exclusive language, merging into a proliferation of expressions such as Triple bottom line, sustainability, corporate citizenship, social responsibility, greening of supply chains and cooperative responsibility, to name a few.

The purpose of this essay is to bring about and review the current state of SD while an evolutionary process. Not an easy assignment, on account of the multidisciplinary proliferation this theme that has undergone.

We restricted our work to 5 topics, in an attempt to frame in a coordinated way, considering its evolutionary view, the transition to a timeless approach, which has allowed numerous interpretations where even now, despite the change effort, it is perceived a low influence on the required improvements, and finally, the particularity of the estimated atomized impact that SMEs are likely to have, in an overall strategy for sustainability. As a rule, after going over the bibliography and the accomplished studies, we verify that a large majority of SMEs is not addressed in the dialogue of sustainability issues. When examining literature on the subject we also found that, when confronted with aspects related to SD, SMEs are receptive to change of habits and to adopting new strategies for their business.

Let's not forget that, on a global level, many of these SMEs are suppliers of large companies, which in turn will not be and will not fully conform to what they promote with the reputation they show in their re-

ports and actions, if we do not contemplate what happens upstream, i.e., integrating SMEs in the path of sustainability.

The impact and success of any global strategy in the path of SD will not be achieved without taking account of these SMEs. Bear in mind that they represent between 60 - 70% of the global market, with all that it implies.

Let us carry on our (R)Evolution by land, water and air, in order not to succumb.

2. EVOLUTIONARY VISION – GLOBALIZATION THE CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TO SUSTAINABILITY

Of known historical facts, many are the events that contributed to human development in its planetary motion. Previously the world globalized itself, even before knowing the meaning of the word globalization. Globalization is the most obvious phenomenon of modern-day and by now it boasts over half a century of evolution. It was

and is an irreversible process, caused mainly by technological developments.

It was born along with the advent of maritime discoveries, since the mid-fifteenth century, carried out by Spanish and Portuguese. We may consider three significant moments in launching the globalization process:

- the first, by Christopher Columbus¹ in 1492, through the discovery of America;
- the second moment, by Vasco da Gama² in 1498, which opened the sea route to India;
- and the third, the circum-navigation of the planet by Fernão de Magalhães³ in 1522 (Peter et al 2001; 2007; Philip T. Hoffman et al 2002, Michael et al 2003).

The discovery expeditions generate a transfer of technologies, diseases, flora and fauna of such magnitude and importance hitherto never witnessed (KH O'Rourke & JG Williamson, 2001).

The diversity of transfers, performed in different periods over the last 500 years, created quite an assorted level of inter-relationship and interdependency dynamics, affecting the balance of economic, social and environmental authorities in an increasing and irreversible manner. Although apparently clear and not complex, the idea of globalization conceals, more than reveals, what is going on throughout the world. But, over the last 50 years, regional disparities have increased dramatically in some areas of the earth, exclusionary consequences of the neoliberal globalization (Jai Sen, 2004c).

As referred by Boaventura Santos (2006a), "...If, for some people, globalization is still considered a great triumph in rationality, innovation and freedom, capable of producing infinite progress and unlimited abundance, for others, it is more and more an anathema, as it leads to misery, loss of food autonomy, social exclusion, environmental decline, destruction...".

¹ **Christopher Columbus** was a navigator and explorer, responsible for leading the fleet reached America on 12 October 1492, under the orders of the Catholic Kings of Spain. Embarked on its journey across the Atlantic Ocean with the aim of reaching India, and in fact discovered the Caribbean islands and later to the Gulf of Mexico in Central America.

² **Vasco da Gama**, Portuguese navigator and explorer. In the Age of Discovery, stood out for being the commander of the first ships to sail directly from Europe to India, the longest ocean voyage so far held more than one complete circuit around the world at the Equator.

³ **Fernão de Magalhães**, Portuguese navigator, commanded the naval expedition that made the first voyage of circumnavigation of the globe. It was the first to cross the strait now known by its name (the Strait of Magalhães) and the first European to sail the Pacific Ocean

It is clear that what we call globalization is rather a number of different processes of globalization and, ultimately, of different and sometimes contradictory globalizations. What we usually designate as globalization are actually different sets of social, economic and environmental relationships which, in turn, start off assorted globalization phenomena (Santos, Boaventura 2006b).

Globalization has often been a driving force for poverty attenuation, but occasionally some nations have been left out and are not taken into account in these waves of change. Some important motives for this segregation are associated with poor management and the implementation of non-integration policies, rising barriers to prevent access to rich countries markets, thus causing the asymmetries to increase and the development of those countries to decrease. It is in this context of dissimilarities that international associations of people surface, often assembled as an indistinct force, in order to justify certain policies or behaviours. These groups apply pressure on industrialized countries, with the aim of forcing them to adopt more favourable positions on the equitable distribution of globalization benefits and the fight against situations of poverty, which prevent some countries to build the necessary foundations to overcome underdevelopment (Santos, Boaventura 2006c). The environmental activities in particular have played an important and high impact role with regard to globalization, in the fight they have triggered for a clean planet. As an exponent of what we just said, we may well cite the principle "Think Global, Act Local", slogan of Agenda 21 (UNCED 1992).

Globally, the ecological balances of the planet, and those of social and economic systems, are undergoing a radical change, for which very few societies are/will be equipped. So far, the pains taken by governments to react to imminent emergencies have been ineffective and inappropriate (John Byrne and Leigh Glover 2002), despite the efforts to improve this state of affairs (UNCTAD 2008).

The continuous growth and profit as the highest benchmark performance, often limits the implementation of restructuring and behaviours by organizations, corporate or otherwise. As a rule, the advent of crisis causes the established systems to collapse and promotes the surfacing of new opportunities for the makeover, thus resulting in incentives for implementing and making new policies.

More and more we come across citizens organized as a community and linked regionally, seeking answers and offering solutions and alternatives based on a local production/market. Perfect examples are the initiatives of "post carbon institute" – its motto "Reduce consumption, produce locally", of "wiser earth" – a non-profit online community connecting people and merely working towards a more fair and sustainable world, of "Transition towns" – "how can our community respond to the challenges, and opportunities, of Peak Oil and Climate Change?". Some of these movements devise effective deployment strategies to cope with energy shortage and the scarcity of resources, acting as models for sustainable solutions, such as "Green cities" or "Cool cities", and challenging the very national policies with their own solutions.

A change of attitude in our way of looking at the world will be forthcoming. Human beings are part of a web of connections, in what is called environment and society. The "anthropocene" concept describes our current era as a period in which human activity is the main element of the world's condition (Crutzen, PJ, Stoermer, EF, 2000, Dearing, JA 2007). We should not go on pretending and fragmenting our activities and impacts, it is essential to have a global vision of the world in a trans-disciplinary way.

In this line of thought, globalization and SD must evolve as two aspects of a common view of our own future. SD must make sense in the long term, in an integrated perspective and based on the dogmas of human life and the world.

3. SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT – A TIMELESS APPROACH

Despite its current popularity, the theme SD or sustainability has been worrying and attracting the attention of scholars of the most varied scientific knowledge, in different periods of time. In fact, the terminology of the concept of SD has had various meanings, depending on how the participants analyze, interpret, relate, apply and implement it. In this day and age, the watchword is to preserve life on our planet "*lato sensu*", thus being vital to understand and integrate solutions that address human needs as well as their interactions with natural systems, in a medium and long-term perspective (Leal Filho, W. 2000, Kates et al. 2001).

In this approach, we place our starting point in the late 19th – early 20th century, when issues relating to preservation and conservation were really coming into being. The utmost promoters of these two ways of thinking were personalized respectively by John Muir⁴ and Gifford Pinchot⁵.

Muir advocated the safeguarding of nature from any exploitation, interference and human, productive or commercial use. This is environmentalism with a biocentric penchant and a strong ethical and spiritual appeal, of which the defence of nature relied mainly on civil society institutions (Sierra Club 2009). Pinchot, in turn, believed

in a more anthropocentric and utilitarian environmentalism, compatible with economic development, providing maximum sustainable use of natural resources and counting on the State's involvement for efficient management. Pinchot believed the restrictions proposed by Muir to be overstated and offered a vision that would embrace the predominant welfare and values of civilization, as long as it did not entail a development at any cost (Héctor Leis 2004).

According to John Muir, we must be receptive to the beauties of Mother Nature and its aesthetic assessment of our lives; and, as per Pinchot, we must accept the responsibility of doing and redoing our world. In short, we must be both Muir and Pinchot, if we are to live agreeably in our world and turn it into a sustained experience (Douglas R. Anderson 2006).

We may consider Pinchot's positioning as the forerunner of what we today refer as SD. Pinchot advocated three principles to ensure, simultaneously, the usage and the preservation of nature (McCormick, John 1989):

- I. The employment of natural resources by this generation;
- II. The prevention of waste;
- III. The development of natural resources for the majority and not for a minority of citizens.

But it is really a few years later, in the 60s, that the topic of environmentalism comes back and wins popularity, due to the warning given through the document presented by Rachel Carson – "Silent Spring". "Silent Spring" clearly shows the concern for life, in its broad expression, human or not human, and the implicit or explicit features of morality and ethics of acts and their impact on the environment (Carson, R. 1994).

Her essay stand as a milestone in appealing to the problems caused by chemical pollution, which helped to restrict the employment of pesticides, herbicides and other chemicals for agriculture and industry, as well as

⁴ John Muir, (21 April 1838 – 24 December 1914) was a Scottish-born, American naturalist, author, and early advocate of preservation of U.S. wilderness.

⁵ Gifford Pinchot, (11 August 1865 – 4 October 1946) was born in Connecticut. Was the first Chief of the United States Forest Service. Reforming the management and development of forests in the United States and for advocating the conservation of the nation's reserves by planned use and renewal. Pinchot coined the term conservation ethic as applied to natural resources.

to their methods of handling, application and safe disposal. It also had an outstanding role as the basis and contribution to the legal framework of the "Clean Water Act" in the U.S. (Botzler, Richard and Armstrong, Susan 1998; Philip Cafaro 2006).

What triggers and draws concern and attention to sustainability is the increase, in a growing, consistent and systematic way, of surveys regarding the impact of human activities on the environment and its "side effects". It is crucial to study and understand the dynamics by which human activities and their influence have some bearing on the state of the environment, as well as the dynamics of the environment and its changes, caused by human activity, have an impact on its economic development, social structure, health, culture and wellbeing. (Costanza and A.J. McMichael 1998; D.J. Singh A 2006).

In the following decades it is fully established as a differentiated scientific field in the interrelationship challenge of man and his immediate surroundings. This awakening to the problems of sustainability is originated by the meetings of the so-called "Clube de Roma", which led to the paper named "The Limits to Growth" by Donella Meadows team. This report acted as a testimonial, starting off the awareness of development and environment interdependence, emerging at the same time the concept of eco-development. Despite being developed from a model with very basic assumptions of reality, it revealed that the conventional criteria for economic growth, the increasing population and the unrestrained way of consumption are unsustainable, signifying the exhaustion of non-renewable resources, thereby restraining the limits to growth and causing the collapse of populations and their economic systems (Meadows et al. 1972).

In its time, "The Limits to Growth" is the first and most prominent study aiming for an overview on various existing influences between the actions and the behaviour of human activities, their socializing and their economic backing in terms of the impact caused on the environ-

ment, as well as conditioning the options of future generations (Gray, 2006).

The United Nations, based on the discussion of the work undertaken by the Meadows team, decided to create the environmental program UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program), setting in motion the declaration of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, which had the main objective of creating the 1st worldwide institution to develop a global system that would control the environment, as well as analysing the documented tendencies (UNEP 1972). In this frame of mind, the United Nations, through its "Governing Council the Environment Programme", promotes, in 1983 at the General Assembly of the United Nations, the establishment of an independent committee, World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), to develop innovative proposals designed to harmonize the environment related issues and setting in motion the report "Our Common Future", also known worldwide as the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987). One of the most significant contributions of this paper was structuring the concept of sustainable development, providing it with a magnitude that comprises a whole range of human values (Ascher 2007).

The World Commission for Environment and Development alerts in its text that human activities should be conducted based on ecological sustainability. It reiterates the concept of limits to growth, although not in unconditional terms, but limits set by the state of technology, social organization and the biosphere's capacity to absorb the effects of human activities (WCED 1987).

It is at the Rio de Janeiro Summit, known as the "Earth Summit", that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development "UNCED" emphasizes the need of a makeover in our attitudes and behaviours, to bring about the necessary changes in three crucial areas of interest, known as triple-bottom-line: economy, environment and social. It stands out, among other features, the pledge to Biodiversity and Agenda 21, which reinforces the structuring importance of sustainable de-

velopment, reiterating the notion that traditional models of growth and consumption should adjust themselves, to achieve a healthy environment (UNCED 1992).

This was followed up by the Johannesburg World Summit, where SD starts to be regarded as a global strategy, reaffirming the strengthening of the pillars of SD at local, national, regional and global levels, embodied by the implementation of Agenda 21 (UNEP 2002).

As a final point, we would like to highlight the Conference held in Poznan by the United Nations Organization for Climate Change, emphasising the reiteration of the Kyoto Protocol and essentially in the spirit of a common vision on the long-term cooperative action about climate changes and sustainable development policies, by way of adjustment to new realities, implementation of new financial support mechanisms and adoption of environmentally friendly technological processes (UNFCCC 2008).

Sustainability and its development rely on many sources of the most diverse areas and fields of knowledge: environmental economics, environmental engineering, environmental law, biological preservation, sociology, health and many others, which, in their different ways of looking at the problem, help out in issues concerning sustainability, in seeking solutions to facilitate that dialogue and reducing conflicts (Clark and Dickson 2003).

After a journey of several decades, we realize that in fact we travelled a long way, but we can also perceive, by means of the objective evidence we have on the state of the planet today, that the guiding principles of sustainability were implemented by global community in a far from significant manner. Evidence of this state of degradation comes up everywhere: decline of many ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, climate changes, mobility of environmental refugees, cultural loss, etc. (World Bank 2008; UNEP-WCMC 2008; UNHCR 2008). In view of these tendencies, there is a pressing need to reopen a new kind of dialogue with nature, in order to build a diplomatic basis of understanding, where human aspirations and their goals for development are reconciled with the natural constraints of the ecosystems.

4. SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT – A PUZZLING DEFINITION

The words support, sustainable, sustainability, have in essence the root of the Latin word “*sustinere*”, which literally means the ability to maintain or sustain, as well as the state of something that can be maintained at a certain level.

In literature we may come across many references and definitions for the expression “SD”, each depending on the context, focus, purpose, applicability and perspective that we want to meet with (Pezzey 1989; Robert Costanza, Bernard C. Patten 1995; Raniga Iyer, U., Treloar, G., 2000, Lamberton, G. 2005). This context will vary and shape itself to the requirements of various fields of activity, inspiring and providing an amalgam of views.

According to Bybee (1991), we must consider SD as “... central unifying concept, necessary in the current moment of the history of mankind.” It should be a permanent starting point, not only free from pre-set levels of maintenance, but also able to challenge those levels and to progress to stages that will intensify the pledge of maintaining in good health the biological systems and subsystems that support us.

The Brundtland Commission, promoted by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), through the release of its report “Our Common Future”, provides a definition of SD, known worldwide as “ability to make to ensure that it meets the needs of the present

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987; CWB 2009).

The concept of SD is the result of growing global awareness of issues related to environmental problems and socio-economic interactions, with the prospect of a healthy future for mankind. This concept in itself does not specify limits, other than those inherent to the state of technological development, the type of social organization, the availability of resources and the biosphere's ability for renewal, in view of the effects produced by human activities.

The turning point is given by the fact that environmental problems were no longer seen as merely local in scope, and the supremacy of man over the environment ceased to be a triumph of mankind over nature.

The Brundtland report acknowledges the interdependence of man, environment and the demands man makes in order to meet his needs of welfare, in a broader sense than mere exploitation of resources, without endangering its very existence (WCED, 1987; Lee, 2000).

Our actions and way of life have forced systematic impacts on the environment, making changes that go beyond the perimeter of the event, in a sequence that progresses from the local to the regional, national and global spectrum. Hitherto, the employed methods of growth and development did not contribute to preserve the healthy environment from which we depend on, moreover, it has increased exponentially the statistic of poverty and global disparity. These last 50 years played an important role in reducing the recovery aptitude of several systems on an unprecedented scale, changing habitats, diminishing biodiversity and putting at risk the ecosystem forces that sustain us (MA, 2005a). Evidence of our unsustainable development abounds all over the planet. Every day the media reports on the water contamination, heat waves, discrimination in obtaining food, poverty, environmental migration, lack of health care, etc. The definition proposed by the Brundtland Commission has produced a proliferation of vocabulary over the years, which is being used in accordance

with the vision we have of the variants of the problem. The concept was communicated in such a way that it is difficult to go against it, despite its contradictory expression "sustainable development" becoming an oxymoron, with the merit of bringing together the unifying capacity of movement and action of several agents in the search for solutions (John Robinson 2004; Osório, et. Al, 2005).

SD has been offered as a triangular theory, reflecting the triple bottom line: social, environmental and economic criteria; terms like 3E's - equity, environment and economy; or even 3P's - people, planet and prosperity (Zimmerman, 2005).

TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE	SOCIAL	ENVIRONMENTAL	ECONOMIC
3E's	Equity	Environment	Economy
3P's	People	Planet	Prosperity

Despite the progress and the effort developed around SD, there is one characteristic the researchers seem to agree with... there is no obvious meaning for SD, rendering it both controversial and attractive. It is a fertile ground for some speculation by political decisions and pressure groups, it endorses what they would like it to be and not what it actually is (Springett, 2003). We should take into consideration, on one hand, the preservation ability of a state (sustainability), on the other hand, seeking to maintain a dynamic equilibrium and incorporating a long term process in its essence (DS) (Mebratu, D., 1998, John Robinson 2004). The difference between the two states, sustainability and SD, lies in the way by which the final objectives are pursued (Dias De Avila-Pires 2000; Osorio, et. Al., 2005).

The fact of having to deal with multiple matters and perspectives, leads to the redefinition and focus our efforts on targets to be achieved. This feature of sustainability is known as "multiple interpretations" (Martens in 2006). We have to manage them and sustainable development is the goal to maintain continued growth, is

the perspective from the point of view of governments and private sector organizations (Koehler and Hecht 2006). Researchers and NGOs are more likely to use the term sustainability, sometimes used in similar contexts. But if we focus on the ability of human beings to continue to live within environmental constraints, the term sustainability turns into a different meaning and significance from SD (John Robinson, 2004).

By the above exposed, an approach on the issue of Sustainability/SD must take a clear stand on the following questions (Gray, Bebbington, & Walters, 1993; Parris TM, Kates RW 2003):

- Sustainability for what?;
- Sustainability for whom?;
- Sustainability in what way?;
- Sustainability for how long?;
- Sustainability at what level of resolution?

In short the basic issue to be addressed and that must be tackled relates to the type of measures we have taken to build a sustainable future and that has to be found in policy proposals, education, scientific and technological developments.

5. THE APPARENT AND IRRELEVANT IMPACTS OF INITIATIVES TO SOLVE THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM

We must recognize that the past 100 years have produced unprecedented global advances, and in various domains of activity, as proof of this we may point out the achievements of social rights, an unprecedented economic growth, creating jobs, the increased life expectancy, development of new technologies, increased agricultural production, environmental concerns, among many others. This growth has been quite impressive, but it's achievement has required a huge and inadequate consumption of resources, as well as the fact that this growth and its benefits, has been far from embracing a broad majority of the world population.

It should be noted that in the year 1820, 75% of the world population lived on the equivalent of U.S. \$ 1 per day. Today,

people living on the same income represents 20% of the world population. It is still a high value. The progress shown by the report "Development Goals for the Millennium 2008" (UNDP 2008), although positive, is uneven among the various regions of the world. Only in developing countries, 980 million people lived on less than \$ 1 per day in 2004. The value shows a decrease of 270 million compared with 1990. According to Ban Ki-moon the United Nations Secretary General (UNDP 2008), "Looking ahead to 2015 and beyond, there is no question that we can achieve the overarching goal: we can put an end to poverty. In almost all instances, experience has demonstrated the validity of earlier agreements on the way forward, in other words, we know what to do. But it requires an unswerving, collective, long-term effort."

In order to consolidate this process there is the need to create a knowledge base that will:

- a) Describe the initiatives that are being developed around the world about the implemented measures and their interest;
- b) Help people interested in development, by using of the measures, reporting and analysis of indicators of progress, etc,
- c) Create a community of specialists that may share experiences and jointly define best practices (OECD 2009).

The results and impacts observed with the implemented changes in recent years have come to question the concepts and importance of what is meant by economic growth in its neo-classical sense and reinforces the need to develop new policies for implementation and action. Thinking that the problems of poverty and all other associated problems are eradicated by betting on the maintenance of policies and the state of continued growth has constituted a barrier on the adoption of effective measures oriented towards sustainability.

It is true that economic indicators, like the rate of production and investment, have been, in recent years, consistently positive; in contrast, the environmental indicators

have presented increasingly negative values; there is evidence of that everywhere, contamination of soil and water resources, obvious climate changes with consequences and serious effects on biodiversity, jeopardizing the very survival of the human species (Meadows, DH et al 1992). This continued economic growth is directly linked to the problem of over consumption in developed societies, which have assumed that its growth is directly related to an almost infinite capacity of the earth's potential. This unrestrained consumption base behavior of collective hysteria for consumption, which is encouraged and supported by aggressive advertising, which has created needs increasingly ephemeral. To tackle these vices of consumption there has been the need to spend more and more units of raw materials and non-renewable energy, for this artificial demand.

But, according to Nadine Gordimer⁶, consumption is necessary for human development when it improves the capability of people, upgrades their lives, without compromising the quality of life of other human beings. (Gordimer 1998). On the other hand, the prescription of a continued economic growth, as a solution for the problems originating from underdevelopment and poor distribution of wealth, is harming the world. Both the economy and management processes do not take into account that development consumes resources and generates wastes that have been systematically reducing the assimilative capacity of the environment to detoxify.

Note that classical economists like Adam Smith, Ricardo, Malthus and Mill paid much more attention to "nature – environment" than most neoclassical economists (Goodland, Robert 2009).

For the need to be clear, we have to trigger a (r) evolution for sustainability, expression used by Greenpeace. This expression designates the requisite to revolutionize and take a profound change in organizational form, of lifestyle and consumption together with an evolutionary view of concrete and systematic actions.

⁶ Nadine Gordimer escritora Sul Africana, Premio Nobel de literatura, Embaixadora de boa vontade do PNUD em 1998

This (r) evolution needs to be built on a process of consensus, through the setting of new goals with a broader vision of long-term interdependence, economic and social development and ecological well-being; improving the tools and the way of measuring progress towards these objectives, and an intensive and energized campaign to perform this evolution with new institutions (Costanza et al 2009).

6. SMES IN THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This aspect is for us of utmost importance. Individuals, and those organizations supporting them, working in search of an evolutionary process in the field of industrial ecology, cleaner production, fair trade and SD, are faced with the incongruity between global citizenship and global trade (Sam B. Moore and Gemma MM Jones 2004). It has been argued that, by their position, managers and heads of organizations are the front line to influence the conduct of their employees, as well as interaction with all stakeholders towards the implementation of behaviour and organizational changes and the recognition of multiple legal, ethical, social, economic and environmental requirements. These changes have to be evaluated by setting operationally measurable goals, enabling organizations to move towards the implementation and enforcement of an effective agenda on the path to sustainability.

Social and environmental factors have become increasingly important criteria for organizations, regardless of

their size. In recent years, organizations have been making an effort to incorporate referred considerations into their strategic planning, such as the adoption of normative SA 8000, AA 1000 and ISO 14000 (CEPAA 2001, AA1000, 1999, ISO 14000, 2004) and many other initiatives like the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI 2009), which measures economic performance and the Global Reporting Initiative as a basic account.

These and other efforts enable systematic filtering practice of business processes and how organizations operate, helping to identify and raise strategies for a more SD, in a context of global challenge, allowing the improvement of natural value between what is done, what is preserved and what is distributed.

Indeed, these challenges have repercussions for virtually all strategic aspects of organizations and for the business model that is intended to follow and implement. However, a large majority of organization executives still see the SD not as a multidimensional opportunity, but as a nuisance in the geometry of their activities, which involves regulation, increased costs and liability. (Stuart L. Hart and Mark B. Milstein 2003).

Some authors indicate that there is a greater lack of commitment and involvement from leaders of large organizations when compared with the leaders of small and medium organizations, where understanding the implementation and progress in adopting measures towards sustainability is more evident. This predisposition of small and medium organizations is usually conditioned and affected in its progress and plans, by financial constraints (McKinsey 2008).

An inclusive approach of skills for an organizational change that meets and leads the organization to the goals of the SD is inevitably the quality of its leaders and their management. The emphasis on shared responsibility encourages the organizations towards the goals of the DS through its modernization, emphasizing social and ecological concern criteria.

If we assess SMEs based only on the number of its employees, we can state that SMEs are really the backbone

of the market and that their way of being, behaviour and practices are fundamental in the way the evolutionary process towards sustainability is triggered.

On the one hand, there are only the charges emanating from legal requirements and, on the other hand, the reference to mere indications for assuming sustainable practices, it seems appropriate that the definition and implementation of clear strategies on the way to SD is paramount in achieving the ends that we aspire to and want (IR Kerr 2006).

Developed studies indicate one factor that consistently emerges as critical to the survival of organizations, regardless of their size, which is profit. There is, in practice, organizations that do not opt for investment and sustainable solutions if there isn't a direct relationship with the profitability of their type of activity (Corral, CM 2003). Many organizations have enhanced and integrated sustainable practices that allow them a more competitive strategic positioning and consolidation of synergies to the factors of change. On the other hand, they are constantly being confronted with having to show to multiple agents the commitments they assume with their actions on corporate, social and environmental responsibilities and expansion of their business.

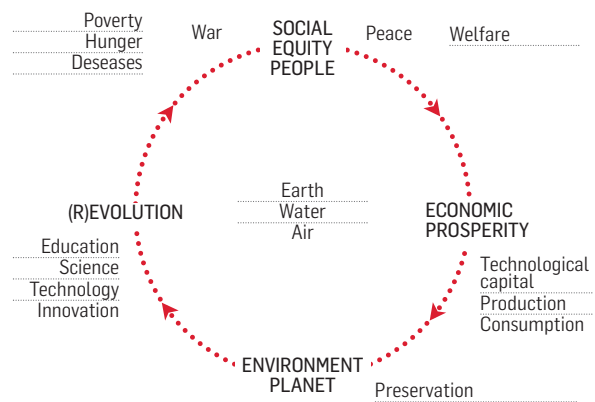
If we think that our society is economically structured by a proliferation of SMEs (which globally account for 70 to 80% of all companies in the world) with everything they represent, with respect to wealth creation, employment, production and pollution; if we combine this dimension with the motto of "act local, think global" in Agenda 21, we can not remain insensitive to its impact on integrated strategies for SD.

SMEs are directly responsible for 60 to 70% of world production (OECD 2002, 2008). The political importance and impact of this reality is reflected, for example, in The Small Business Act of the European Union creates a strategic framework to enable the growth and innovation potential of SMEs to be better exploited. This should encourage the sustainable competitiveness of the European Union (EU) and its transition towards a

knowledge economy. (Think Small First A Small Business Act for Europe 2008).

Recently, the Copenhagen Statement, promoted by the Prince of Wales and the Group of World Leaders on Climate Change (UCPSL 2009), reiterated that the challenges for change are here. The statement calls for the reduction of global medium temperature and emission reductions to levels of pre-industrial era, ie a reduction of between 50-85 percent by 2050 (Bates et al 2008). Fig 1.

FIG. 1 EFFECTORS TO SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT



The document states that economic development is not sustainable in the long run, unless the weather is stable, so the times ahead are expected difficult and challenging for the business community.

The problem of climate change is solvable because many of the necessary technologies are available today, while others may be developed if the right incentives are in the right places. The required policies are relatively clear and the transition costs are manageable, even in the current economic climate.

It is therefore urgent that the signs are clear and that the transformation going on in the world economy will create the conditions that companies need to achieve the desired change and the path of a sustainable economy in the long run, which has the esteem for human and environmental integrity as one of its support.

7. CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen in the last decades, organizations and experts have striven and struggled to find ways and solutions to issues related to human activities, specifically social, economic and environmental issues.

This demand has led to an impressive body of knowledge that aims to tackle problems of many sources, the urgency and accuracy of its resolution are constant and urgent.

There is objective evidence everywhere, we are losing at a rapid pace biodiversity, forests and marine resources, our environment. Our persistent and unsustainable consumption habits, derived from a misfit style and practice of life, has placed enormous pressure on natural resources and the vital elements that support us – water, earth and air.

How can we ensure that we will not compromise the needs of future generations, even when our needs are being met properly? We are living in a time of extreme vulnerability and unpredictability, unfortunately associated with our continued stoic refusal to recognize the disturbing signs of times.

We still depending on our actions and our choices to reverse the state of affairs we have come into, with respect to our environment and, as a result, of our own survival. The concept and principles of SD are still alive, it is a positive concept that relates with the demand for well-being of people and ecosystems.

SD should not be seen as a mere expression, each of us can take the mold in line with our visions of the world. Thus, it is flexible enough for each one of us.

As mentioned before, we have yet to persevere, so far, the initiatives that have been developed and implemented have not yet begun to bear fruit, the indicators are clear, high temperature, CO₂, water pollution, disease proliferation, hunger, widespread poverty. Basically, we have to change our living and consumption style and habits.

The magnitude of SMEs has been stressed in the impact it has on the economy and they should be taken into account in any policy and strategy for SD. The quality of leaders remain a key factor in changing the organizations, while influencers and drivers of behaviour for sustainability, internally and externally. We need to bear in mind that our development and the hierarchy of our needs should be within the earth's biophysical limits, where our goals and economic and social ambitions should be met.

Change must be supported and underpinned by clear policies and measures, as mentioned, technologies are available, it seems clear that nothing will be as before, organizations and society will have to assume that these changes will certainly be difficult, but necessary. Let us regain the fundamental principles of SD, let's form an Interested Sustainability and let's assume a Sustainability Features which is Transcendent, which allows its Transference through knowledge, which supports itself by the Experience of learning, which builds growing Expectations and which has the capacity to be Renovative, to be gradual, continuous and uniform within the necessary limits for the well-being.

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