EMERGENT THEMES OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Magis, Kristen & Shinn, Craig

INTRODUCTION

Social Sustainability gained formal and international repute following the World Commission on Environment and Development report to the United Nations which stipulated that sustainable development required concerted attention to social, ecological and economic conditions (WCED, 1987). Social Sustainability is the least developed of the three constructs and often is posited in relation to ecological or economic sustainability (Stephen McKenzie, 2004).

Ecologically focused renditions of sustainability typically posit Social Sustainability in relation to the environment, focusing primarily on society's threat to natural resources and its ecological stewardship function (Eva Wollenberg & Carol Colfer, 1997; Thomas Beckley, 2000; Robert Constanza, Bobbi Low, Lin Ostrom, & James Wilson, 2001). For example, Fikret Berkes & Carl Folke (1998) explore social mechanisms and management practices utilized to deal with local ecosystems. From the vast array of components within the social system, only those relevant to the environment are elicited, e.g., property rights, land and resource tenure, and environmental knowledge and ethics.

Economic renditions of sustainability embed society within the construct of economics. In this perspective, people are equated with input into the economy. For example, social capital, an essential constituent of Social Sustainability, is accorded import as it reduces economic transaction costs (John Elkington, 1998; Francis Fukuyama, 1995). Likewise, meeting basic human needs is assigned value as it ensures a healthy, well-fed and skilled labor force, which is essential for the production of goods and services (World Bank, 1980). While important, studies subordinating social systems to economics or the environment fail to delve into the factors that sustain a community of people.

Society must be sustained in its own right. Mahbubul Haq (1999) asserts that the pursuit of human development dates to antiquity. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) stipulated that political institutions be judged by their contribution to people's ability to lead flourishing lives (1996). Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) asserted, "So act as to treat humanity, whether in their own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only" (2002, p. 13). The necessity of maintaining society confers Social Sustainability with intrinsic value. Social Sustainability is critical, as well, from a sustainability perspective. Sustainability is premised on systems theory, stipulating that society, the environment and the economy are interrelated constituents of a larger system. The system can only remain viable to the extent that each of the constituents functions properly (Jonathan Harris, 2000). To adequately identify and employ the contributions of Social Sustainability, it needs be understood as a phenomenon distinct from – albeit interrelated with – ecological and economic sustainability.

Though the construct of Social Sustainability is in formative stages within the sustainability dialogue, it is informed by a rich and mature tradition of research on *social well-being*. Robert Prescott-Allen (2001) describes social well-being as the fulfillment of basic needs and the exercise of political, economic and social freedoms. Three traditions of research and practice add definition to the concept of social well-being and hence Social Sustainability, i.e., Human-Centered Development, Sustainability and Community Well-Being.

Though the traditions are unique, they arise from the same foundation, have developed over the same time-period and have grown in strikingly similar directions. From these traditions, four universal principles emerge – human well-being, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society. The emergence and precedence of the four principles across these traditions creates the basis for the primary premise of this chapter – human well-being, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society are central constituents of Social Sustainability.

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the primacy of the four principles in each of the traditions. The chapter opens with an overview of the critique of growth-oriented development, the practice of which galvanized significant opposition and motivated the conception of two alternative paradigms. The alternative paradigms – human-centered development and sustainability – are then introduced. The chapter then turns to a review of social principles paramount in the traditions of Human-Centered Development, Sustainability and Community Well-Being. These social principles were designed to define and facilitate social well-being and as such provide a rich foundation for the construct of Social Sustainability. The chapter concludes with the explication of these four emergent themes, and the assertion that they are principle constituents of Social Sustainability.

RE-ORIENTING DEVELOPMENT

The goals of economic growth and income expansion have long been central to development policy. Critiques of this growth paradigm, however, have emerged from multiple realms. The critiques have to do with the growth model itself and with its primary indicator of success, Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

GROWTH-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Critiques of the growth model stress that growth is not synonymous with development. Herman Daley (1996) differentiates growth from development, asserting that growth is a quantitative increase whereas development is a qualitative change. While growth increases size via assimilation of resources, development transitions to a better state. Karl Polanyi's (2001) study of British economic history provides a case in point. Polanyi documented the devastating effects of market liberalization and the elimination of a basic system of social security. The combined force of these two interventions undermined values important to society's well-being, e.g., civic participation, reciprocity and redistribution, and led to the decline of civil society.

In contemporary society, the institution of the growth model has resulted in extremely disparate development. Wealth is expanding for an extremely small portion of the world's people, causing excess and inequitable consumption and deterioration of democratic institutions (UNDP, 2002). Meanwhile, a rising number of people are becoming permanently superfluous to the world's economy, adding to the persistently high numbers of extremely poor and malnourished people. The result of these twin dynamics is extreme wealth accompanied by widespread and abject poverty (Sukhamoy Chakravarty, 1991; John Galbraith, 1998; Noam Chomsky, 1999; Richard Douthwaite, 1999; Jonathan Harris, 2000; Timothy Wise, 2001; International Forum on Globalization (IFG), 2002).

This extreme inequity "…distorts the allocation of economic resources, excludes all but the very rich from meaningful democratic participation, undermines institutional legitimacy and creates social instability" (IFG, 2002, p.75). This inequity and its associated maladies buttress Haq's (1999) declaration that the use of income is as important as its generation. Wealth

distribution, he states, is not handled equitably by the marketplace. Rather, it needs be a political determination made by people through democratic governance.

Two critiques present serious challenges to the growth model's indicator of success – GDP. The first criticism is that GDP is a partial and inaccurate measure of economic well-being. GDP is a gross tally of economic transactions, all of which are presumed to add to well-being. It does not discriminate between transactions that result in social or environmental *bads* and those that contribute to social or economic well-being – *goods*. Tyler Norris Associates (1997) provide a case in point, explaining that urban sprawl, pollution and decimated inner cities exist concurrently with job growth, new housing and road improvements. The GDP obfuscates these societal bads and counts them as contributions, creating the fallacious impression of a stronger economy and improved well-being (OECD, 2001; Redefining Progress, nd).

A second criticism of GDP concerns its relation to human well-being. Human well-being is multidimensional, with economic well-being and its associated measure, GDP, constituting just one dimension (Harris, 2000; OECD, 2001). Furthermore, growth in GDP is only weakly correlated to improvements in basic needs, and hence human well-being (David Morawetz, 1977; Harris, 2000). Significant and mounting data corroborate these claims.

The Index of Social Health, a standard measure of inequality, measures the gap between the rich and the poor in the United States (Marc Miringoff & Marque-Luisa Miringoff, 1999). From 1970-1996, the inequality gap increased by 19%. While the GDP grew by 158%, social health worsened by 38%. Growth, the Miringoffs concluded, is not related to social health in the United States. World Bank data (2000) illustrate that while total world income increased by 2.5% annually in the 1990s, the number of people in poverty rose by 100 million (p. 29). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2002) data reveals that the annual income of 1% of the world's people equals that of the poorest 57%.

Data such as these reinforced a widespread belief that the GDP fails to illustrate well-being. It, further, prompted the development of more accurate measures, e.g., the Genuine Progress Indicator (Giles Atkinson, Richard Dubourg, Kirk Hamilton, Mohan Munasinghe, David Pearce & Carlos Young, 1997; Jason Venetoulis & Cliff Cobb, 2004). Moreover, the data substantiated the claim that the means – growth – is being confused with the ends – human development (Wouter van Dieren, 1995; Haq, 1999). The appropriate end is human development, not growth.

Even as the discussion of human-centered development unfolded, concern over environmental destruction resulting from unbridled growth and extreme poverty gained worldwide precedence. The mounting alarm prompted the United Nations to appoint the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) to propose strategies to improve human well-being without threatening the global environment (Gro Harlem Brundtland,1991). The WCED concluded that ecological degradation could not be halted without addressing its root causes, namely, poverty, uneven development and population growth. The WCED further legitimized *sustainable development* as an organizing principle for worldwide development (WCED, 1987). OECD (2001) characterizes sustainable development as quality economic growth and improvement of human well-being. The WCED offered recommendations that set in motion multilevel endeavors – international, national and local – to understand and move toward sustainable development.

RE-CALIBRATING THE COMPASS

Sustainability does not dictate the end of human progress. It, however, does require rejection of the myth that equates growth with human progress (David Korten, 1992). This paradigmatic change compels fundamental transformations. It requires refocusing the goal of development, revalidating the role of governance, restructuring the development process and redefining indicators of success.

First, the goal of development needs be rearticulated. Aristotle argued, "wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else" (Haq, 1999, p.13). That something else, asserts Haq, is the betterment of people's lives. Development must first be reoriented toward human development. Principle 1 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development[1] places people directly at the center of sustainable development. Moreover, in the pursuit of human development, the environment must be protected and sustained (Harris, 2000).

Second, governance needs be revalidated. A primary tenet of the growth-oriented development model is the elimination of government influence on the market (John Williamson, 1994). Operationalizing this principle led to what Haq (1999) calls a "garage sale of public enterprises" (p. 140) and the inevitable weakening of government's ability to protect social and environmental goals (Paul Streeten, 2001). Democratic governance, however, is required to direct economic development, to protect society from the vagaries of the international market, to enforce accountability, and to ensure that growth is sustainable and equitable (Mario Polese & Richard Stren, 2000; Annan, in UNDP, 2002; IFG, 2002; Stiglitz, 2002).

Third, development needs be restructured to include human-centered processes and to eliminate destructive processes. Human-centered development processes will sustain: 1) basic human needs such as nutrition and shelter (Paul Streeten, Shahid Javed Burki, Mahbubul Haq, Norman Hicks, and Frances Stewart, 1981); 2) human freedoms including political rights, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security (Amartya Sen, 1999); and 3) human development, which expands social, economic, cultural, political choices and leads to equity, sustainability, productivity and empowerment (Haq, 1999). Human-centered development will also promote "pro-poor growth strategies", simultaneously facilitating sustainable growth and poverty reduction (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 82). Destructive processes that need be eliminated include: 1) the unsustainable perpetuation of inequitable lifestyles (Harris, 2000); 2) consumption patterns that exploit and appropriate resources critically needed by those in poverty and that severely tax the global ecosystem (Agenda 21, 7.1; Gretchen Daily & Paul Ehrlich, 1996); and 3) development that compromises the integrity of critically important ecosystems (Daley, 1996; Harris, 2000).

Finally, indicators of success need be redefined to focus on human-centered development and sustainability. Generating desired future visions and goals is a critical, but insufficient step toward actualizing those visions. Decisions and actions need be aligned with the vision. Social indicators, statistics designed to measure and provide information on specified system conditions, need be utilized to highlight effects of the decisions and actions in relation to the vision of human-centered development and sustainability. The information they provide then needs be utilized to inform policy analysis and align decision-making more closely with the vision.

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[1] www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm

The consequences of growth-oriented development reoriented the world toward alternative goals – human-centered development and sustainability – which accord social and environmental systems equal import to economic systems. Endeavors to raise the import of social and environmental well-being, and subsequent efforts to operationalize them, have given definition to Social Sustainability. Three such traditions are explored herein – Human-Centered Development, Sustainability and Community Well-Being. Four primary principles of social well-being – human well-being, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society – emerge in each of the traditions. These principles are advanced herein as central constituents of Social Sustainability.

EMERGENT PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In this section, human well-being, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society are posited as primary constituents of Social Sustainability. Then, lessons from Human-Centered Development, Sustainability and Community Well-Being are synthesized to offer a broad portrayal of each.

The 2002 HDR states that public policy is about selecting priorities from the multitude of competing interests and issues. It delineates two criteria to select ideas that will take precedence over others. First, the idea must be universally accepted by people throughout the world and second, it must be so fundamental that its absence would close off many life options. The evidence presented in this chapter fulfill these two criteria, thereby substantiating the assertion that human well-being, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society are primary constituents of Social Sustainability.

Examination of Human-Centered Development, Sustainability and the Community Well-Being Movement reveals shared perceptions of essential principles of social well-being, and hence Social Sustainability. Human well-being, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society emerge as principles shared by citizens and local communities around the world, as well as by regional, national and international governments. The principles, furthermore, are characterized as fundamental to life options for all people.

The proposal that human well-being, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society are primary constituents of Social Sustainability is corroborated in the following definitions, mined from community development, sustainable development, the World Bank, the OECD and the Australian regional government. Social Sustainability requires equity within and between generations, cultural integration, widespread political participation, community ownership and self-determination (Stephen McKenzie, 2004). Democratic participation, i.e., empowering and engaging citizens to direct their own future, is critical to community well-being (Randa Gahin & Chris Patterson, 2001). A socially sustainable system must achieve adequate provision of social services, distributional and gender equity, participatory and pluralistic democracy and political accountability (Harris, 2000). Development requires participatory democracy, decentralization and social capital represented by strong local organization, as well as involvement of local and state government and non-governmental organizations (World Bank, 1997). Social Sustainability requires safety nets, high employment, equity and democratic, participatory decision-making (OECD, 2001). Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic, and provide a good quality of life (WACOSS, 2000).

Figure 1: Emergent Principles of Social Sustainability

	Human-Centered Development			Sustainability		Community Well-Being 1990
	Basic Needs 1976	Human Development 1990	Freedom 1999	Agenda 21 Rio Declaration Forests Principles 1992	Montreal Process LUCID 1998 Mt. Hood 1998	
Human Well-Being	Objective 1: Basic Sustenance - Nutrition; Education; Health; Sanitation; Water Supply; Housing	Productivity Empowerment	Protective Security Social Opportunities	A21 – Sec. I: Social & Economic Dimensions Rio – Healthy, Productive Life; Eradicate Poverty Forest – Social, Economic, Ecological, Cultural & Spiritual Needs	MP – C6: Cultural & Spiritual Needs & Values; Employment & Community Needs LUCID – Institutional & Community Capacity; Social & Cultural Values Mt. Hood - Community Livability	Livable Communities - education and health care; access to public goods and services; employment; transportation; housing
Equity	Equitable Economic Opportunity	Economic Equity Political Equity	Economic Opportunities	A21 – Sec. I: Social & Economic Dimensions Rio – Reduce Living Standard Disparities	LUCID – Social Equity; Social & Cultural Values Mt. Hood - Social & Cultural Values	Equal Access Social Justice
Democratic Government	Objective 2: Social Infrastructure Producer, Rule of Law, Financer	Political Freedom	Transparency Guarantees Civil Rights Political Freedom	A21 - Sec. IV: Governance, Rule of Law Rio – Environmental Laws Forests – Policy Inclusive and Protective of People	MP – C7: Institutional Framework LUCID – Institutional Capacity; Collaborative Stewardship Mt. Hood – Institutional Adequacy	Community Inclusion in Public Policy Democratic, Efficient & Equitable Complement & Facilitate Communities
Democratic Civil Society	Objective 3: Democratic Participation Self Determination, Participation National and Cultural Identity	Empowerment Political Freedom	Civil Rights Political Freedoms	A21 - Sec. III: Democratic Participation Rio - Citizen Participation; Indigenous, Women, Youth Forests- Wide Participation	MP – C7: Public Participation LUCID – Community Capacity; Collaborative Stewardship Mt. Hood - Collaborative Stewardship; Community Resilience	Informed Public Dialogue & Decision-Making Collaboration Social Integration and Inclusion

HUMAN WELL-BEING

Prescott-Allen (2001) maintains that social well-being is achieved through fulfillment of basic needs, as well as through political, economic and social freedoms. Haq (1999) adds that social well-being is realized when people enjoy long, healthy and creative lives and continually enlarge their choices in all of life's affairs.

Social well-being needs to be decoupled from economism (John Bridger Robinson & Tinker, 1997). Social well-being perceives economic development as a means to make qualitative improvements in human well-being. Economism, on the other hand, perceives economic development as the end, and distinguishes attainment of prosperity as society's ultimate goal. As so eloquently stated by Haq (1999), "We have finally begun to accept the axiom that human welfare – not GNP – is the true end of development" (p. 4). The importance of decoupling is multiplied when consideration is given to the fact that income expansion doesn't automatically improve social well-being and often degrades it. In fact, human poverty and mass consumption societies are implicated as the prime culprits of environmental degradation (British Columbia Round Table, 1993; Nigel Richardson, 1994). Accordingly, the OECD (2001) declared that sustainable development is concerned with the quality, as well as the quantity, of economic growth, and with human well-being alongside economic growth.

Social and human well-being are differentiated in that social well-being refers to the community of people and addresses all four constituents of Social Sustainability, whereas human well-being refers to the individual and focuses on the fulfillment of basic needs. Social Sustainability assumes that basic needs are met for all members of the community (WACOSS, 2000). Prescott-Allen (2001) defines human well-being as including the ability to meet one's needs, the opportunity to be creative and productive, security against crime and violence, and guaranteed human rights. Streeten et al. (1981) claim that the first objective of development is remunerative livelihoods that accord people a primary claim of the fruits of their labor and income adequate to purchase basic sustenance. These include food, water and shelter, as well as the capacity and opportunity to engage in economic endeavors through which those necessities can be purchased for oneself.

The Human-Centered Development model, the Freedom model, Sustainability and the Community Well-Being Movement all accept and incorporate Streeten's (1981) conception of basic needs, and transcend it to include social and political freedoms. They further assert that fulfillment of these needs and freedoms is a basic human right, and stress that economic development must not imperil human well-being.

EQUITY

Advocating for equity and suggesting alternative indicators to measure it dates back to Streeten et al. (1981) and the Basic Needs approach. It winds its way through all the Human-Centered Development, Sustainability and Community Well-Being literature. Within the communities movement, Social Sustainability is equated with the degree to which inequalities are reduced (Polese & Stren, 2000). Communities and government are seen as agents of the provision of equitable rights, opportunities and outcomes for all (Hart, 1999; WACOSS, 2000).

Within the sustainability community, it is commonly accepted that inequity is the basic cause of environmental damage and that sustainability absolutely requires a concerted focus on eradication of inequities (WCED, 1987). Within the human-centered development community,

there is resounding concurrence that equity in political and economic opportunities is a basic human right, and that income inequality is a significant malady. Inequalities exacerbate the effects of market and policy failures, which then further hinder poverty alleviation. The problem is magnified in poor countries, which are subject to imperfect markets and institutional failures (UNDP, 2002). The WCED (1987) holds that development is a "…progressive transformation of economy and society…Physical sustainability cannot be secured unless development policies pay attention to such considerations as changes in access to resources and in the distribution of costs and benefits" (p. 43). Sustainable development, then, requires economic growth to be redefined (Harris, 2000).

Stanley R. Euston & William E. Gibson (1995) advance the notion of *Sufficiency of Sustenance*, which creates a standard of enough for all without excess and wastefulness. The basic needs of all people would be met in an equitable fashion. Concurrently, conspicuous and wasteful consumption would be halted and the gross gap between wealth and income would be eliminated. Alan Durning (1992) adds the third leg to this strategy, asserting the requirement for strong social institutions and a healthy environment.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The 1990s witnessed a momentous worldwide expansion in democratic governance. This movement was informed by Human-Centered Development projects, initiated and demanded by people, facilitated by increasing worldwide interdependencies and promoted by the United Nations. The World Social Forum Charter of Principles[2] explicitly states that human rights rest on democratic international systems, which serve to promote social justice, equality and the sovereignty of the people. The United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) states, "We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms[3]."

Democracy is valuable in its own right and because it is the cornerstone to the advancement of human development. The political and civil rights afforded people in a democracy endow them with information and skills critical to make choices; a voice, the freedom and the opportunity to actively participate in governing their lives; and the authority to hold their government accountable (Sen, 1999; The United Nations General Assembly, 2001; UNDP, 2002).

Democracy is also invaluable to sustainable development. Living sustainably requires that people continually monitor and improve social, economic and environmental conditions, and further that they make associated decisions regarding policy formulation and implementation. Hence, living sustainably requires access to information, full inclusion, participation and collaboration. Additionally, it requires government institutions that are open, transparent, accountable and supportive of community action (Brundtland, 1991; Theda Skcopol, 1996; President's Council on Sustainable Development, 1996; WACOSS, 2000; UNDP, 2002; Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development[4]; World Summit on Sustainable Development[5]).

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[2] www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4&cd_language=2
[3] www.un.org/millennium/
[4] www.A/CONF.199/L.6/Rev.1
[5] www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/aconf199_17_add1.pdf

The link between democracy and human development, however, is not automatic. Further, it can be subverted in a number of ways. Social injustice, discrimination and inequities are widespread in democracies. Economic growth is not guaranteed by democracy (UNDP, 2002; Sen, 1999). People, victim of the electoralism fallacy, assume that free elections are synonymous with deep democracy and disclaim further responsibility for upholding democratic practices (Peter Schmitter & Thomas Karl, 1991). Nation-less transnational corporations use their unmatched economic power to capture and turn international institutions to their advantage (Sarah Anderson, 2000; Oxfam, 2002; Lori Wallach, Patrick Woodall & Ralph Nader, 2004; Erik Wesselius, 2002). Excesses of wealth threaten democracy as the wealthy pursue private interests at the expense of the public good, and abuse their economic and political power (Alex de Tocqueville, 1969; Roger Boesche, 1987). This tyranny of the minority robs the majority of its voice and its claims. Finally, corrupt government officials and deficient public institutions impede proper democratic processes and structures (UNDP, 2002).

Democracy can promote human development. However, it must be a conscious choice, facilitated by deliberate and strategic decisions, strong governing institutions and democratic politics. Democracy, in its essence, is rule of the people, by the people and for all the people. The Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) Universal Declaration of Democracy[6] declares that human rights are inseparable from democracy (IPU, 1997). Preserving those rights is crucial for people's well-being, for a humane society and for enabling an active and engaged civil society.

Democracy takes many forms as it is integrated into the multitude of cultures around the world (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). However, there are core principles that distinguish it from other forms of governance and that guide its development. Two core principles identified by the IPU are participation and accountability. Effective public participation in governance requires civil and political rights, including freedom of association and assembly, of expression and conscience, and of the press (Guy Gran, 1983; UNDP, 2002). Governing bodies must represent and be held accountable to the people. Accountability is institutionalized through popularly controlled legislative bodies, an independent judiciary bound to the rule of law and democratic political parties (Gran, 1983; Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2002). Of note, at the 2004 World Social Forum, a survey of participants revealed that the majority want UN General Assembly representatives directly elected by citizens. Further, that majority wants the creation of a popularly elected UN Parliament (GlobalScan, 2004).

People share a "social contract" with their governments (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 78), an essential trust that all will share in the burdens and benefits of society, and that civil society and governments will collaboratively govern that society (Peter Evans, 1996; World Summit on Sustainable Development[7]). So, democracy is activated by democratic governing institutions and by an engaged and democratic civil society. This shared responsibility for the governing of a society is called governance (Lester Salamon, 2002) and is differentiated from government, which addresses only government organizations. Both democratic government and democratic civil society were widely and prominently evident throughout the literature on Human-Centered Development, Sustainability and Community Well-Being.

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[6] www.ipu.org/english/strcture/cnldocs/161-dem.htm
[7] www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/aconf199_17_add1.pdf

Democratic Government

Government fulfills critical and irreplaceable roles in democratic governance. It must consistently ensure that governance is oriented to people. It must provide a stabilizing force within society. And, it must uphold and advance the democratic cause.

Government needs orient governance to the people. Because of its significant impact on peoples' lives, government is the holder of the public trust (UNDP, 2002), and as such must be responsive to the people and accountable for its decisions. This most fundamental of principles is true for all levels of government. One example is Walden Bello (2000) challenge to the UNCTAD to pursue a paradigm that establishes social equity and environmental integrity as paramount objectives of government. This call for equity is widespread and includes for example, equity for women (UN General Assembly, 2001), future generations (Agenda 21) and tolerance for difference (IPU, 1997). It is also widely understood that ungoverned markets and growth-oriented development do not protect human rights or preserve equity. Rather, equity requires collective, i.e., political, actions to ensure that all people share in the benefits and costs of society. Moreover, that decision must be enforced by government institutions (Neil Harrison, 2000) through democratizing and directing the market (John Ehrenberg, 2002), and ensuring reforms and redistributive measures are consistently and effectively implemented (Bello, 1994).

Government is also a stabilizing force in society, protecting basic needs and rights as well as the space for the contestation so critical to democracies. The most recognizable protection regards government's role in ensuring public goods are provided when externalities prevent their distribution through the market (Streeten et al., 1981). Government's protective role, however, extends beyond a narrow market focus to encompass protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, protection from discrimination, elimination of poverty, expansion of choices in all realms of life, and protection from economic, physical and political catastrophes (UN General Assembly, 2001). Government also plays a stabilizing role by creating open space for political opposition and ensuring peaceful power transfers, (UN General Assembly, 2001; IPU, 1997). David Truman (1971) describes government decisions as the product of the contest between interests. Ensuring entry to the deliberation is not obstructed and mediating tensions between society's competing forces is a critical role of government.

Finally, government plays a vital role in cultivating the democratic polity by facilitating civil society's engagement and being responsive to the people. Sustaining democracy means nurturing and reinforcing a democratic culture, i.e., civil society (IPU, 1997). Through its roles, rules and procedures (Anirudh Krishna, 2000) government operates a political system that secures and empowers effective citizen participation (Sharp, 1992; WCED, 1987) and makes democratic rule a good in itself (UNDP, 2002). Responsive governments are accountable to the people, ensuring economic and social policies address peoples' needs and aspirations, ensuring the vote to those who bear the costs, limiting the rights and powers of absentee owners, and holding decision-makers liable for the harm of their actions (IFG, 2004; IPU, 1997; UNDP, 2002). Finally, responsive governments are responsible for institution building to deepen democratic governance (World Summit on Sustainable Development[8]). These institutions include a system of representation, an electoral system and the rule of law.

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[8] www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/aconf199_17_add1.pdf

Democratic Civil Society

The 2002 HDR refers to the promotion of civil society participation in democratic governance as the "…third pillar of 21st century human development strategy" (UNDP, 2002, p. 53). Collective action by civil society is, it states, an emerging consensus among the nations. The HDR notes the growth of civil society groups from 1,083 in 1914 to 37,000 in 2,000. Civil society made a remarkable appearance in national and world governance in the 1990s, with nearly 1/5th of its growth occurring in just that decade.

This expansion of civic activism has had historic influence on both national and international governments. Through volunteerism, whistle-blowing, norms development, oversight, contentious politics, and collaboration in decision-making, civil society has forced its presence into governance, broadened democratic space, strengthened democratic institutions and promoted social change (Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier & Marlies Glasius, 2003; Lester Salamon, 2004). In fact, global civil society theorists provide substantial evidence of civil society's active agency in numerous significant social changes, i.e., human rights, international corruption, democratic governance, development, peace and environmental conservation (Ann Marie Clark, 1995; Ann Florini, 2000; Margarate Keck & Kathryn Sikkink, 1998; Sanjeev Khagram, James Riker & Kathryn Sikkink, 2002; Ronnie Lipschutz, 1992; Thomas Weiss & Leon Gordenker, 1996; Peter Willetts, 1996).

Civil society provides both a generative and a countervailing force in society. It is generative in that it creates and nurtures civic space and empowers people to utilize that space for deepening democratic practices and building democratic governance. de Tocqueville (1969) emphasized the importance of this civic space, stating that through association, people interact, find common ground, and empower and inspire each other to engage in activities to promote the common good. Civil society is embedded in community, whether it is the place-based community so important to sustainability and the Community Well-Being Movement, or the interest-based community propelling international civic endeavors (Gahin & Patterson, 2001; IUCN, UNEP & WWF, 1996). Former secretary general Boutros Boutros Ghali states that though non-governmental organizations have no standing in the United Nations, they are in fact "full participants in international life," and are "a basic form of popular participation and representation" (Weiss & Gordenker, 1996, p. 18, 7).

Civil society also plays a countervailing role in society. Civil society's ever-present diligence compels government to work democratically (Gahin & Patterson, 2001). Through the exercise of political rights, civil society educates and builds consensus about its needs and its responsibility to play an active political role in ensuring those needs are met (Sen, 1999). The relationship between government and civil society in a democracy will always have some level of contention. It is the primary role of civil society to ensure government is functioning according to the will of its people. However, government may deviate from the course prescribed by the people, requiring consequent civil society intervention to re-direct and hold government accountable. Further, civil society will always be divided among itself, especially in a democracy wherein diversity is celebrated and nurtured. In a representative democracy, a full 49% of the population could be disaffected by the workings of a government representing the other 51%. Because of the inherent discord between civil society and government, civil society must be institutionalized to prevent government abuse of citizens' rights (Bello, 1994) and to protect the voice of the people in democratic governance. Civic engagement in the polity is paramount to the survival and achievements of democracy (Sen, 1999).

CONCLUSION

Social Sustainability concerns the ability of human beings of every generation to not merely survive, but to thrive. It is reflected in Aristotle's notion of flourishing and Jefferson's notion of the informed and engaged polity. Social Sustainability is of value in its own right. Furthermore, it plays a paramount role in the continuous journey toward sustainability, as ultimately it is human beings, individually and in collectives, that will determine economic and environmental well-being.

Lessons from three traditions, Human-Centered Development, Sustainability and Community Well-Being, provide the foundation for the conclusions drawn in this chapter. Though unique and separate, the traditions have evolved over the same period, requiring each to respond to similar environmental, social, economic and political conditions. Their responses overwhelmingly support four conditions critical to social well-being, and hence Social Sustainability – human well-being, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society. These four principles are posited herein as primary constituents of Social Sustainability.

The constituents create a self-reinforcing virtuous cycle which enable movement toward environmental sustainability, balance multiple and divergent interests, guide sustainable economic policies and develop resilience to manage the changes, reversals and surprises inherent in systems. Human well-being ensures protections of basic needs and security and continuous development of human potential through expansion of choices in all facets of life, political, economic, social, etc. Equity ensures protections against conditions that would enrich some at the expense of others, and creates mechanisms to guarantee equitable sharing of both society's benefits and its costs. Democratic government ensures that governance is oriented to people, provides a stabilizing force within society, and upholds and advances the democratic cause. Civil society creates and nurtures civic space and empowers people to utilize that space for deepening democratic practices and building democratic governance. Moreover, it compels government to work democratically through ever-present diligence. Social Sustainability, thus defined, is of absolute importance to sustainability.

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