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## Saferational approach to a valid sustainable development

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the steps needed by the actual society to progress towards an authentic sustainable development, given the unsustainable economic growth followed until present. The first section investigates the origin of sustainable development preoccupation and demonstrates the failure of sustainability principles - based on the three economic, social and environmental dimensions - to reach the effective welfare. The second section includes measures thought by the author of this paper to address the present situation and recommends saferational approach as a prudent and moral manner to achieve the desirable human wellbeing, but in a safe, rational and ethical style. The saferational approach represents an original concept developed by the author of this paper that seeks to advance on the road of the attainment of human wellbeing by correcting the sustainability principles that proved to be socially and environmentally blinded and concerned only with the economic dimension that always prevailed over the other two.

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### 1. Introduction

The modern story of sustainable development began in 1987 when it was firstly introduced as a term by the Commission led by Gro Harlem Brundtland, and it was described as a development that “*satisfiesthe needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” [World Commission on

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Environment and Development, 1987]. However, the significance of the sustainable development is much older and it was acknowledged from early time, being considered from the first time to rest on three foundations: economic, social and environmental (Carlowitz, 1713). Nevertheless, ensuring a continuous economic growth, social impartiality and environmental safety, while addressing climate change, proved to be an insurmountable task for politicians and legislators around the world [Momete, 2013 (a)]. The economic ongoing crisis and related events proved that the sustainable development requirements, otherwise well-intended, failed in all stakes and the world will progress towards a deeper economic recession, social inequity, environmental degradation and a profound climate change, unless a solution is identified.

Sustainable development is a popular yet very complex issue that needs optimization, the concept lacking practical implications and being to a certain extent confusing. Therefore, the concept requires clear indications regarding its explicit scalability and a method of reporting or, otherwise, like in the Lewis Carroll's fiction "*Alice in Wonderland*", sustainable development becomes bendable and depends on the beholder, the mold being set by particular interests. This plasticity of the concept opens the gate for contractions, skepticism, lucrative interests for some persons, allowing the transformation of good intentions into unsustainable practices.

Sustainability and sustainable development are phrases in fashion today, but they were heavily overused, more for media exposure than for real concerns, and unfortunately more through rhetoric than action. Moreover, the sustainable development definition does not incorporate welfare, speaking merely about the needs of present and future generations, therefore the approach proposed by the author of this paper seeks to advance on the road of the achievement of wellbeing by correcting the sustainability principle that proved to be socially and environmentally blinded. Beckerman raised the question of the usefulness of the concept of sustainable development [Beckerman, 1994] and, twenty years later since that question, one may witness that sustainability proved simply a fashion trend, contributing at making new types of profits for investors and profitable arrangement for politicians.

The events correlated with the past and present crises modified the world landscape, therefore the concept of sustainable development is no longer sufficient and must be enriched with another type of desirable growth, saferational development, "*that encompasses two distinctive dimensions: safety and rationality*" (Momete, 2012 (a)).

## 2. Brief chronology of sustainable development

The definition of the sustainable development concept is rather young, being defined in 1987 as previously mentioned, but its meaning dates from ancient times. Starting with von Carlowitz, Mill and Malthus [Morelli, 2011], continuing with Haeckel, Georgescu-Roengen and Brundtland and finishing with major environmental events, future generations, resources and environment were documentarily proved major concerns.

In 1713 Hans Carl von Carlowitz described the need of the sustainable use of forestry, his main concern being the "*conservation and cultivations of forests for a continuous and sustained use*" (Carlowitz, 1713). He was the first to identify the importance of the economic, social and environmental aspects for generating a sustained use of forestry. Von Carlowitz was also a pioneer in recognizing a correlation between the human behavior, the exploitation rate of forestry, and the capacity of the natural resource to cope with that behavior, the growing rate of trees.

Thomas Malthus was another wise scientist concerned with the problem of increasing population and its effects on the capacity of producing food. His study correlated the population growing rate with the production rate of food products [Malthus, 1798] and the results made him very pessimistic about the future. Malthus's forecast was that the world population would perish of famine, as it cannot be nourished with the available resources.

In 1848 John Stuard Mill described the reality of living in a world with limited resources and the "*need to prefer a stationary state and not a progressive state that is based on resources consumption and is oriented toward economic growth*" (Mill, 1848).

The architect of the modern science reflecting a deep concern about the ecosystems was the visionary Ernst Haeckel, whom introduced the term ecology and defined it as being "*the study of the relationship of organisms with their environment*" (Haeckel, 1866).

In 1908 Svante Arrhenius, a pioneer in terms of modern climatology, predicted that the temperature rise is likely to be caused by increasing atmospheric concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> and therefore they are anthropogenic (Arrhenius, 1908), contributing to the development of modern theories regarding climate change.

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