

# Is the Current Reality Conducive to the Implementation of Sustainable Development?

## Czy obecna rzeczywistość sprzyja wdrażaniu zrównoważonego rozwoju?

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### Abstract

The idea of sustainable development did not appear in the eighteenth century for ecological reasons to save the environment or humanitarian reasons to save humanity, but for economic reasons to improve the management of forests and fossil resources. Its creator was Hans Carl v. Carlowitz (1645-1714), a Saxon tax accountant and mining administrator. The idea has always served an economic purpose – constant economic growth as well as increase of productivity and profit. Therefore, it worked best in the sphere of management. Over time, it turned out that one could achieve better economic effects when one combines economic goals with those that people have always strived for – to create a better world, life and interpersonal relations. This requires care for the good condition of the natural and social environment. Consequently, the idea of sustainable development was coupled with the goals of ecology and zoology. Unfortunately, for various reasons, the modern world is less and less conducive to achieving these goals. Therefore, one can increasingly difficult implement the postulates of sustainable development, even in the sphere of economy. It has become clear that sustainable development is not a panacea for all the ills of the world. The idea of this unrealizable development turned into a myth and a tool to manipulate people's feelings and dreams of a better life. With their help, one mobilizes people to higher and higher productivity, which generates an increase in the enrichment of the financial elite and to the accompanying to it deepening of social inequalities, which are the source of all the evil.

**Key words:** sustainable development, military conflict, peace, social divergences, corporatocracy, social conflict, zoology, imbalance

### Streszczenie

Idea rozwoju zrównoważonego nie pojawiła się w XVIII wieku z przyczyn ekologicznych dla ratowania środowiska ani humanitarnych dla ratowania ludzkości, tylko z ekonomicznych dla poprawy gospodarowania lasami i surowcami kopalnymi. Jej twórcą był Hans Carl v. Carlowitz (1645-1714), saksoński księgowy podatkowy i zarządca górniczy. Przez cały czas służyła celom ekonomicznym – nieustannemu wzrostowi gospodarczemu, wydajności i zysku. Dlatego najlepiej sprawdzała się przede wszystkim w sferze gospodarowania. Z czasem okazało się, że lepsze efekty ekonomiczne można osiągać wtedy, gdy cele ekonomiczne połączy się z takimi, do których ludzie zawsze zmierzali – do stworzenia lepszego świata, życia i relacji międzyludzkich. A to wymaga troski o dobry stan środowiska przyrodniczego i społecznego. Wskutek tego idea rozwoju zrównoważonego sprzęgła się z celami ekologii i zoologii. Niestety, z różnych względów współczesny świat coraz mniej sprzyja realizacji tych celów. Dlatego coraz trudniej urzeczywistnić postulaty rozwoju zrównoważonego, nawet w sferze ekonomii. Przekonano się, że rozwój zrównoważony nie jest panaceum na wszystkie bolączki świata. Idea tego nierealizowalnego rozwoju przekształciła się w mit i narzędzie manipulacji uczuciami i marzeniem ludzi o lepszym życiu. Za ich pomocą mobilizuje się ludzi do coraz wyższej produktywności, która generuje wzrost bogacenia się elit finansowych i towarzyszące mu pogłębianie nierówności społecznych będących źródłem wszelkiego zła.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zrównoważony rozwój, konflikt zbrojny, pokój, dywergencja społeczna, korporatokracja, konflikt społeczny, sozologia, nierównowaga

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*Armament is no protection against the war, but leads to war. Striving for peace and preparing for war are incompatible with each other.*

*All of us who are concerned for peace and triumph of reason and justice must be keenly aware how small an influence reason and honest good will exert upon events in the political field.*

Albert Einstein

## 1. The essence of sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development is ambiguous for two reasons. Firstly, because of different translations of the English word *sustainable* as balanced, permanent, self-sustaining or continuous, and secondly, because of different ways of understanding these words. Agenda 21 adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992) defines sustainable development in two ways. First, as development process of countries, cities, companies, communities, etc. that unconditionally connects the needs of today's generation with the possible needs of future generations, as well as the needs of one people with the needs of others. Secondly, as *a sequence of changes in which the use of resources, the structure of investments, the direction of technological progress and institutional structures should be implemented so that there is no contradiction between future and present needs of people* (WCED, 1987). The second definition is less often quoted. The following definition of sustainable development applies in Polish legislation: *Sustainable development is a socio-economic development in which the process of integrating political, economic and social activities takes place, while maintaining natural balance and the durability of basic natural processes, in order to guarantee the ability to meet the basic needs of individual communities or citizens of both present and future generations* (Prawo ochrony środowiska, 2001)<sup>1</sup>.

All definitions of sustainable development take into account the *non-conflict of interests* in terms of time and space. This applies to the current generation (in the synchronic dimension) and between successive generations, starting from the present one (in the diachronic dimension), as well as to the local, regional and global dimensions. The essence of sustainable development is at best expressed by the concept of an integrated order, which is the goal of this development. This concept includes five orders: ecological, social, economic, spatial and institutional-political (Borys, 2023). The social order is such an organization of the social system, thanks to which it is possible the harmonious functioning of its elements, so that the system, as a whole, can effectively carry out the tasks for which it was established and its function of purpose. For this reason, society should be optimally organized within each of its structures, because this ensures its balance. Social order bases on the system of axiological values, accepted voluntarily in democratic systems or imposed in authoritarian systems. In the first case, it deals with a spontaneous organization (Hayek, 1981) due to internal forces, and in the second – with an order imposed by external forces. Supporters of the functionalist theory of social order believe that people, guided by some *vis interior*, spontaneously strive for a state of equilibrium, and therefore society is a self-regulating system, which has not yet been proven. As a result of the growing chaos and turbulent processes, it is rather a self-regulating system, and the elites of financial and political power, guided by the antagonistic theory of social development, consciously strive for conflicts and deepening the polarization of society, and thus to its imbalance.

Social consensus on the most important issues affecting people's lives is at the heart of sustainable development. In order to achieve them, a consensus is needed on the consistent observance of the basic principles of coexistence, above all the principle of tolerance and the principle of synergy of action. Adherence to the first stems from the will to keep the peace in conditions of rapidly increasing environmental densification because of rapid population growth and the imperial policies of the superpowers. Adherence to the second follows from the pursuit of humanity's fundamental interest, namely the protection of individual life and the survival of the human species in the face of increasing threats from the natural and social environment.

## 2. Implementation of the idea of sustainable development

The implementation of the idea of sustainable development is encountering increasing difficulties because it is still impossible to agree on common interests, goals or social consensus of the ruling elites within individual countries, even more so in the world. Nevertheless, the idea of sustainable development was built on this foundation. Instead of integration around a common goal of survival in an increasingly threatened world, there is disintegration that results from divergence and conflicts of interest. This discrepancy grows with the strengthening of the nation states

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<sup>1</sup> Dz.U.2001.62.627, art. 3 ust. 50. This is an example of a badly constructed definition of *ignotum per ignotum*. We do not know what sustainable development is, because we do not know what: natural balance, durability of natural processes and basic natural processes are. Polish legislation is full of erroneous definitions, as if they were deliberately formulated in order to be able to arbitrarily relativize the provisions.

against the idea of globalization and with the position of the corporatocrats and world finance. First of all, it is about economic interests and political interests that are inextricably linked to them. All others – religious, axiological, ideological, and ethnic, etc. - only support these two basic discrepancies.

For more than twenty years, attempts to implement the idea of sustainable development have turned out to be ineffective. Therefore, on September 25-27, 2015, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* summit was held at the United Nations in New York. The meeting adopted the document *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN, 2015). It was naively expected that if more detailed goals were set for the next fifteen years, it would be enough to take actions aimed at more effective implementation of the idea of sustainable development. The following main goals were defined (UN, 2015):

1. End poverty in all its forms worldwide.
2. End hunger, ensure food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensuring healthy living and promoting well-being for all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.
5. Reach gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Provide access to water and sanitation for all.
7. Give everyone access to stable, sustainable and modern energy at an affordable price.
8. Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.
9. Build resilient infrastructure and promote sustainable industrialization and innovation.
10. Reducing inequalities within and between countries.
11. Create inclusive, safe and sustainable cities.
12. Creating patterns for sustainable consumption and production.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its effects.
14. Protecting the seas and oceans and using their resources in a sustainable way.
15. Manage forests sustainably, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss.
16. Promoting a peaceful and inclusive society.<sup>2</sup>
17. Strengthening the means of implementing the goals and renewing the global partnership for sustainable development.

For these main goals were assigned the operational ones. There are 169 of them in total (UN, 2015). Appropriate criteria for them have also been developed. Unfortunately, as long as corporatists rule the world, these goals will not be achieved. For them, economic benefits are the most important, not so much for the common good as for the personal good. Therefore, the achievement of the goals contained in the *Agenda 2030* is far delayed in time, and the chance of their implementation is getting closer and closer to zero. Therefore, some critics even talk about the collapse of the idea of sustainable development (Kothari, 2015). In fact, so far no country has been able to achieve any of the goals listed in the *Agenda 2030* because the social conditions are less and less conducive to it. The situation of people worsened day by day and it became more and more difficult to survive. What is worse, all indicates that it will only get worse in the next fifteen years (Braun, 1993).

### 3. Armed conflicts are the biggest obstacle on the way to fulfilling the idea of sustainable development

Since the end of World War II, more and more local and regional military conflicts have emerged. One estimates their number at about 200. Some have been short-term, while others have not yet ended. In recent times, the number, intensity, extent and duration of local wars have increased significantly. In the last decade, military conflicts of high or medium intensity took place in 23 countries with a total population of 850 million people. More and more they transform into continental wars. Now, there are enough local wars scattered around the world to treat them in their entirety as a large-scale global military conflict, or *global dispersed war*. The superpowers are not directly involved in this world war. Their leaders know that their clash with each other would lead to a global cataclysm. Therefore, they limit themselves to supporting states directly fighting each other by supplying them with weapons and military equipment, regardless of whether they are aggressors or victims. Some politicians and military experts claim that the Russo-Ukrainian war has already started World War III, different from the two previous ones (Wertheim, 2022; Most, 2022). In this war, it increases the possibility of using nuclear and bacteriological weapons.

Military conflicts absorb more and more money from the budgets of many countries, not only directly involved in wars. Under conditions of peace, they could be spent on the implementation of the sustainable development goals formulated in the *Agenda 2030*.

First of all, as stated by David Malpass (former president of the World Bank), wars significantly hinder the eradication of hunger and poverty in the world (Mandel, 2022). Wars also contribute to deepening the debt crisis, mainly in developing countries, because of rising food prices, but even more because the purchase of modern weapons.

<sup>2</sup> An inclusive society is a society that over-rides differences of race, gender, class, generation, and geography, and ensures inclusion, equality of opportunity as well as. capability of all members of the society to determine an agreed set of social institutions. that govern social interaction.

Currently, more than 60 percent of the poorest countries have a very difficult debt situation. Wars also contribute to deepening the debt crisis, mainly in developing countries, because of rising food prices, but even more because the purchase of modern weapons. Currently, more than 60 percent of the poorest countries have a difficult debt situation (Mandel, 2022). It is a truism to say that poor and underdeveloped countries lose the most from wars. Contrasting to them, the various corporations that supply the army, and the military and political lobbyists who support them, benefit huge from wars. These are the greatest *warmongers* in our time, on which the fate of humanity depends (Sztumski, 2011, 2017) (This statement has nothing to do with the conspiracy theory of history because corporations, instigators, and lobbyists do not really work in an organized or colluded way like conspirators). Their *modus operandi* is as primitive as it is effective. First, one must declare as an enemy someone who threatens countries, societies, the world, democracy, civilization, value systems, the Church, and so on. That should justify fear of him. Then it is necessary to force him – usually because of some provocation – to aggression that will shock and justify defending against him at all costs. (Nota bene, the shock and fear that throw people off balance has now become the main driving force of the economy. That is why the mass media increasingly scares and shocks all audiences, regardless of age). Then it is easy to convince people to defend themselves against such *bad man* and to destroy him by means of military conflict, which is the only effective option. The more countries get involved in such a conflict, the better it is for the instigators. Defense and attack require increasingly expensive, ultra-modern weapons, which are produced by large military concerns in the richest and most technologically advanced countries. They sell their products to the invaders and the attacked at prices that increase in proportion to the demand for them. As a result, arms-exporting countries develop their economies and increase their prosperity (Burgess, 2023).

For example, in the Russo-Ukrainian war, the real victors will not be Russia or Ukraine. They are and will be the large arms companies, such as the international British Aerospace Engineering Systems, the American concerns Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Raytheon, and the German gunsmith concern Rheinmetall (Philips, 2022). A few months after the invasion of Russia, the shares of each of them increased from about 30 to 100 percent (Bernhard, 2022). In addition, the beneficiaries of this war are other countries selling arms to European countries, which suddenly felt strongly threatened (including Poland) and quickly began to arm themselves. Another big winner is the Israeli aircraft company Elbit Systems, whose shares soared by 18% in just two days (Gabison, 2022). It turned out that military aid to Ukraine is also a very lucrative investment. That is why more and more countries are getting involved in it. They also help because they count on the huge profits that will bring them the reconstruction of Ukraine after the end of the war.

Poland, among others, by helping Ukraine in reconstruction, only for direct benefits, counts on a profit of PLN 32.5 billion/ 7.5 billion Euro. In addition, before its neighbor returns to a normal economic trajectory, the profit is to reach PLN 140-156 billion/ 31.5-35 billion Euro (Karpińska, 2022). Such aid, which is really a commercial transaction, is a manifestation of the calculation and hypocrisy of politicians and corporations, not their empathy and mercy. (On the contrary, to them, millions of ordinary people, guided by compassion, disinterestedly helped refugees from Ukraine.) They adhere to the principle *Nothing is free in capitalism*. They behave like hyenas that feed on carrion. They are not at all interested in ending this war quickly, but in prolonging it. The longer it lasts and the more damage it causes, the greater the benefits will be. The death and disability of thousands of victims is not counted for the losers in wars are the less developed countries, especially the poorest ones, and all the taxpayers who lose much of what they earn by honest work. This is the rule of economics: *if one wins, the other loses*. The profit of a few corporates is equal to the sum of the losses of billions of other people. Rich countries are getting richer at the expense of growing poverty and increasing indebtedness of poor countries. Military conflicts (justified or not) contribute to the growing disproportion between the few percent of billionaires and the rest of the world's population. Inequality Report informs that in 2022 there were 2,668 people in the world whose assets exceeded one billion dollars, which was 3.8% of the world's population (Szubański, 2022). In their hands was 76% of the world's wealth. The richest man, Bernard Arnault with a net worth of \$217.3 billion, earns \$136 million a day in 2023, and Mark Zuckerberg earns \$1.7 million in just one minute (Twojezarobki.com, 2023). Their earnings are no way to do with the earnings of the poor, middle and even affluent classes, which also get rich to some extent during relatively rare boom periods. The tendency for multi-billionaires to appropriate more and more world wealth will increase more and more, as their appetite will increase as they eat. Thus, over the next fifteen years, the gap between rich and poor will deepen even further. This will cause the increase the remaining social inequalities, which will further hinder the implementation of sustainable development postulates.

#### 4. The idea of sustainable development is a myth and a tool of manipulation

One of necessary conditions for the implementation of the idea of sustainable development is the reorientation of awareness on the basis of ethics as a result of changing the hierarchy of values. The idea is to make *being* more important than *having*, so that humanity can focus on existential problems, not on increasing wealth. This is impossible in times when money is the object of worship and rules everyone and everything. Nevertheless, there are

many such optimists, mostly environmentalists, who believe in such metanoia because of the Second Enlightenment and the return to rationality (Weizsäcker, 2017). They hope that humanity will become smarter and will soon notice that it has already found itself on the brink of a catastrophe, and therefore it will start to change its consciousness and behavior accordingly. Unfortunately, this is extremely unlikely. First, people continue to become more and more stupid under the influence of the massive attack of stupidity (Sztumski, 2022), and second, by the time this happens, it may be too late, because the tipping point of social evolution has been reached. The return will no longer be possible, because the processes taking place in social reality are irreversible. So far, there is no indication that people are going to get smarter. On the contrary, they become stupid more and more widely thanks to politicians, economists, priests, advertisers, ideologues and other fraudsters who make their fortunes on mass stupidity. Therefore, they use all techniques, means, knowledge, and mass media to stupefy even more and more effectively. Therefore, the process of stupefying will continue yet in the growth phase for a long time. One uses various spell words and myths to stupefy people.

One of them is *sustainable development*. For various reasons, it gained widespread applause, but above all because of its economic and emotional significance. Some saw it as an opportunity to get rich from sustainable development by research projects and their implementation, even without really knowing what this development is. Others saw it as an opportunity to fulfill their dreams of living in paradise on Earth. The science of environmental protection (sozology) and sozophilosophy played a huge role. Thanks to reports about the disastrous and rapidly deteriorating condition of the natural environment as a result of unsustainable development, or rather, uncontrolled economic growth, people began to realize that this is leading humanity to a catastrophe. The main cause was seen in unsustainable development. That is why sustainable development became a lifeline. Attempts have been made to balance everything necessary and unnecessary, what can and cannot be done, and this is still not always done with the expected good result. Sustainable development has become a shocking and fashionable idea, although it cannot be implemented in every sphere or fully. So, after several years, critics of this idea appeared. *The most important objections formulated against the idea of sustainable development include: internally contradictory, too general and unclear definition of sustainable development; the overuse of the concept of sustainable development, which led to the devaluation of the term; as well as the lack of effects of implementing sustainable development and the deepening of the problems it was supposed to solve, and the lack of formulating measurable guidelines and taking specific actions* (Matysiak, Struś, 2015). One of the downsides of sustainable development is that it systematically accelerates economic growth, although it should only be *self-sustaining development*, i.e. steadily sustaining this growth. This contributes to accelerating and increasing social stratification, not only economic, and to the deepening of social contradictions. Its second downside is winding up a spiral of spontaneously and faster growing supply of goods and controlled and slower growing demand for them. This is one of the internal contradictions of sustainable development. The third disadvantage is that the concept of sustainable development upholds the neoliberal paradigm of economic development, according to which only an unlimited free market ensures economic efficiency, growth, fairness and progress. The myth of sustainable development is fed by the modern society, which, thinking more wishfully than practically, believes that sustainable development will change their lives and the world. As long as they do not spontaneously occur (which is unlikely) or the conditions for the implementation of this beautiful idea are not consciously created, it will remain only a myth. So far, there are no indications that it can be implemented to a satisfactory degree.

Contrary to the supporters of the idea of sustainable development, inequalities in many areas of social reality are increasing for various reasons. The resolutions of the Earth Summits and the commands of the agencies are implemented with difficulty and to an insufficient extent and extent. Not everyone wants to comply with them, although the governments of about one hundred and seventy countries have democratically enacted them. Especially the dominant countries in the world, which do not have to take into account the interests of others. It is not known whether the idea of sustainable development is the result of naive, though sublime optimism and pious wishes of people aware of the threats resulting from chaotic development, which devastates the natural and social environment, or whether it is a tool of deliberate fooling of the masses by ideologues who are at the service of corporatocrats by creating another utopia or illusion. If we take the latter option, then the idea of sustainable development works like a drug delivered to people in order to divert attention from the actual, dangerous social reality and perceive it as beautiful as after taking hallucinogenic drugs. Perhaps, under the guise of a great idea, there is a perfidiously disguised desire to rule the world by the powerful of this world, who want to reign supreme by deliberately deceiving people with empty promises (The Catholic Church has been successfully using the same trick for two thousand years). It is possible that creating the myth of sustainable development, i.e. that someday there will be *better* times for all people in the world – how many such promises have there been in history – has aimed at defusing social tensions, conflicts and revolutionary moods resulting from economic, social and political imbalances, inequalities and injustices. After all, the masses that are starving, humiliated, excluded and living in poverty must be appeased somehow. And there are already about 80 percent of the world's population. Their number will continue to increase in the conditions of an economy oriented on unlimited, ruthless and mad pursuit of profit. An attempt to introduce restrictions resulting from sustainable development without changing the way of economic thinking and, consequently, changing the social system, seems to be doomed to failure from the start. It cannot be

otherwise, because the sustainable development strategy is based on a far from reality ideal model of a stable economy and on additional idealization assumptions, such as, for example, that the governments of individual countries will voluntarily and willingly implement the resolutions of the various resolutions adopted at the *Earth Summits* (Górny, 2002). Their implementation is a practically impossible task. This justifies skepticism towards the idea of sustainable development, which is good in itself, and its implementation, if only possible, would be desirable.

A dozen or so years ago I was wondering whether sustainable development, which perhaps is a necessary phenomenon at the current stage of social evolution, but not sufficient for the further survival of humanity, should be treated as a real chance or as a myth (Sztumski, 2004). Now I am more and more inclined to treat it as a myth that the elites of the rich ruling the world have transformed into an instrument of perfidious social manipulation and use it to arouse optimism in the masses, giving them some spark of hope for a better life. Because they know, that pessimism breeds apathy and aversion to everything, including work. In addition, they want people to work and be more and more productive, because thanks to which they will become even wealthier than they are now. In addition, pessimism and loss of hope give rise to rebellious moods and various subversive ideas and actions. Moreover, the political and financial elites are trying to prevent the loss of their status quo at all costs. Their perversity lies in the fact that they use the universally recognized ideals contained in the idea of sustainable development in order to hide soulless and growing economic exploitation behind them.

## 5. A short conclusion

Natural economic development is unsustainable. On the other hand, sustainable development is an invention of people, and therefore an artificial, alien and previously unknown creation in management. It was introduced to defy the natural workings of the economy and to improve it. Unfortunately, it has not improved because it has failed to eliminate the fundamental contradictions that are the source of social inequality, excessive economic growth, injustice, greed, antagonisms, conflicts, wars and economic crises. The destruction of natural resources and the degradation of the natural environment have not been stopped. Replacing natural raw materials and energy sources with artificial ones has led to excessive littering, toxication, increased production costs and product prices. On the other hand, the social environment has been more degraded, among others due to the fact that the natural mechanisms of homeostasis operating in the sphere of the economy have been replaced with artificial ones. Human interference in the natural equilibrium mechanisms in nature also leads to catastrophic consequences. The creators and promoters of the idea of sustainable development have forgotten or ignored the fact that the world was, is and will be asymmetrical and unbalanced, full of opposites and contradictions, thanks to which it can develop. All attempts to make him different, contrary to his nature, are ineffective and end badly. Therefore, I believe that in an unsustainable world, it is better to improve or create better models of an unsustainable economy.

Moreover, I claim that sustainable development is a myth in a world full of armed conflicts and threatened by a new world war, because that disorganizes the economy and reduces spending on sustainable development goals. Therefore, the primary task is to ensure peace and security, without which the implementation of sustainable development will remain only a dream that one cannot fulfill. The elimination of military conflicts and the restoration of peace in the world seem unlikely, but not impossible. Like John Lennon, one can imagine such a world in the indefinite future: *Imagine all the people living life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one.* Anyway, you have to strive for it.

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