

The Five Pillars of Sustainability: Economic, Social, Environmental, Cultural and Security Aspects

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Bell and Morse (2003), Musson (2013), Bertoneclj et al. (2015) and several other scholars envision sustainability as the organizing principle for sustaining existing but limited resources in order to provide for the needs for resources and desirable living conditions of the coming generations. Similarly, sustainable development is defined in the Brundtland Report as “development that meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987:43).

Sustainable development has been traditionally described from perspective of three interrelated aspects, namely economic, social and environmental pillars (Loucks in Gladwell, 1999). Several conceptual frameworks of sustainable development can be found in the existing literature describing the confluence of three constituent pillars: ecology, economy and equity (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014). A traditional conceptual framework of sustainable development with the triple-bottom-line dimensions has been expanded by the fourth pillar: culture (Scerri and Paul, 2010; UCLG, 2010) thus including ever growing importance of cultural sustainability as key element for a new strategy for sustainable economic growth.

In recent years, the European Union has seen unprecedented migration flow of political and economic migrants leaving their homelands for better future in more stable developed countries. The dimension of this phenomenon is of such magnitude that it has already begun to impact the cultural, social and political structure of some EU member states.

Therefore, geo-strategic security and cultural sustainability, in addition to economic, social and environmental sustainability, should be of interest to researchers, businessmen and policy makers. Qualitative research approach has been selected to execute the study of geo-strategic security and cultural sustainability in Slovenia as we wanted to gain insight into the personal understanding of the research problem by Slovene executive managers and policy makers, thus focusing on studying the subjective meaning that selected participants (Ragin, 2007) attributed to both studied aspects of sustainability, security and culture.

Quota sampling has been used as a method for selecting participants/interviewees based on their professional experience and knowledge in relation to the research problem. Participants have been segmented into two sub-groups: ten executive managers and ten policy makers and semi-structured interviews conducted since early 2016. The interview protocol has been comprised of 20 questions divided into 2 topics.

Based on a detailed description of results of the study with consideration of the context in which the problem is embedded (Saunders et al., 2007), we intend to propose a new conceptual framework of sustainable development based on five pillars of sustainability: economy (material well-being through sustainable growth), equity (social well-being through social cohesion), ecology (environmental well-

being through natural harmonization), culture (cultural well-being through intercultural dialogue) and security (peace and sustainable stability).

It is still far from clear how a transition to more sustainable modes of development may be achieved. However, transition management requires changes in socio-economic systems and wider cultural and societal change—in beliefs, values and governance that co-evolve with existing environmental and security changes in order to ensure the long-term viable development.

Keywords: sustainability, five pillars of sustainable development, Slovenia, abstract

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