

Stakeholder Engagement for Sustainable Development

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Introduction

The devastating effects of environmental degradation and extreme weather conditions have forced many people off their land in search of survival and the ensuing mass movements of populations fleeing ecological disasters are causing tensions between migrants and their hosting countries.

These conditions will most likely get much worse when the population movements will reach record high levels never imagined by mankind before. By 2025, according to UN forecasts, the world population will reach 8.1 billion from 7.2 billion today. Most growth will be in developing countries and more than half in Africa. By 2050, it will reach 9.6 billion.¹

Human habitat continues to suffer from the dangerous levels of pollution, deforestation, over-consumption and other forms of contamination which have gone way beyond the self-regeneration ability of mother earth.

It is the time to call for action to ensure sustainable development for all. This requires bold new initiatives to engage all stakeholders and to advocate new forms of imagining sustainable life styles and well being.

What is needed is a frame breaking approach to economic, social and ecological development within a larger policy frame that includes all members of our societies.

MDGs-SDGs: towards sustainable development

The Rio+20 is the short name for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development that took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 20-22 June 2012. At the Conference, world leaders, along with thousands of participants from governments, the private sector, NGOs and other groups came together to discuss how to reduce poverty, advance social equity, and ensure environmental protection in order to progress from the Millenium Development Goals towards the Sustainable Development Goals to be launched in 2015 by the members of the United Nations.

Two themes of the Conference were directed towards sustainability.¹ The first theme was

¹ <http://news.yahoo.com/un-world-population-reach-8-1-billion-2025-154851954.html>

the proposal to move towards a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. The second theme addressed the need to build an institutional framework for sustainable development. (Saner, Yiu, & Boehmer, 2013)². While both themes are pointing to the right direction, implementation cannot be taken for granted. Many years of UNFCCC-Kyoto Protocol did not bring convincing commitments by leading economic and trading countries to effectively combat climate warming and related climate change³

Costs of Inaction

The costs to our society pays for inaction are high. Some of the identified costs include disappearance of common and natural resources, dramatically changing weather patterns, sea levels rising continuously, increasing deforestation, growing and spreading health issues²⁴ etc. The most significant cost, however, is directly related to human behavior. If inaction persists as a dominant mindset of the world's citizens, human society will begin to wither. The earth is unable to adapt to increasingly unsustainable human consumption habits. Humans will begin to suffer from the effects of their own actions as the planet cannot provide unlimited resources for un-sustainable life styles.

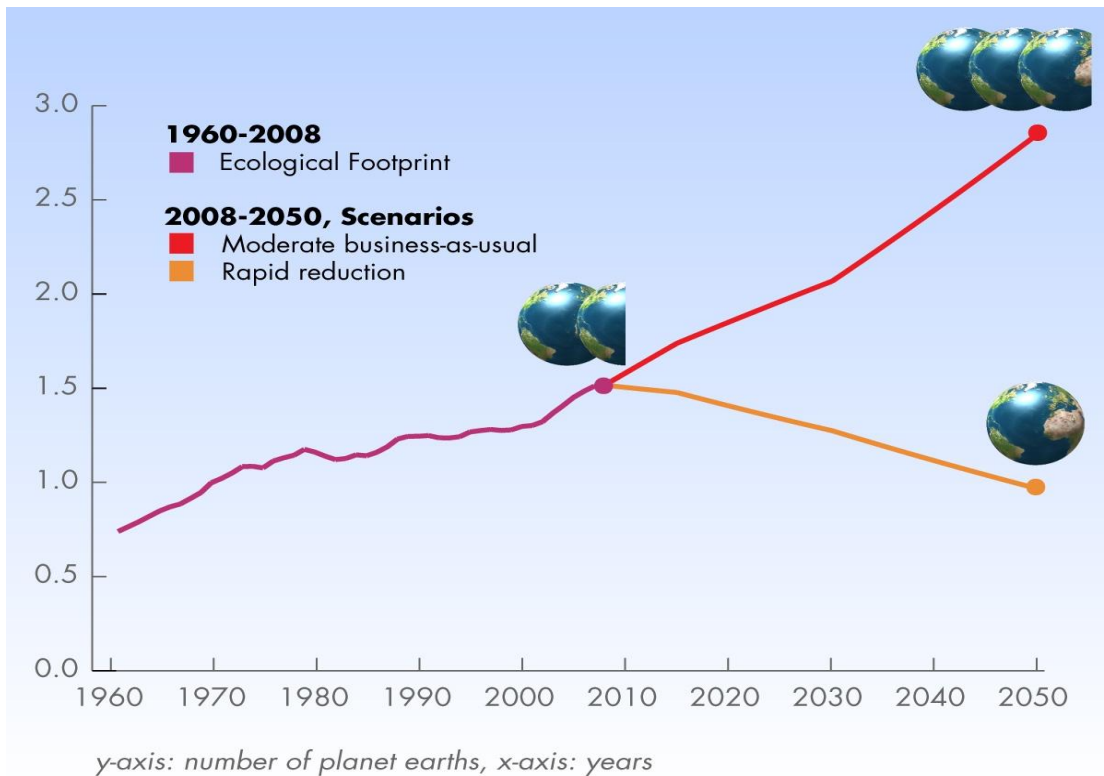
Global Footprint keeping track

Global Footprint, an environmental research NGO and pioneer in quantifying externalities at national and global levels, states that "humanity uses the equivalent of 1.5 planets to provide the resources we use and absorb our waste. This means it now takes the Earth one year and six months to regenerate what we use in a year. Global Footprint representatives state that "moderate UN scenarios suggest that if current population and consumption trends continue, by the 2030s, we will need the equivalent of two Earths to support us. And of course, we only have one."

Turning resources into waste faster than waste can be turned back into resources puts us in global ecological overshoot depleting the very resources on which human life and biodiversity depend.

² Saner, R ; Yiu ; L ; Boehmer, D; (2013) Sustainable Development and the post-2015 implications: a closer look at the MDG and SDG processes, CSEND Policy Nr. 12, 2013, <http://www.csend.org/publications/csend-policy/briefs>

³ Saner, R; (2013) ; Greening the WTO to stop climate warming; CSDEND Policy Studies; <http://www.csend.org/images/articles/files/20130706%20Greening%20WTO%20Policy%20Study%20nr%202.pdf>



(Source: http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/world_footprint/)

The result is collapsing fisheries, diminishing forest cover, depletion of fresh water systems, and the build up of carbon dioxide emissions, which create problems like global climate change. These are just a few of the most noticeable effects of overshoot.

Overshoot also contributes to resource conflicts and wars, mass migrations, famine, disease and other human tragedies—and tends to have a disproportionate impact on the poor who cannot buy their way out of the problem by getting resources from somewhere else.

Global Footprint urges individuals and institutions worldwide to begin to recognize ecological limits and to convince our decision makers to invest in technology and infrastructure that will allow the global community to operate in a resource-constrained world. It means taking individual action, and creating the public demand for business and policy makers to participate.

Using tools like the Ecological Footprint to manage our ecological assets is essential for humanity's survival and success. Knowing how much nature we have, how much we use, and who uses what is the first step, and will allow us to track our progress as we work toward our goal of sustainable, one-planet living.

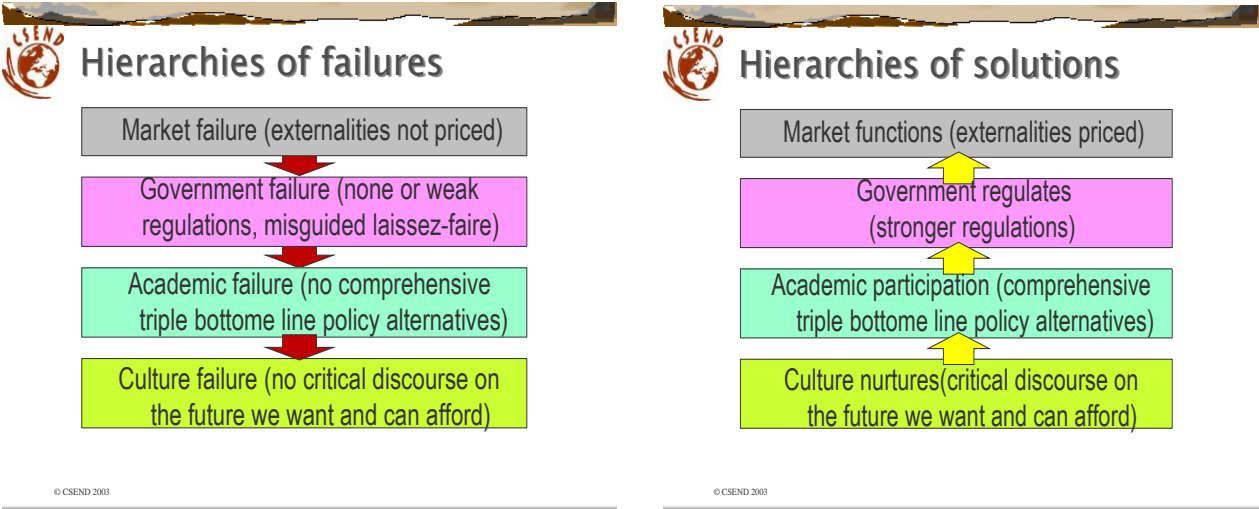
The Need for publications which explain the risks of climate change

Educational resources (books, videos, simulations, modeling) should provide guidance as to the following policy failures namely a) market failure (externalities not included in price of goods and services); b) government failure (our governments know what should be done to

stop climate warming but instead they remain soft on policing economic actors polluting the environment; c) academic failure (many academics and researchers understand the destructiveness of market and government failure but do not muster enough courage to say so and argue accordingly in their policy papers and finally d) art and society failure meaning that many artists understand the risk of climate warming and see how human behaviour and political inactions increase the likelihood of environmental calamities but prefer to stay in their safe cocoon of “art pour art” instead of using their art and reputation to contribute to social and civil action to help entrepreneurs, governments and academics live up to their share of calling an end to this suicidal trend of seemingly unstoppable climate warming.

Hierarchies of failures and solutions: Need for Cultural Diplomacy!⁴

Sustainability is often simplified to mean achieving “Triple E” (sustained economic, environmental and equitable social development” but little has been suggested as to how communities can harmonize the triple “Es” and find constructive solutions to the inevitable occasional tensions between the three sectors of social reality. There needs to be an overarching strategy that ensures ways to nurture a social culture which supports, protects, leads, cajoles communities and businesses towards orienting their respective activities and roles towards an overall balance of their multiple interests and desires which at times are in opposition with each other and at other times coalesce towards the achieving of a sustained well being for all.



(Source: Saner, R, CSEND, May 2013)

Cultural Diplomacy can nurture such a culture of sustainability. Cultural Diplomacy pertains to the use of the arts and cultural events by state and non-state actors to bring about international cultural understanding, co-existence and mutual acceptance. Cultural

⁴ Raymond Saner, DAW Singapore, 10th May 2013); <http://www.diplomacydialogue.org/publications/cultural-diplomacy/122-hierarchies-of-failures-and-solutions-need-for-cultural-diplomacy>

diplomats can be government officials as well as representatives of civil society with strong links or background in the arts and background in the arts and culture. Sustainability in its multi-sector reality needs cultural diplomats who can offer solutions to the inevitable disagreements over priorities of how to achieve the “Triple Es” and how to ensure constructive and harmonious relations between the many actors involved in making sustainability a reality. The Digital Art Weeks (DAW) is a unique opportunity to bring to life a culture of sustainability encompassing the three pillars of sustainability supported by mutually enriching interactions between the arts and sciences.