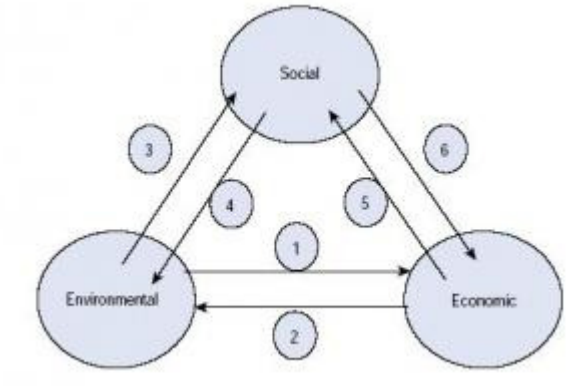
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS NOT REAL SUTAINABILITY BECAUSE...

1- It still believes in the modern paradigm of development, where the production depends only on capital and work force. That is the function of production according to Neoclassical Economy.

Q = f (K, L) *where Q is the production, K is the Capital and L is the work force*

2- It still gives more importance to the economic development instead of environmental protection, producing a rift between the economic system and the social system.



Source: *Adapted from OECD (1999), "The OECD Three-Year Project on Sustainable Development: A Progress Report", Paris.*

3- It still makes differences between first and third world only in terms of economy and social needs, but it does not mention that in the poorest countries, the contamination and pollution levels are higher than in the rich countries. We must stop thinking that we have to choose between development and environmental protection, because both of them go together.

The Rio Declaration (1992), as the first step in order to stimulate sustainability in the whole world, needs to be improved through a **strong sustainability**:

1- Changing to a new paradigm that recognizes the limits of the natural resources:

a. The production consists not only in capital and work force. It is necessary to include new concepts from ecological and environmental economics, such as natural capital, ecosystem functions and ecosystem services.

b. It's necessary to include the approaches mentioned before (ecological and environmental economics) in the government policies and in the private companies accounts.

c. It has to begin with the inclusion of subjects like Ecological Economy in Economical Sciences' degrees. The students must know the way to reflect the role of nature in economy and the ecological costs derived from economic growth.

2- Considering sustainability in three new dimensions: Ecological, Social-Economic and Cultural-Historic.

a. Ecological dimension: Protection and conservation of the natural base processes as the support of our resources, activities and lives.

b. Social-Economic dimension: A dimension where economy is an integrating part of society, not a separated system.

c. Cultural-Historic dimension: Sustainability must be a long-time process. The only way to reach this objective is adapting this model of sustainability to the cultural and historical context of each country.

3- Recognizing that the rich countries need to take side in the pollution and well-being of the rest of the world:

a. Promoting the same human and environmental conditions in their factories in the third world as in the first world's

b. Respecting the capacity of the ecosystems in every country.

c. Not exporting the same model of development based on capital and work force to the third world.

The Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) has to progress according to the Strong Sustainability, because this doctrine considers the limits of the natural resources (not only the capital and work force) in order to ensure the persistence of the coastal zones and the population living there. The function of production would be:

Q = f (K, L, N) *where N are "the gifts of the Nature", according to Classical Economy*

It is important to consider that the main decisions affecting the environment are taken in areas related with economy. Being so, these times of financial crisis are a perfect moment to start thinking about changing the traditional model of development:

The Spanish Government is pushing a new law of economic sustainability (not as ambitious as I would like, but this is not a post to talk about that) and today is the last day of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15), where192 different countries are in Copenhagen trying to find a solution to reduce CO_2 emissions through internatioanl efforts and agreement. Moreover, a lot of university departments are studying new ways to change capitalism into a sustainable system that recognizes the limits of planet Earth.

Scientists have the information, people have the ability to enforce new changes and the governments have the key to make those changes real. It's necessary to adopt a model based on Governance, where all the stakeholders take part in the decision-making process: from the bottom (citizens, scientists, companies) to the top (administrations, legislative body).

The participation of all the society can ensure the implementation of sustainable model and its continuity in a long time.

A contribution from COP15: **"The Danish example" - the way to an energy efficient and energy friendly economy**

Penélope Laó

18th December, 2009