

What is sustainability?

Sustainable development is about keeping human activity, both social and economic, at a level that nature can tolerate; without causing irreversible climate change, polluting water, air or soil, disrupting essential ecosystem services (e.g. clean drinking water, fish stocks etc.) or biodiversity. There is an abundance of definitions of sustainable development. No doubt, the most referred to is still the one from the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development report; “Our common future” (The Brundtland report). In the report sustainable development is defined as:

“.. development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (United Nations, 1987, p. 37)

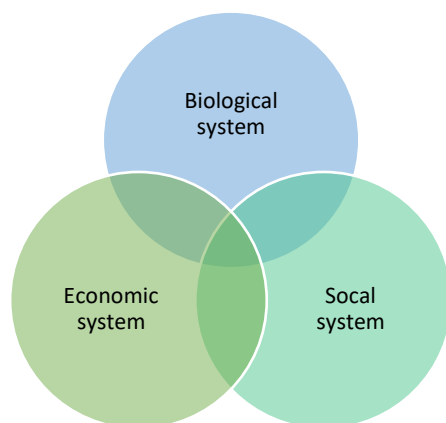


Figure 1: A much used illustration of sustainable development based on the Brundtland report and following documents from the UN Agenda 21.

In line with the Brundtland report and documents from the UN Agenda 21, three dimensions are generally perceived to be the main elements of sustainable development – society, environment and economy. Often sustainable development is illustrated as in Figure 1: Social, economic and environmental systems are balanced in the pursuit of an improved quality of life. The three elements are intertwined. For example, a prosperous society and business relies on a healthy environment to provide food and resources, safe drinking water and clean air for its’ employees and citizens.

Often the term sustainability and sustainable development are used interchangeably. The two terms have different histories but for our purpose we adhere to UNESCO’s definitions, which describes the difference between the two terms as the difference between the endpoint and the road to it. Sustainable development thus refers to the processes and pathways to achieve sustainability (UNESCO, 2020); developing sustainable enterprises is one such pathway.

UN Sustainable Development goals (SDGs)

In 2015 the Sustainable development goals (SDGs) were adopted in the UN General assembly (UN General Assembly, 2015) to contribute to find pathways to global sustainability. They focus on both social, economic and ecological development. With the 17 goals and more than 100 sub-goals the SDG’s cover almost all aspects of human life, the economy and ecology.

The UN sustainability goals

1. End **poverty** in all its forms everywhere
2. End **hunger**, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure **healthy lives** and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality **education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve **gender equality** and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of **water and sanitation** for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern **energy** for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and **sustainable economic growth**, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build **resilient infrastructure**, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce **inequality** within and among countries
11. Make cities and human **settlements** inclusive, **safe, resilient and sustainable**
12. Ensure **sustainable consumption and production** patterns
13. Take urgent action to **combat climate change** and its impacts*
14. Conserve and **sustainably use the oceans**, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote **sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems**, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote **peaceful and inclusive societies** for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the **Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**

Figure 2: The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainable entrepreneurship

So, how does entrepreneurship become sustainable? Sustainable Entrepreneurs need to find a balance between the three elements of Sustainable Development: economic health (prosperity), social equity (people) and environmental resilience (planet). This should involve the “discovery, creation, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to create future goods and services consistent with the sustainable development goals” (Greco & de Jong, 2017). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be confused with sustainable entrepreneurship. However, corporate responsibility is a concept including societal and ethical aspects in the firms’ business activities only. Nature and ecological concerns are not at the core or even directly included in such a concept.

Sustainability in World Heritage sites and protected areas

Sustainable development and sustainable entrepreneurship in and around natural World Heritage sites and protected areas would include contributing to taking care of the areas' landscapes, ecosystems and species.

The project areas Wadden Sea and the Geiranger area are both World Heritage sites. World Heritage status is given by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) to an area of "Outstanding Universal Value" (OUV) in a global context. The OUV underlines the special values of a site and thereby what nation states have a responsibility to protect and the focus for management of the area. A site inscription is always related to one of ten UNESCO criteria. While the West Norwegian Fjords – Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord is inscribed on the basis of criterion vii and viii, Wadden sea is inscribed on the basis of criterion viii-x:

- Criterion (vii): to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- Criterion (viii): to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- Criterion (viii) to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- Criterion (ix): to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- Criterion (x) to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

The Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on November 16th, 1972. Sustainable development is not explicitly mentioned in the text of the Convention. The idea of the convention, to preserve cultural and natural heritage, does however seem close to the idea of sustainable development, something the UNESCO eagerly points out in diverse settings.

While preserving the values of the OUV is the main concern of World Heritage area management, the relationship between World Heritage and economic and social development has over time become increasingly clear in UNESCO's work. From 2011, sustainable development in this broad sense has received more attention in the organisation's "Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention." These are requirements related to the inscription of World Heritage sites (Boccardi & Scott, 2014). In 2012, an expert group was set up and since then, sustainable development has been integrated into several operational documents of the UNESCO and more and more into the management and operations of the sites (UNESCO, 2012, 2015, 2019, 2020).

The project partner the Wash and North Norfolk coast does not have a World Heritage status, but it is a protected area. One can roughly say that there are three main arguments for such protection in general: 1. All life forms have an intrinsic value and a right to live. 2. Ecological values: The species have different functions in nature and ecosystems. Without species, ecosystems collapse. 3. Applied values. Species and natural areas can be of benefit to humans. Outdoor experiences, use of natural resources for health purposes or tourism are examples of applied values (Olerud, 2018). Protected

areas are managed through laws and regulations that describe the main purpose of the preservation and rules to operate within them.

Nature protection and World Heritage thus are not the same. However, to receive a World Heritage status, management plans are needed. This means that the status in general will be accompanied by protected areas, nature reserves and management regimes, and with them administrative rules and regulations to preserve the OUV.

The OUV of the World Heritage sites of West Norwegian Fjords and Wadden Sea and information about the basis of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) of The Wash and North Norfolk are presented in the following.