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EC SO6004: Sustainable Communities & Global Development

Theme 2: Key Concepts and Context

Guided Study Activity - Discussion

Having researched the following phrases what do you understand each of these to mean;

- Cognitive dissonance
- Built-in obsolescence
- Ethical consumerism
- Instant gratification

What do we mean by Sustainability?



Take some time to consider this and then share your thoughts with the whole group.



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What is the connection between Sustainability and Equality?



Take some time to consider this and then share your thoughts with the whole group

Some Definitions of Environment

- [noun] 1 : the circumstances, objects, or conditions by which one is surrounded
- 2 a : the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors (such as climate, soil, and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival
- 2 b : the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community.

Different Environments

- Throughout this Module we will be exploring these different concepts of 'environment'
- This will include what we sometimes call the 'natural' environment





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St. Lawrence Market, Toronto



Quinta Fay, Gustine, California



Yates Street Heritage District, St. Catharines



Old Town, Hastings, East Sussex



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Including 'privileged' urban environments



Sherman Avenue North, Hamilton, Ontario



La Oroya, Peru



Dharavi district, Mumbai, India



Love Canal, New York

As well as 'deprived' urban environments



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*...to defined natural and anthropogenic
environments at all scales.*



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**“But what do you mean by
‘anthropogenic’ Ken”?**



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Anthropogenic - (chiefly of environmental pollution and pollutants) originating in human activity.



We will also be exploring the way in which Government and other policy can contribute to sustainability and equality – both positively and negatively

Definitions - Policy

‘a course or general plan of action to be adopted by a government, party, person, etc’.

Concise Oxford Dictionary

‘a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party’

Cambridge English Dictionary

Issues to Consider

- How sustainability and its historical development relate to;
 - Social change
 - Social mobility
 - Power
 - Social capital
 - Inequality
 - Social justice

Defining sustainability

Sustainability is concerned with the;

- The welfare of future generations*
- Including the management of irreplaceable natural resources
- As opposed to the gratification of present needs

Kuhlman & Farrington (2010)

The contested nature of sustainability

Two opposing views of the relation between humankind and nature:

- One stresses adaptation to and harmony with nature
- The other sees nature as something to be conquered or exploited

The latter view has been dominant in Western society, at least in recent centuries but its counterpoint has never been absent.

A short history of sustainability

- It is argued that Palaeolithic peoples worried about their prey becoming extinct
- Early farmers must have been apprehensive about maintaining soil fertility
- Traditional beliefs enjoined thinking in terms of stewardship and concern for future generations,
- As expressed in the oft-quoted Native American saying “we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children”.

(Wilderer, 2007)

A short history of sustainability

1713

Nachhaltigkeit

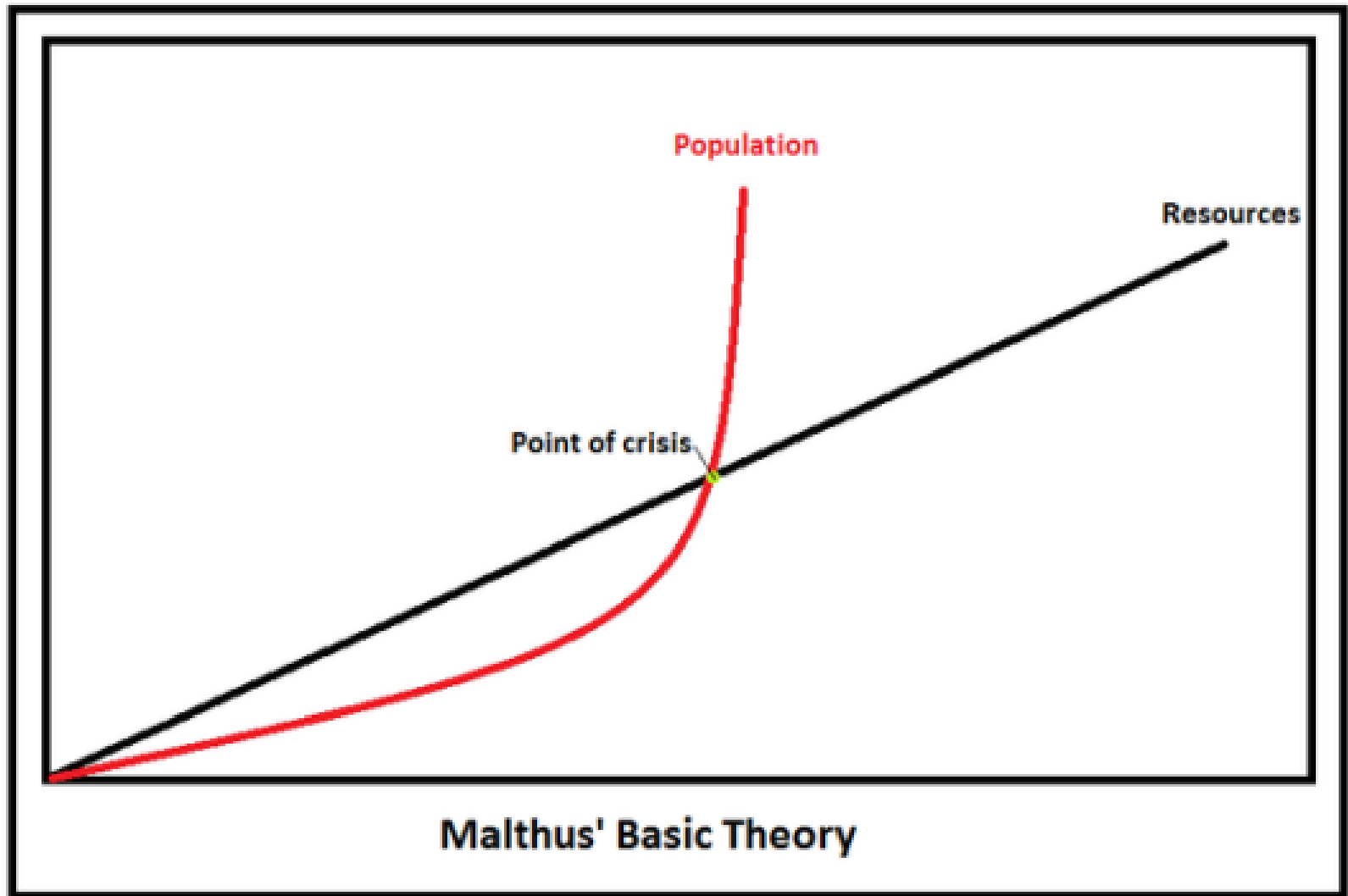
- German term for sustainability
- Originally coined in forestry industry
- Concept of not harvesting more than what the forest yields in new growth
- Preserving natural resources is perennial

(Wilderer, 2007)

A short history of sustainability

1798 Thomas Malthus

- Theory regarding the inevitability of mass starvation
- Food production increases arithmetically but population increases geometrically
- More and more agricultural land needed to feed an expanding population
- Although this theory is now outdated it does highlight an important issue of sustainability



A short history of sustainability

1931 Harold Hotelling

- There is an optimal rate of exploitation of non-renewable resource (e.g. oil, iron, steel)
- Owners of these resources will only produce them if it is profitable to do so

Hotelling 1931

“US oil prices turn negative as demand dries up”

[BBC 21/04/2020](#)

What do we mean by 'non-renewable' resource?



Take some time to consider this and then share your thoughts with the whole group



A short history of sustainability

Brundtland Report - 1987

- Growing concern that natural resources crucial to our survival would be exhausted in one or two generations
- This situation is caused by public policy which should exist to improve things
- The UN World Commission on Environment & Development (WCED) produced the Brundtland Report 'Our Common Future' which;
 - Identified a way out of the impending crisis
 - Adopted the concept of sustainable development

Brundtland (1987)

Defining sustainable development

‘People, Planet, Profit’

“Development is a multidimensional undertaking to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development”

United Nations (1997)

Defining sustainable development

Happiness, Well-being and Welfare

- A primary goal of government policy is to improve people's lives
- In this context well-being, welfare and happiness are commonly seen as synonyms

Ormerod (2007)

However, as we will see this can become problematic.

Defining sustainable development

Happiness

- Happiness is the broadest concept
- Difficult to design a 'Happiness Policy'
 - Happiness is a subjective state of mind
- Happiness as a basic goal of human behaviour
- Can governments 'make' people happy?
- Can governments 'promote' happiness?
- What are the 'conditions' which create/promote happiness?

Ormerod (2007)

Defining sustainable development

Happiness & Subjective Well-Being

- Ruut Veenhoven developed a scheme of 'qualities of life'
- Concept of the 'livability of the environment'
- Asks 'what can Policy do to advance happiness?'
- It is not just about;
 - 'Basic needs' (e.g. food, shelter etc.)
 - Material goods (e.g. luxuries)
- But also supporting the individual's capability to achieve their potential

Veenhoven (2004)

Defining sustainable development

Well-Being and Policy

- Concepts include:
 - Freedom
 - Education
 - Security
 - Democracy
 - Justice

Sen(1993)
- Concept is now discernible in the 'Wellbeing of Future Generations Act' (2015)



Defining sustainable development

Welfare

- A more limited concept which views prosperity in terms of material needs such as;
 - Food
 - Water
 - Health
 - Shelter
- As such it is easier to measure than 'well-being'
- Therefore it is often used by policy makers as it is easier to measure

Slee (2007)

Defining sustainable development

Dimensions of Sustainability

- Well-being could replace Social and Economic measures
- It is a policy goal that must be balanced with sustainability
- Measuring well-being and sustainability separately will allow for clear choices to be made by individuals, society and policy makers

Slee (2007)

Defining sustainable development

Sustainability: Resources and the Future

- Some resources are non-renewable and others are renewable
- Some resources are natural and others man-made
- The main man-made renewable is 'capital' which is produced by exploiting other resources

Solow (1992)

Table 1. A Fourfold Classification of Natural and Cultural Resources.

	Non-renewable	Renewable
Natural	e.g., soil, biodiversity, fossil fuels	e.g., water, forest, clean air
Man-made	e.g., paintings, landscapes	capital

Defining sustainable development

Weak and Strong Sustainability

- What are we measuring?
 - The sustainability of natural resources
 - The quality of the environment
 - Capital growth
- Is sustainability what we bequeath to coming generations?

(Solow, 1992; Pearce *et al*, 1989)

Defining sustainable development

The Sustainability Tensions

- (i) That the next generation should inherit a stock of wealth, comprising man-made assets and environmental assets, no less than the stock inherited by the previous generation;*
- (ii) That the next generation should inherit a stock of environmental assets no less than the stock inherited by the previous generation.*

Pearce et al.(1989)

But what is the difference between these two concepts? Share your ideas with the group.



Defining sustainable development

Strong Sustainability

Two principle arguments

Provision of 'services' – grouped into 4 broad categories;

- provisioning, such as the production of food and water;
- regulating, such as the control of climate and disease;
- supporting, such as nutrient cycles and crop pollination; and,
- cultural, such as spiritual and recreational benefits.

Stewardship of resources – ethical and responsible planning and the ethical and responsible management and use of resources

Defining sustainable development

Sustainability....

- “A Sustainable society is one that persists over generations, one that is far-seeing enough, and wise enough not to undermine either its physical or social systems of support”

(Sterling, 2009)

Defining sustainable development

- “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

Brundtland (1987)

<http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

Defining sustainable development

‘Our Common Future’ 1987

Contains within it two key concepts:

- the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given;
- the idea of limitations imposed by the state on technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs

WCED (1987)

Defining sustainable development

‘Our Common Future’ 1987

- The goals of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries: developed or developing; market-oriented or centrally planned
- Interpretations taken by governments will vary but must share certain general features and must flow from a consensus on the basic concept of sustainable development and on a broad strategic framework for achieving it

Brundtland (1987)

Defining sustainable development

‘Our Common Future’ 1987

- Places a duty on the state to hold environmental resources in trust for the benefit of the public
- Where there are threats of serious or reversible damage, lack of scientific certainty should not be used as a reason [...]not acting to prevent environmental degradation
- All people currently alive should have an equal right to benefit from the use of resources...within and between countries
- Decisions should be made at the lowest appropriate level
- Costs of environmental damage should **be borne by those who cause it...**

Brundtland (1987)

Defining sustainable development

A set of guidelines

- People must share with each other and care for the Earth
- Humanity must take no more from nature than nature can replenish
- This in turn means
 - adopting lifestyles and development paths that respect and work within nature's limits
- It can be done without rejecting the many benefits that modern technology has brought provided that technology also works within those limits



Defining sustainable development

What is Sustainable Development?

- Sustainable development is often thought to have three components, namely:
 - The Environment
 - Society
 - The Economy
- The maintenance of these three areas is intertwined, not separate

McKeown (2002)

Defining sustainable development

UNESCO



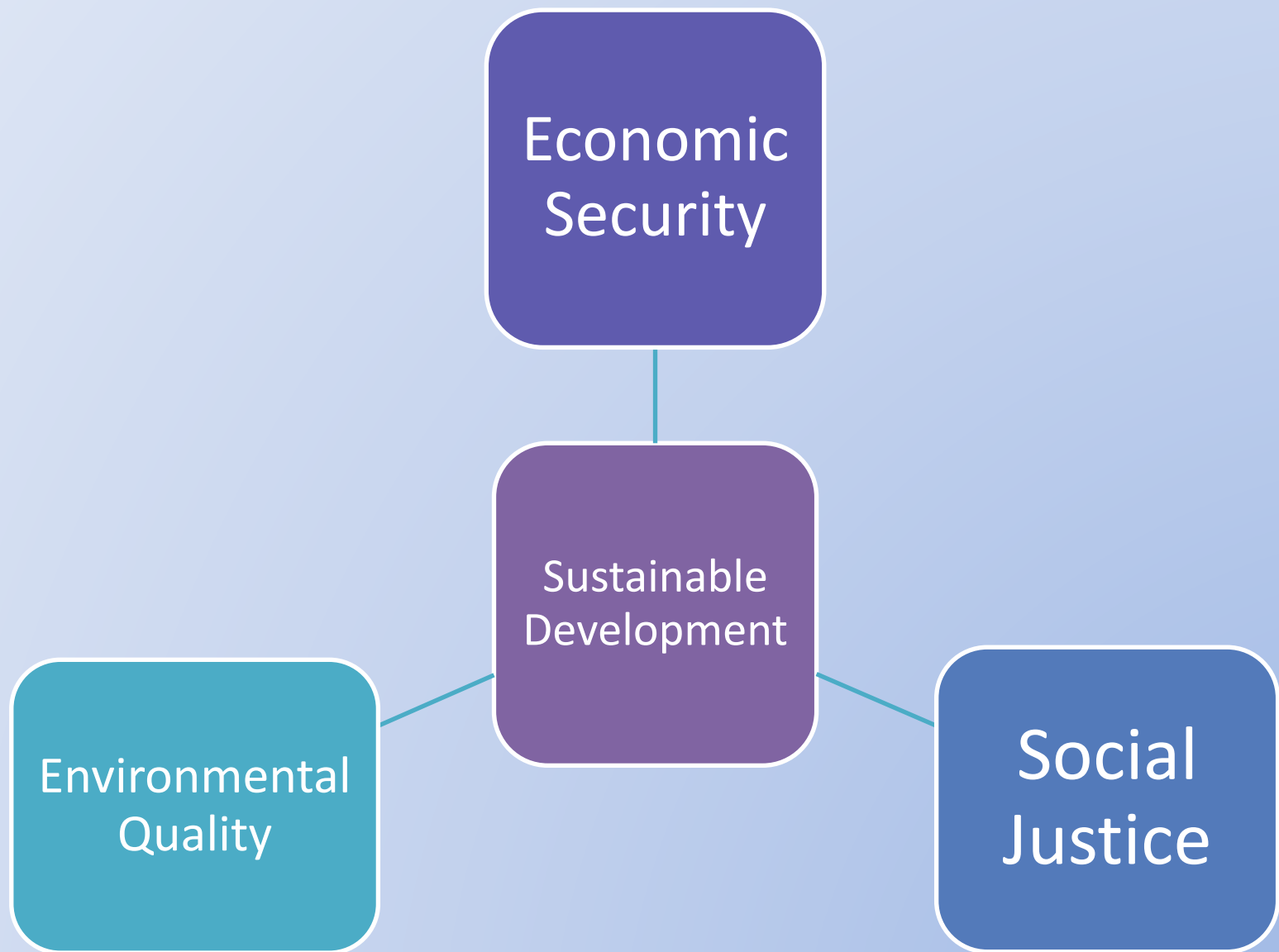
What does UNESCO stand for?

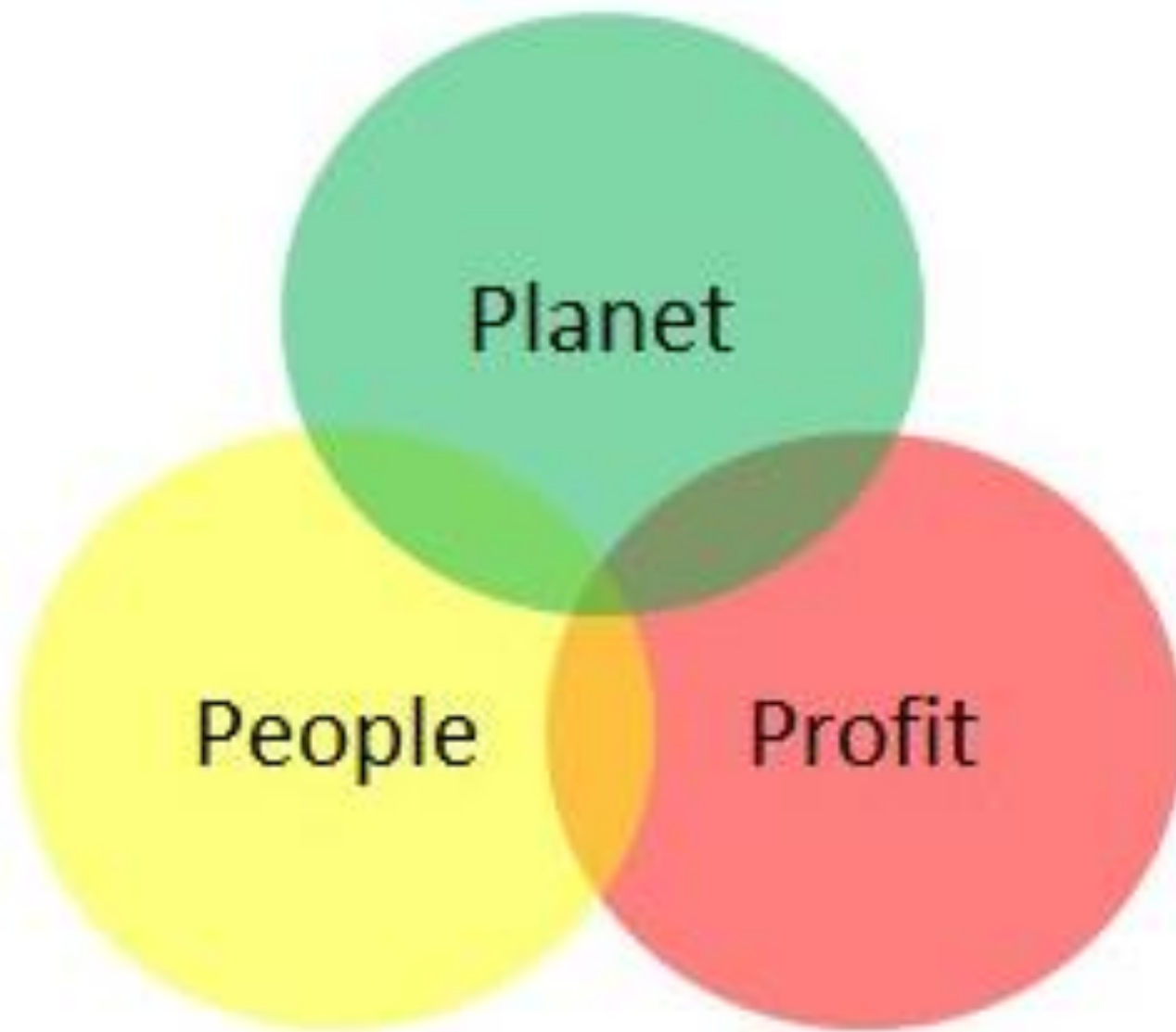
- Other authors and organisations, however, use other terms
- For example, UNESCO promotes international resource development that is;
 - socially desirable and culturally appropriate
 - economically viable
 - and ecologically sustainable

Environment, Society, Economy

- These are known as the three pillars of sustainability
- And although they are often given different names these 3 pillars are considered vital to sustainable planning







The Triple Bottom Line

- These three aspects; environment/planet, society/people and economy/profit have been labelled the Triple Bottom line by economists and business analysts such as John Elkington as far back as 1998
- They have argued that all three aspects need to be balanced in order for sustainable growth to be possible

Elkington (1998)

- This concept will be a continuous theme throughout this Module

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