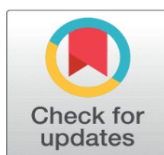
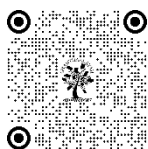


ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS ECO-SOCIAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

A social work is a profession in which works and tasks are performed by utilising available resources from social environment namely social networks and support system that enhances humans to thrive and excel their lives. However, in the current trends there are some drawbacks in the manner of work such as very limited engagement of social organisation that focuses on environmental aspects and sustainable ecology. As a consequence, social work has to develop theoretical framework to incorporate ecological environment because man and environment are crucial and mutual dependence components. In the existing ecological hardship, climate change is a matter of concern as it regulates the land fertility and biodiversity to achieve sustainable food productions, cycle of energy and water resources. The ill effects of climate change are unbearable by all, for instances people of Flanders in Belgium with enormous wealth had to face challenges in shrinking free land spaces, environment pollutions and many health issues. And as mentioned by the United Nations Development Programme these crises are mostly affected by the poor people which sets a wide gap between the rich and the poor in both the ecological and economic crises. All of these present major challenges to the social work despite of keeping social justice as central core of frame work.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social work claims to have imparted education about the essence of environmental problems to the people after the onset of sustainable development targets. Yet it has not achieved much of its target due to set backs in coordination by the social workers because they stick to focus mainly on social environment and according to them sustainable development is conceived as environmental management. Social work must pay heed on ecological dimensions and non-scientific discipline as well.

This article addresses the need for the social work to keep importance of sustainable development and how it might be addressed, never the less it is arguably challenging topic of concentration for the social work professionals but an attempt will make more fruitful in social and ecological justice. Sustainability is related to its primary societal goal and other scholars are examining how social work practice and sustainable development are related. When establishing this link, it was assumed that a suitable interpretation of sustainable development for social work would need to satisfy two key requirements:

- I. It should take account of contemporary analyses of the ecological crisis; and
 - II. It should recognize synergies between the social-ecological mission and the critical tradition of social work.
- Given these circumstances, social work is uniquely positioned to tackle the environmental catastrophe and issues related to sustainable development at this pivotal historical moment. This article gives a quick summary of ecological theory in social work before presenting an opinion on sustainable development and how it relates to the practice of social work.

2. GROWTH OF ECO-SOCIAL WORK

As defined by the subject experts' social work is a context-based profession that studies how people are supported by the social networks and support systems that allow them to live fulfilling lives. The "urban environment" was Jane Addams' primary focus, while Mary Richmond (1922–1971) emphasized the value of social networks and social interaction for social casework, establishing the dominant focus on the social environment (Addams, 1910 in Staub–Bernasconi, 1989, p. 296). The constructed environment, which includes things like housing conditions and pollution, as well as local services like sanitation and hygiene, are all components of the living environment in addition to the social environment.

Social work was significantly impacted by systems theory in the 1970s. After Pincus and Minahan (1973) in the United States, other scholars quickly produced contrasting interpretations of how systems thinking may be applied to social work (Germain, 1991; Germain & Gitterman, 1980; Meyer, 1983, 1995; Wendt, 1982–1990). While the natural environment was taken into account in this developing "systems approach," classical person-in-environment thinking concentrated on the interaction between people and their social surroundings, with nature serving as a supporting element: Given that the diagrammed models of practice continuously omit the physical environment, it should come as no surprise that the assessment instruments included in mainstream practice textbooks focus mostly on social roles, social networks, and social functioning.

Understanding the connection between the environmental disaster and social work was not possible with such an approach. However, conversations on environmental issues arose as a result of the 1960s' growing environmental consciousness and the 1970s' early social acceptance of it. The ecological or "green" movement had a crucial influence on social science research concerning ecology or the physical environment.

During the 1980s, a select few academics in the field of social work started to pay close attention to sustainability and environmental issues. It appears that Jane Addams' method of environmental thinking in social work is compatible with this ecological style of thinking. The eco-critical method was named by Närhi and Matthies (2001) due to its focus on environmental criticism throughout the modernization process

There has been a growing convergence between the ecocritical and ecosystems approaches to ecology in social work, according to Närhi and Matthies (2001). On the other hand, the latter started to consider sustainability issues in relation to ecological questions and the element of nature. Writers from North America and Europe attempted to reframe ecosystems as a method for bringing about change and elevating consciousness (Payne, 2005). The "person-in-environment" was reimagined by Hoff and McNutt (1994) for "ecological social work" that goes beyond the social.

Following Coates (2003), the critical orientation that emerged focused on a fundamental critique of contemporary Western culture and urged a paradigm shift toward a "holistic" understanding of the relationship between humans and nature, with a particular emphasis on spirituality as a crucial component. This approach was highlighted in two special issues of *Critical Social Work* (2003, 2010).

3. THE CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The relationship between the ecological crisis and social problems—referred to as a "social-ecological crisis"—has come under scrutiny in light of the concerning facts on the ecological devastation of Planet Earth and the worldwide social and economic crises (Peeters, 2009). Sustainable practices are called into question by human consumption because natural resources are limited and sometimes irreversibly damaged. As to the Living Planet Report (World Wide Fund for Nature, 2010), the global ecological footprint in 2007 surpassed the amount that the planet Earth could offer by fifty percent.

The Belgian philosopher Vermeersch (1988) described this issue as a deadlock in our international social structure more than 20 years ago: There is no other option than to navigate as long as the current global system is in place. The ecosystem is more vulnerable the more prosperous a portion of the global population is; conversely, the more protected the ecology, the more synonymous it is with perpetual suffering.

In addition to the booming economy, late-modern society's sociocultural norms and aspirations are also responsible for the contemporary overconsumption. The sustainability argument revolves around the problem of meeting human demands while protecting Earth's biophysical limits, or "natural capital." Thus, in order to be considered sustainable, the following requirements must be met at the very least: (i) Dematerialization of the economy, which entails a significant decrease in the input and output of natural resources, particularly energy. the equitable distribution of wealth; and (ii) (iii) A fresh perspective on the welfare of people and the world. This is really the core of what is meant by "new paradigm" thinking

When these conditions are met, a society will "transition" to sustainability. This will necessitate changes in all spheres of society, including the production and consumption of energy, the monetary systems, the movement of people within society, the distribution and production of food, the organization of labour and care systems, and social, technological, economic, political, and structural-institutional changes. Thus, seen as a "social transition," sustainable development necessitates a variety of approaches, the most commonly mentioned of which are sufficiency, efficiency, and redistribution (Peeters, 1997; Sachs, 1999).

The prevailing conversation on sustainable development emphasizes efficiency above all else, leading to dematerialization through the use of alternative technologies in both production and consumption. Since a sustainable vision of well-being has to do with the daily expectations of individuals who form society, it is essential for social work and is fundamental to finding a path out of the current social deadlock. We need to look for an alternative to the widely held belief that material prosperity and economic expansion are the main causes of well-being. Finding methods to learn how to live under constraints has been the ecological solution; this suggests that new conceptions of what constitutes a good existence must be created. Recent research (Abdallah, Thompson, Michaelson, Marks, & Steuer, 2009) challenges the notion that a large ecological footprint and well-being are correlated. This goal is validated by these findings. Without endangering the planet's ecosystems, a happy existence is achievable (Jackson, 2009; Simms & Smith, 2008). It entails improving the calibre of interactions between people and the natural world as well as between humans and themselves, and it calls into question:

- I. The meaning of emancipation and the connection between labour and consumption.
- II. The idea of citizenship and its available rights.
- III. Significant engagement by the society to reach new heights of valuable change.

In formulating these new changes, the ecologist and environmentalist assert the importance of human rights along with ecological justice are the two essential ideas of new changes.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL WORK: A COMMON AGENDA

Based on the facts, the preceding study of the current socio-ecological crisis shows that social work has a direct stake in concerns of sustainable development. The query of "what role can social work play in sustainable development" is closely related to normative observation. The definition of sustainable development included in the 1987 of World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report, *Our Common Future*, is a useful place to start when attempting to connect the goals of social work and sustainable development. As the most significant source of information for social policies that are environmentally friendly, it is widely acknowledged (Baker, 2006). It asserts: Development that is sustainable is one which satisfies current needs without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own. The concept of "needs," in particular the basic needs of the world's poor, to which priority should be given, and the idea that the environment's capacity to meet present and future needs is limited by the state of technology and social organization are the two central ideas it contains. (WCED, 1987, p. 43)

There are two conditions attached to this nebulous definition: acknowledging that Earth's resources are finite and giving the poor's needs top priority. Sustainable development, reduced to its most basic form, is "maintaining a positive process of social change with a global perspective that concerns people's needs and, therefore, takes account of the dimensions of space – where they are located – and the historical junctures in their location's development."

Intense discussion about how sustainable development is interpreted differently in different places as well as fundamentally divergent philosophical, ideological, and political viewpoints regarding ecological boundaries, equity and distribution, and approaches to resolving the "social-ecological crisis" resulted from *Our Common Future*. To put it succinctly, there are multiple interest-driven perspectives that define sustainable development.

Thus, it might be understood as a contentious domain of social discourse about the direction of society, or as a "political concept." This article offers an interpretation of sustainable development that is appropriate for social work as part of the continuing conversation.

The prevalent link between "development" and economic growth is a significant problem because it contradicts the concept of "sustainable" development (Jones & Jacobs, 2006; Peeters, 1997; Sachs, 1993). An ecological perspective aims to provide clarification on this matter using natural resources, and it addresses the issue of how much economic growth may cause "produced capital" to supplant "natural capital." "Strong" sustainable development aligns with the fundamental tenet of the environmental movement of the 1970s, which asserts that development cannot exist without sustainability (Meadows, Meadows, Randers & Behrens, 1972).

The approach of "the growth of limits" is preferred over "strong" sustainable development, which makes the assumption that expansion is necessary for sustainability. "Green growth" could address the concerns surrounding environmental degradation and growth by achieving efficiency gains by using the market-oriented, neoliberal development paradigm with the sustainability standards (Baker, 2006; Jones & Jacobs, 2006). In light of the current overuse of resources, efficiency as such would not result in an absolute drop in commodity production, even if efficiency increases were to yield a relative decoupling of commodity production from the use of natural resources. According to Jackson (2009), there is currently no evidence that the relationship between environmental effect and economic growth can be separated.

For the preservation and repair of natural capital, all available facts thus point to "strong" sustainable development. Fair access to ecological resources is a fundamental principle of ecological justice. In worldwide obligation, but given the historical and contemporary environmental effects, not all countries bear the same amount of duty. It is therefore necessary to distinguish national initiatives towards the rehabilitation of natural capital. In 2011, the Global Commons Institute created the concept of a "contraction and convergence" mechanism for the negotiations on carbon emission reductions.

However, Jones and Jacobs (2006) state that this is also applied generally to integrate a "just distribution of welfare" with a "dematerialization of the global economy" process. a rather quick drop in the developed economies' resource usage the contraction process involves countries. The remainder of the world still has space for improvement. Longer-term goals, however, centre on a more equitable and sustainable pattern of resource consumption and, consequently, environmental effect. That is how convergence happens.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE PICTURE

Seeing sustainable development in action a suitable public image is essential to the formation of the outlined environmentally friendly social agenda, given the political nature of sustainable development. Long-term viability and the most widely used definition of development is the interplay of three dimensions: social, ecological, and economic. This idea is embodied in the popular concept of the "triple bottom line" (Elkington, 1998), also known as the "triple P": people, planet, and prosperity, or profit, which is essential to a framework for sustainable development. Since the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, the UN has emphasized "prosperity" above "profit" as a way to highlight the economy's social responsibility. According to Parkin (2010), these aspects of sustainable development are frequently seen as "human" and "financial" capital in addition to social, ecological, and economic aspects.

As a result, three overlapping circles or a triangle are frequently used to symbolize sustainable growth. The three elements are moderately integrated to form sustainable development, which is situated at the centre of the overlap. But this representation is deceptive since it gives each component equal weight, neglecting to take ecological restrictions into consideration and maintaining the dominance of capitalist interests. It backs the idea of "weak" sustainable growth. In line with an ecological perspective and the fundamental concepts of ecological economics (Daly, 1999, 2008), a systemic model: (i) turns the economy into a serving ecosystem by integrating the social and economic spheres. as a component of society (Parkin, 2010); and (ii) because it is inherently relational and has no centre, which encourages society to view Earth's ecosystem with greater humility. Furthermore, it's important to remember that nature can have significance that goes beyond social and economic concerns in the context of the new paradigm. Further illustrating the fundamental connections between ecological, social, and economic challenges is Figure 2. Financial output, as the social realm is situated between the ecological and economic domains because human behaviour toward the natural environment is a socially and culturally influenced activity. The role that society plays as a mediator highlights the significance of political and social activity in the transition to sustainability. One way to conceptualize the economy's role

in sustainable development is as a collaborative effort between socially conscious businesses and other stakeholders in society.

5. CONCLUSION

The current social-ecological crisis suggests that there is a standstill in the global social structure. Significant changes are occurring in society that will affect many facets of our existence. In order for sustainable development to occur, society must be heavily involved in this enormous shift. Social work ought not to set aside; in addition, there are chances to participate in this revolutionary process as long as it takes an eco-social stance grounded in social-ecological systems theory and positioned inside a broad critical, political-ethical agenda. A complex web of social relationships and action at multiple levels are required due to the intricacy of a social shift. Social work can help by developing people's capacities and social capital to guarantee resilience for social change.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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