

Critical Approaches to the Concept of Sustainable Development

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Abstract— *It has been observed that while living in harmony with nature on earth until the industrial revolution, with the industrial production and consumption society formed after the industrial revolution, humanity has started to dominate nature more and the damage caused to nature has increased. Economic growth, contrary to expectations, increasing inequality in the distribution of income, the impoverishment of the broad masses of the natural environment in the emergence of problems such as destruction of natural resources, growth and development of the concept of sustainable development has revealed the new concept. Sustainable development suggests that both economic development can continue and the ecological system can be protected; the contradiction between the environment and development will disappear. The concept of sustainable development has been considered to be able to solve many country problems since its first appearance, and has been applied to many fields such as economics, politics, the environment and social culture. In fact, there are many aspects of the concept of sustainable development that are open to criticism. The aim of this study is to address the criticisms brought to the concept with a collective perspective. For this purpose, the criticisms brought to the concept of sustainable development based on the previous studies conducted on the subject were examined. It is thought that the study will contribute to the literature by eliminating the lack of a critical perspective on sustainable development in this way.*

Keywords— *Sustainable development, natural resources, economic development, sustainability.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last fifty years of the twentieth century, it was better understood that the natural life and the environment that are mandatory for humanity and all living things to continue their lives were destroyed, and the damage caused by this destruction to human health and social structure was destroyed. Although it is known that developments such as the rapid development of industry, science and technology, an increase in well-being and human life, the spread of education and a decrease in deaths due to diseases have improved living conditions, it is observed that today's plans and policies are damaging the environment and therefore threatening the future of people. As a result of these observations, various seminars, conferences and reports have been organized around the world, and the view that countries should also think about future generations when

developing has been supported. The importance of choosing this topic in the study is due to the fact that there are also negative features of sustainable development and there is not enough research on it.

The concept of "sustainable", which we have often encountered in the literature in recent years, was first used in the report "Our common future", known as the Brundtland Report, in 1987. The report describes the use of our existing resources in a way that will be sufficient for future generations. In this report, the concept of sustainable development within the process of change is discussed. Although the report has many objectives, the aim of "integrating the environment and the economy in decision-making" has been highlighted and emphasized. In this form, the definition concerns both the economy and the environment, emphasizes the most favorable and optimal

use of resources. “Sustainable Development”, environmental science and natural resources, with city in terms dictionary values in a manner that will not cause the waste of the rational method to be used in consideration of the rights and benefits of present and future generations, without a sacrifice of principles, aimed at achieving economic development is defined as the environmental worldview (Keles, 1998). To date, however, sustainable development policies, national development policies, poverty, inequality, environmental pollution and the climate crisis could not provide drastic solutions, such as chronic problems. While some regions have been successful in industrialization and production, poverty has escalated in other regions, and the natural environment has also started to deteriorate. Because developed countries have high competitive forces, they have become much stronger in attracting capital, being a center of investment and production, while developing or undeveloped countries have used their natural resources without environmental damage. While the positive aspects of the concept of sustainable development are usually always emphasized, many of the negative features mentioned in the study have been ignored. Nowadays, it has been inevitable to consider and examine sustainable development in a social, economic and environmental context. When we look at the research in the literature, we also see that the studies conducted support this information. However, it has been observed that some problems have been encountered at the implementation stage of the sustainable development understanding. The aim of this study is to evaluate the criticisms and suggestions for sustainable development from the popular concepts of recent years and to eliminate the lack of literature on this subject.

II. CRITICISM ON THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Especially in the last quarter of the 20th century, environmentalists have argued that it is not possible to sustain rapid population growth and industrial activities without seriously depleting the planet's resources and overloading the capacity to deal with waste materials and pollution produced by humans.

The sustainable development view, which has a human-centered ethical understanding, has addressed many issues from the protection of natural resources to the quality of life of future generations. Although his thinking of future generations shows that he is human-centered, the fact that humans are also at the center of the destruction of nature creates a contradiction. For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate the environment as a whole, including humans, and to give importance to living things other than humans.

(Ergün and Çobanoğlu, 2012). Otherwise, it will be impossible to talk about sustainability.

Since the concept of sustainable development was introduced, it has been defined many times and in different forms. This situation has led to the ambiguity of the concept. Definitions are usually created to reflect the academic branches of those who make the definition. Economists, most of the time tended to emphasize the need to protect a certain level of living standards, were involved in aspects of biodiversity and ecological flexibility and ecologists, sociologists work in the communities of the need for protection sociological ties and mutual relations are given priority (Cole, 2006). This uncertainty has caused countries to act according to their own economic, social and political structure when applying the principles of sustainable development. Thus, the understanding of sustainable development is shaped according to the principles of national interest. Although this situation has had positive consequences and feedbacks for developed countries, it has meant that poverty and environmental destruction have increased even more for developing or undeveloped countries.

It is also extremely important to address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced and consistent manner. In addition, the relative emphasis on traditional development versus sustainability needs to be evaluated in a balanced way. This is because while the priorities of the south of the world are development, consumption and growth, fighting poverty and economic justice; A significant portion of the mainstream sustainable development literature, which began in the north of the world, tends to focus on pollution and the unsustainability of growth and population growth (Munasinghe, 2009). According to the northern countries, the cause of environmental problems is excessive population growth, polluting technologies that consume insufficient and a lot of energy; the solution is an effective birth control policy, getting rid of foreign debts of underdeveloped countries, and transferring environmental technologies. According to the south, environmental problems are the result of the north's wasteful production and consumption approach and the south's own underdevelopment. Underdeveloped countries want to achieve absolute economic and social development and demand that developed countries transfer environmental technologies for free and that their debts be written off (Kaplan, 1997). There are different priorities and needs in sustainability and development between regions and countries. Although sustainable development policies, which are prepared with international documents and shaped according to the priorities of developed states, determine the main objectives, they are incomplete in

coinciding with the realities and priorities of states and societies. The fight against climate change is of no importance for people who die of hunger in African countries and struggle with epidemics because they cannot reach clean water. However, the fight against climate change is a much more important issue so that the sea level countries of Europe do not remain under the rising sea waters due to the increasing glacier meltdowns as a result of global warming. In other words, the sustainable development goals of the world's developed countries and developing or underdeveloped countries are different from each other. This situation has revealed an understanding of sustainable development created for the interests of developed countries in the long run.

As mentioned above, the main focus in underdeveloped countries is rapid development and there is no environmental priority. For this reason, environmental damage will be high as a result of rapid development instead of sustainable development (Tutar, 2011). In addition, there is a dominance of developed countries in sustainable development. This situation causes the policies of developed countries to dominate in terms of sustainable development. Under the name of global governance, the possibility of developed countries to dominate over developing countries is another subject of criticism (Bozoğlu, 2008). In fact, this idea is at the top of the biggest criticisms brought to sustainable development. The fact that underdeveloped or developing countries have almost no say in the formation of sustainable development policies has caused this concept to go out of its purpose. Since developed countries take care of their own interests in all circumstances, the decisions taken may be contrary to the principles of universal sustainable development, which reduces the rate of sustainable development in the long run. The success of the concept of sustainable development depends on various criteria. In this sense, it is important to ensure the balance of production and consumption and to fulfill the income justice as much as possible. It needs to break the link between the market economy and sustainable development. The market economy is a threat to sustainable development. It has been observed that the studies carried out so far have not produced successful results in the shadow of the market economy. Models that accept environmental thinking and adopt new approaches out of existing policies should be developed in this sense (Kılıç, 2012). Since the economic intervention of the state is reduced to a minimum in free market economies, which have become the dominant economic understanding in the world, it has become impossible to talk about universal sustainable development principles in an economic model where large companies set their own rules. For this reason,

it is important to implement sustainable development practices as a state policy.

Another criticism is that the idea of sustainable development is sometimes used as a tool for legitimizing emerging problems. Public managers should not use the universal principles of sustainable development for their own benefit and try to get support from here. Otherwise, sustainability and the concept of sustainable development can only be mentioned theoretically, and no results can be obtained in practice. The scarcity of resources in nature is based on the sustainable economy approach and gives priority to the protection of natural resources. But the resources that are scarce in free market conditions are an opportunity to produce alternative products. Therefore, in a sense, ecological crises create new opportunities for the market (Kılınc, 2012). While industrialized countries deal with problems that negatively affect them, when the same situation arises in the relations of non-industrialized countries with nature, they can apply economic systems that are contrary to the environment for them. Accordingly, it is seen as an undeniable fact that developing countries want to be able to produce profitably by using natural resources as much as possible in order to obtain more rent (Atabay and Kaçmaz, 2007). While developed countries can adopt and implement policies that will constantly maintain their ecological balance, they do not care about the ecological balance of these countries while providing annuities from underdeveloped and developing countries. However, an environmental problem that occurs in any region of the World can have a negative impact on all people.

On the other hand, the recommendation of developed countries for developing and underdeveloped countries is not accepted positively in some approaches such as dependency theory. Dependency theory emerged in Latin America influenced by traditional Marxist and structuralist ideas (Palma, 2008). In traditional Marxist thought, Marx analyzes capitalism through its expansionist and colonial character. According to the Marxist approach, capitalist countries do not refrain from implementing policies that will make underdeveloped countries dependent on them. When implementing sustainable development policies, developed countries usually always impose recommendations and criteria on other countries, such as compliance. The all-commoditizing understanding of capitalism and the need for growth are seen and criticized as its many ecological sources. According to critics, capitalism's response to ecological problems is aimed at producing "green-sensitive products" or discovering goals that do not lead to pollution. It is assumed that it will be sufficient to work on recycling, environmental protection tools and new methods of energy production. While doing this, capitalism assumes that it can get rid of the ecological

crisis by creating a new area of financial gain and innovations. The source of the existing capitalist ecological problems is related to being capitalist, that is, the system's own acceptances (Kovel, 2005). In other words, capitalist countries have created the market for the concept of sustainable development and used it for their own interests. It is not possible to implement sustainable development policies in the capitalist order in two respects. First of all, the prerequisite for the sustainability of any activity in capitalism is that the activity be profitable, at least the benefit to be obtained is more than the cost. Therefore, in a capitalist order, sustainable development can only be implemented in sectors with high profits. Therefore, it is not possible for a useless or unprofitable business to continue in terms of the sector. Ensuring social justice and equality, such as environmental protection, is often high-cost, unprofitable on the sector or company basis, and its return and social benefits are long-term issues (Doğaner, 2002).

III. CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the criticisms brought to sustainable development. Sustainable development is a concept with social, ecological, economic, spatial and cultural dimensions. Sustainable development means programming the life and development of today and the future in a way that will allow the needs of future generations to be met and developed without consuming natural resources by establishing a balance between human and nature. Any policy to be implemented without considering the criticisms brought to sustainable development will cause new problems to arise rather than solving them. The fact that developed countries, which advocate the necessity of sustainable development, produce industrial products that pollute the environment in underdeveloped countries and do not make efforts to prevent environmental pollution in these countries, disrupt the ecological balance of the world and show the hypocrisy of developed countries about the environment. Developed countries also use these countries as garbage dumps by sending their carcinogenic and non-recyclable industrial wastes to other countries. One of the issues that makes sustainable development the most controversial is that the concept is multidimensional and, accordingly, it contains elements that are very different from each other and contradictory to their coexistence. It is very thought-provoking that investments in green energy production in order to ensure sustainable development cause another environmental problem. For example, cutting trees to produce biomass energy and using them for energy production, and destroying forests to establish solar power plants are examples of these.

As a result, although sustainable development, one of the

most used concepts of recent years, always has positive connotations in the public, it also contains many issues to be criticized in the background. While applying the principles of sustainable development, it is extremely important to draw attention to the fact that this concept is not monopolized by any country or power, and the aim is to maximize the economic, ecological and social benefits of all humanity and future generations.

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