Epistemological approach to the concept of Sustainability
A research agenda in Economics and Management

José Luis Fernández Fernández

History and landmarks for a concept

• The economical miracle of humankind
  – Three Industrial Revolutions
    • Development whitout equity
      – Asymmetric, unfair, unsustainable development
  – Awareness of the limits to growth
    • Carlowitz (1793)?, Malthus (1798)?, Jevons (1805)?
    • Last third of 20th century and first years of 21st
• From sociocultural movement to political proposal
  – Conection between Ecology-Society-Economics
    • Pollution- no renewable resources- lost of biodiversity- poverty
The problem

• The Kantian epitome for Philosophy
  – What can I know?, What should I do? What can we expect?
• We know the answer to the third question... But we do not know exactly
  – What
  – We
    • Academics in the field of Economy and Management
    • Companies and Business beyond the Neoclasical Paradigm
  – Should have (ethical, prescriptive language)
  – To do (practical oriented action)
• How to boost a real Sustainable Development?

Towards a Taxonomy

• Levels
  – α Level
  – β Level
  • Stratums
    – Dimensions
      » Horizon
β1 Stratum

- Legal, Political, Institutional
  - International Politics
  - Multilateralism
  - State, Democracy, Laws
- *Conditio sine qua non*: Necessary Condition for Sustainability
- Law; Political Theory; Public Administration Sciences
β2 Stratum

• Anthropological, Socioeconomic, Ethical
  – Position of man in the cosmos
  – Efficiency, progress, responsibility, involvement

• Philosophical Anthropology; Philosophy of Nature (P. Theilard de Chardin, H. Jonas…); Moral Philosophy (Eco-justice, Human Rights’ Third Generation); Human Sciences; Social Sciences; Economics; Management

β3 Stratum

• Spiritual, Metaphisical, Religious
  – Amezement at reality
  – Holiness, purport, last goals of life, simbolic unvers
  – Myths, Arts, Rites, Institutional Legitimation

• The most transcendental, deepest and less empirical stratum
β2 Stratum’s dimensions

A Dimension
Sustainable society

B Dimension
Responsible enterprise

C Dimension
Personal leadership for sustainability

Macro-systemic

Meso-organizational

Micro-personal

Three concentric triangles

A dimension
Society

B dimension
Enterprise

C dimension
Person

x Point
Responsible economic growth

y Point
Social progress

z Point
Protection of environment
Two concentric triangles

- **p Point**
  Profit

- **q Point**
  People

- **r Point**
  Planet

- **B dimension**
  Enterprise
  TBL

- **C dimension**
  Person

The personal triangle

- **i Point**
  Autopoiesis: Consciousness, freedom, will, habits, virtues, character

- **j Point**
  Solidarity, Common Good

- **k Point**
  Stewardship
  Taking care of the Earth

- **C dimension**
  Person
β2 Stratum’s horizon

Economical Theory
From growth to development...

Management models
ISO 1401
Natural Capitalism
ZERI
Industrial Ecology
Footprint
Cradle-to-cradle
Circular Economy...

Business Ethics
Economic Ethics
Global Ethics...

Entreprise Theories beyond Neoclassics
Stakeholder, CSR, Long Term, Corporate Citizenship...

N

W

S

E