

The History of Sustainable Development - Connecting the Dots

Hidden until 11/01/2010 <http://westernfrontamerica.com/2010/11/29/history-sustainable-development-connecting-dots/>

1 November 2010 | 12:00 AM

The concept of sustainable development arose after the 1974 United Nations adoption of a Declaration for the establishment of a "[New International Economic Order](#)".

The document was written by developing countries and called for:

- The regulation of multi-national Corporations
- Authority to nationalize foreign property
- Authority to establish commodity monopolies
- The transfer of technology and technical assistance

The document showed clearly that the delegates to the U.N. General Assembly accepted the idea that governments should virtually control the economy. That equity was the primary objective. This document was largely ignored by developed nations. But many of these U.N. Delegates took these ideas to other U.N. conferences.

For example, the [1976 U.N. conference on Human Settlements \(Habitat I\)](#).

Here is an excerpt from the Preamble:

"Land...cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership is also the principle instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth, and therefore, contributes to social injustice..."

This preamble sets the stage for 65 pages of very specific land use recommendations. Among the many recommendations are:

- A-1. Redistribute population in accord with resources
- D-1. Government must control the use of land to achieve equitable distribution of resources
- D-2. Control land use through zoning & land-use planning
- D-3. Excessive profits from land use must be recaptured by government
- D-4. Public ownership of land should be used to exercise urban and rural land reform
- D-5. Owner rights should be separated from development rights which should be held by a public authority.

This established the direction of the U.N.'s recommendation.

Among the signers on behalf of the United States were Carla Hills, Secretary of HUD and William Reilly, Conservation Foundation and later the Administrator for the EPA. Also in attendance were:

- Nine agencies of the federal government
- Sierra Club
- National Audubon Society
- Friends of the Earth
- Conservation Foundation
- League of Women Voters

The term "sustainable development" entered the vocabulary during the 1990's and has virtually permeated every facet of American life. The term was first defined in the [United Nations 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment & Development called "Our Common Future"](#). The Commission was chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland who was also Vice-Chair of the World Socialist Party.

Our Common Future defines sustainable development to be:

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Sustainable development is illustrated to depict the proper balance between social equity, the environment, and economic development. Note that what is called sustainable is the perfect balance between policies related to these three all-encompassing areas of life.

The United Nations General Assembly asked the World Commission on Environment and Development, also called the Brundtland Commission, to "...propose long term Strategies for achieving sustainable development by the year 2000 and beyond..."

Five years later the plan called [Agenda 21](#) was unveiled at the [1992 Conference on Environment & Development](#). The conference was chaired by Maurice Strong who was also a member of the Brundtland Commission.

In it's 40 chapters, Agenda 21 addresses virtually every aspect of life. Each chapter presents many policy recommendations that member nations are expected to adopt.

Some of the more important chapters are:

- 5. Demographics & Sustainability
- 7. Human Settlements (the foundation for "sustainable communities")

10. Planning & Management of Land

18. Management of Water

30. The role of Business & Industry

38. International Mechanisms & Institutions (are seen to be the coordinators of worldwide sustainable development)

Agenda 21 calls for the creation of:

"...National strategies, plans, policies, and processes which are crucial in achieving a sustainable world."

Note: The ratification of the Biodiversity Treaty, Agenda 21, was never voted on by Senate after Dr. Michael Coffman presented this [map of the proposed development of the "wildlands"](#) under Agenda 21 in the United States.

Six months after his inauguration, President Bill Clinton issued Executive Order #12852 which created the President's Council On Sustainable Development on June 29 1993.

The Council's Membership included:

- Twelve Cabinet-level Federal Officials
- Jonathan Lash, Pres. World Resources Institute
- John Adams, Ex. Dir. National Resources Defense Council
- Dianne Dillon-Ridgley, Pres. Zero Population
- Michelle Perrault, International V.P., Sierra Club
- John C. Sawhill, Pres. The Nature Conservancy
- Jay D. Hair, Pres. World Conservation Union (IUCN)
- Kenneth L. Lay, CEO, Enon Corporation
- William D. Ruckelshaus, Chm., Browning-Ferris Industries & former EPA Administrator

Their purpose was to translate the recommendations set forth in Agenda 21 into public policy administered by the federal government. They created the American version of Agenda 21 called "[Sustainable America - A New Consensus](#)".

The ideas that came out of the U.N. conferences mentioned above, are emerging in public policy in the United States.

The Consensus Process - The most important dimension to the implementation of sustainable development policies.

Using the consensus process, an initiator carefully selects members of the affected group to participate on a decision making committee. The decision making committee never votes. Consensus is the process by which objections to the proposal are extinguished. This is contrary to the democratic process in which the affected group elects representatives. The representatives debate and then vote. The affected group then abides by the decisions. If the affected group is dissatisfied with the decision, they can elect new representatives to reflect their wishes. Using the consensus process, the affected group has no voice in choosing the decision makers.

Sustainable development was brought to America when President Clinton (initiator) initiated the President's Council on Sustainable Development. This decision-making committee began with Agenda 21 as its proposal. Its goal was to translate Agenda 21 into public policy.

An early achievement of the council was the development of 16 "We Believe" statements among which is No. 8.

"We need a new collaborative decision process that leads to better decisions, more rapid change, and more sensible use of human, natural, and financial resources in achieving our goals."

This new collaborative process is the "consensus process".

The PCSD operated from 1993 - 1999. Their first major publication was "Sustainable America - A New Consensus". It contained more than 150 policy recommendations taken directly from Agenda 21.

At the eleventh meeting of the council, after the recommendations had been developed, then Secretary of the Dept. Of Commerce, Ron Brown, said that his agency could implement 67% of the recommendations administratively using rule making authority. Other department secretaries reported similar numbers.

The recommendations covered a wide range of public policies. Among the most important are land use policies. Sustainable America says:

"Private land use decisions are often driven by strong economic incentives that result in several ecological or aesthetic consequences... The key to overcoming it is through public policies...(p.112)."

The 1990's saw an expansion of government control of land use. In 1997, the federal government already owned about 1/3 of all the land in America. State and local governments owned another 10%. The federal government designated and expanded 21 National Monuments, designated 43 million acres of "roadless" areas, and appropriated millions in grants to states and local governments and land trusts for the purpose of acquiring more private property. These activities were promoted by the land management agencies, all members of the PCSD.

Millions in grants were awarded to the American Planning Association between 1997 - 2000. The EPA and other agencies issued millions more in challenge grants to local governments and organizations for "visioning" projects.

During the 1990's there emerged a rash of visioning projects in towns and cities across the nation. They were typically called something like "Yourtown 2020". They were all the result of the PCSD and funded by grants by an agency of the government who was a member of the PCSD.

The EPA, for example, would issue challenge grants for visioning projects to NGO's (non-government organizations) and to local governments. The grant recipient would designate an initiator who would select the visioning council. Those selected would be politicians, agency bureaucrats, bankers, NGO leaders, and Businessmen. Those selected would be known in advance to support the goals of the initiator and most stand to gain financially from the implementation of the goals.

To spread this process across the country, the EPA coordinated a Smart Growth Network consisting of dozens of non-government organizations which included:

- American Planning Association
- The Conservation Fund
- The Natural Resources Defense Council
- The Sierra Club

All of these organizations have promoted government control of land use since the 1976 U.N. conference.

In each of the communities where visioning councils were established, their starting proposal was the recommendations of the PCSD. Their objective was to:

- Present PCSD recommendations as local goals for the community
- Through the consensus process, remove any objections that might arise
- Develop specific recommendations to achieve goals

The result became the "Yourtown 2020 Plan of Action".

This process takes typically 12 - 18 months during which the local initiator begins to issue press releases and to involve local media to introduce the idea of building a sustainable community. The idea is to build so much public support for the sustainable community as defined by the "Yourtown 2020 Plan of Action", that elected officials will have no choice but to rubber stamp it.

Funding continues to flow from government agencies to local governments and non-government organizations for the purpose of implementing sustainable development. For example, [HUD's Sustainable Community Regional Planning has recently awarded nearly \\$100 million for innovative regional planning proposals.](#)

Hundreds of NGO's were funded to launch the "visioning process" in communities across the country. An NGO (initiator) will begin the visioning process by carefully selecting representatives from various stakeholder groups (environment, business, education, agriculture, government) to serve as the visioning committee or council. Those chosen to serve on this council are well-vetted and known to support the goals of sustainable development.

The visioning process consists of series of meetings in which a trained facilitator leads the group of stakeholder representatives, to suggest goals for the community that will create the best possible future. These suggestions are typically written on a chalkboard, then organized into categories.

Since Agenda 21's 40 chapters and the hundreds of policy recommendations from the PCSD cover virtually every aspect of human existence, the visioning councils' ideas are easily organized into categories addressed by sustainable development documents.

Once the goals are identified and organized, the next step is to develop consensus. Consensus is NOT agreement. Consensus is the absence of expressed opposition. Testimony by attendees of such a meeting reveals that objections are put off by the facilitator. The questions are never answered and the objections are never made public and all are dismissed, ignored, or discredited.

[Agenda 21](#) is the Bible for Sustainable Development as outlined in its four sections:

Section I: Social and Economic Dimensions (8 Chapters)

Section II: Conservation and Management of Resources for Development (14 Chapters)

Section III: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups (10 Chapters)

Section IV: Means of Implementation (8 Chapters)

The PCSD's Sustainable America is a revised version of Agenda 21 that focuses directly on transforming domestic policy to implement the recommendations of Agenda 21. To bring about the perfect balance between the environment, the economy, and social equity (redistribution of wealth) in all developments.

Ironically, most of the people involved with the process have never heard of Agenda 21 or Sustainable America. But the sponsoring NGO or agency knows exactly what it is and what his role is in implementing its policies.

That's why every recommendation in the final land use development plan and the procedure for developing the plan can be traced back to the recommendations in Agenda 21 and Sustainable America.

[ICLEI, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives](#), is an international association of local governments as well as national and regional local government organizations who have made a commitment to sustainable development.

ICLEI provides technical consulting, training, and information services to build capacity, share knowledge, and support local government in the implementation of sustainable development at the local level. Their basic premise is that locally designed initiatives can provide an effective and cost-efficient way to achieve local, national, and global sustainability objectives.

[There are 609 dues-paying members \(counties/cities\) of ICLEI in the United States.](#) There are 18 members (counties/cities) in Virginia.

[ICMA, International City/County Management Association](#), is an organization of professional local government leaders building sustainable communities worldwide. The ICMA partners and works in concert with ICLEI.

ICMA provides technical and management assistance, training, and information resources in the areas of performance measurement, ethics education and training, community and economic development, environmental management, technology, and other topics to its members and the broader local government community.

[The American Planning Association](#) is one of many members of the PCSD. They partner with ICLEI & ICMA in the implementation of sustainable development. The APA published "[Managing Growth and Development in Virginia: A Review of the Tools Available to Localities](#)" to provide the tools necessary to implement sustainable development in Virginia.

[The Renaissance Planning Group](#) is an urban planning firm. They played a critical role in Florida's "Forever Program". The Forever Program is Florida's premier conservation and recreation lands acquisition program. Florida Forever is the largest public land acquisition program of its kind in the United States. With approximately 9.8 million acres of conservation land in Florida, more than 2.4 million acres were purchased under the Florida Forever and P2000 programs.

In 2007, the [Virginia state legislature passed HB 3202](#) mandating that counties with the prescribed growth rate establish high density urban development areas.

To date, 67 counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia are required to implement the very same policies called for in Agenda 21's biodiversity plan. This requirement by the state forces local governments to compromise your private property through rezoning measures called for in the Smart Growth program for sustainable development.

[The comprehensive land use plan](#) is being steered by planning groups under the guise of "protecting the environment" through manipulation by facilitated stakeholder consensus councils. Though their meetings are open to the public, they are void of any public input. The predetermined outcome severely restricts land use and compromises private property ownership in an already distressed market.

The Renaissance Planning Group is currently working with APA and ICMA to implement the policies of Agenda 21 and Sustainable America and to meet the requirements of HB 3202 in Virginia. [If successful, this is what Virginia and the surrounding states will look like on the biodiversity map.](#)

The Renaissance Planning Groups's current project is creating the vision and development of Chesterfield County's Comprehensive Land-Use Plan. Their local stakeholder representative group is called the "[steering committee](#)". You can find more information on the "visioning process", comprehensive land use plan, countrywide plan, steering committee, and the process [here](#). Research reveals that this process is typical of the process in every county in Virginia.

[Videos of most, but not all, of their "Steering Committee" meetings can be found here.](#) In viewing the videos, one can see that while the facilitator seems genuinely sincere in wanting to address concerns and answer questions that arise, he really never does.

Agenda 21 calls for environment and sustainable development principles to be put at the core of the curriculum K-12. There was a recent [survey of the progress of "The Greening Virginia Program K-12"](#) in 12 of the 134 school districts in Virginia.

[Here is the report on Greening Virginia Colleges and Universities.](#)

Greening Programs are at the core of the curriculum at every level of education nationwide as required by the policies set forth by the U.S. Department of Education.

Resources for more Greening Virginia (sustainable development) Projects can be found [here](#).

Despite the Senate's refusal to ratify the Biodiversity Treaty in 1994, the Agenda 21 policies called for by the convention, are being implemented nationwide. No matter where you live, rest assured Agenda 21 policies are being implemented in your community.

International City/County Management Association

777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500

Washington, DC 20002-4201

202.289.ICMA | fax 202.962.3500

TO CONTACT A SPECIFIC TEAM OR PROGRAM:

Advertising

- ♣ Job Ads advertising@icma.org
- ♣ PM Magazine/e-Newsletters info@mohamma.org

Alliance for Innovation <http://transformgov.org> 888-496-0944

Bookstore/Publications bookstoremanager@icma.org 800-745-8780

Cal-ICMA rossolinski@icma.org

Careers, Coaching & Job Advice careers@icma.org
Center for Performance Measurement cpmmail@icma.org
Center for Public Safety Management lmatarese@icma.org
Conferences, Workshops & Meetings customerservices@icma.org
Credentialing credentialing@icma.org
e-Debit Card (ICMA Members Only) customerservices@icma.org
Ethics Advice & Enforcement jdailey@icma.org
Executive Director (Robert J. O'Neill, Jr.) roneill@icma.org
Form of Government jdailey@icma.org
Fund for Professional Management fund@icma.org
General Inquiries customerservices@icma.org 800-745-8780
International Programs international@icma.org
ICMA Retirement Corporation investorservices@icmarc.org
Local Government Management Fellowship lgmfprogram@icma.org
Media Inquiries mfrisby@icma.org
Membership

- ♣ General Inquiries/Join ICMA membership@icma.org
- ♣ Dues/Renewal/IDs/Passwords customerservices@icma.org
- ♣ e-Debit Card Usage customerservices@icma.org
- ♣ Manager in Transition Program membership@icma.org

Next Generation Initiatives nextgen@icma.org
Order Inquiries customerservices@icma.org
Partnerships/Strategic Partners pshocket@icma.org
PM (Public Management) Magazine bpayne@icma.org
State/International Relations membership@icma.org
Subscriptions subscriptions@icma.org 800-745-8780
Survey Research surveyresearch@icma.org

Environment and Resources: This cluster relates to climate change, peak oil, ecosystems and water. Radical and rapid social and economic transformations will be needed to avert runaway climate change and ecological breakdown

Globalisation: This cluster relates interdependence, distribution of wealth and income, demographic change, employment, trade and finance. Rising inequalities and imbalances associated with the present path of globalisation risk the breakdown of the world economic and financial systems

World Development: This cluster relates sustainable development, demographic growth, poverty, environmental stress, food production, health and employment. The scandal of abiding poverty, deprivation, inequity and exclusion in a wealthy world must be corrected

Social Transformation: This cluster relates social change, gender equity, values and ethics,

religion and spirituality, culture, identity and behaviour. The values and behaviour on which the present path of world development is based must change if peace and progress are to be preserved within the tightening human and environmental limits

Peace and Security: This cluster relates justice, democracy, governance, solidarity, security

and peace. The present path of world development risks alienation, polarization, violence and conflict; the preservation of peace is vital in itself but is also a precondition for progress and for the resolution of the issues which threaten the future.