

# Mainstreaming Religion in Sustainable Development

- A Causal Layered Analysis

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## Abstract

*The paper deconstructs "sustainable development" by using Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) as a critical futures research framework. It does this in the context of understanding the issue of mainstreaming religion in leading International Development Institutions (IDI). The goal is a set of strategies for transforming IDI's vis a vis their current model of sustainability. The result, brought about by applying the CLA framework in an upward motion, reveals how religion could be introduced as a cross-cutting issue in the present development framework; advocating the ability of religion to eradicate poverty; level genders, save the environment, conduct good governance, and promote private sector development. Thereby, a former controversial issue is mainstreamed to a level of public acceptance.*

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## Introducing the Use of Causal Layered Analysis

The paper sets out to deconstruct the concept of sustainable development (SD). Working through the four layers of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), the analysis unveils the political, scientific, and discursive aspects of SD to finally disclose the myths beneath our understanding and use of the term. Then, in an *upward* motion, using the same four-level typology of CLA, findings at the root of a deconstructed understanding of SD are utilised in the generation of new myths, theories, strategies, and policies of an expanded concept of SD.

## The Strategic Case

The motivation is for mainstreaming the controversial issue of religion in the current development framework. Previous research<sup>1</sup> has pointed to an imbalance between IDIs financial engagements with religious institutions and their public communiqué on this matter. With growing media attention on this gap, IDIs are forced to stay in the offensive and seek strategies to reveal what might be called a "secret partnership".

Most IDIs are agents of national governments, funding their work through government subsidies. Revealing a state-church cooperation in a foreign policy setting challenges our belief in secular hegemony, and a negative response from the public can be expected.

Anticipating this situation is critical in maintaining credibility around IDIs and their continued activities. A timely smooth act of mainstreaming religion into the present development framework could steel momentum from critics.

Mainstreaming is a recognised practice within IDIs.<sup>2</sup> When new dimensions of, goals for, or strategies to development needs be incorporated into their existing framework, a comprehensive process is initiated. Broken down in steps mainstreaming includes preliminary research, policy formulation, alignment of resources, and finally, forming partnerships. Applied to the present case, the act of mainstreaming will occur in a backwards move towards researching and formulating credible policies capable of justifying financial engagements, and transforming IDIs partnership with religious actors from "secret" to "necessary".

### Applying CLA to the Case

As described by Sohail Inayatullah, and which this paper hopefully helps testify to, CLA can be used in a variety of settings and in a variety of ways. To a student, CLA is best used as a critical futures research framework with conclusions derived at logically and theoretically.<sup>3</sup>

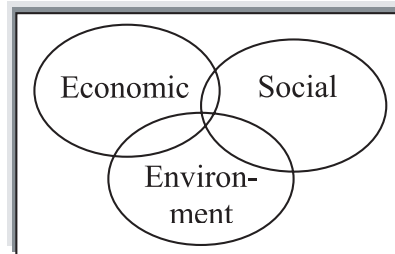
The biggest challenge lied in choosing the right forum that would allow religion to appear as "necessary". That forum would likely be in a problem/solution context. Looking to find a problem that religion could solve materialized through a trial-and-error process. First, it had to be a problem related to a concept well situated within mainstream development framework. The thought was to let a strong concept pull the issue of religion into the present development discourse. Second, the concept should fall within the category of a cross-cutting issue. If the concept was strong enough it will allow for religion to become a strategic solution rather than an "uneasy" end in itself.

Sustainable development holds the qualities mentioned above, and it represents a current problem among IDIs. As IDIs experience increasing difficulties in proving project and sec-

tor sustainability, creative solutions are needed to overcome public aid-fatigue as a consequence of disappointing monitored results, and to secure continued donor support as the increasingly popular practice of results-based leadership places further demand on proving sustainability.

The paper applies the 1987 Brundtland<sup>4</sup> definition on SD as "meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs." The definition is still widely accepted. It implies an important shift from an idea of SD as primarily ecological, to a framework that also emphasizes the economic and social context of development. At the SD Gateway<sup>5</sup> the definition is referred to in business terms as the Triple Bottom Line. The simple illustration below shows the overlapping nature of the three SD spheres.

Figure 1 Spheres of Sustainable Development



Source: Own illustration

The ideal behind CLA is to disrupt present knowledge categories and seek deeper layers of our consciousness so as to free ourselves of blinded understandings and envision better futures. Yet the present may still evolve around the litany and social science level of the old world, in which politics and strategy rule our visions according to positivistic standards, demanding us not to think too far outside the box. The intention in this paper is to combine the two stands: To use post-structuralism as a critical method to deconstruct SD, and to strategically apply the findings to a present scheme of knowledge.

## Causal Layered Analysis of the Concept of "Sustainable Development"

The following section provides a causal layered analysis of the concept of SD. The analysis is laid down in two opposite movements: The critical in a downward motion toward a deconstructed understanding of the concept; and the strategic in an upward motion toward defining a role for religion in development work.

### Downward Motion - a Critical Analysis

In maintaining a clear view of the analysis, each layer is organised around what the problem and solution is, who can solve it, and the context of these. At each level what was formerly presented as a solution is now questioned as a problem. The hands of responsibility changes accordingly, so does the context.

#### *The Litany Level*

First SD is made problematic, and at this level it translates into Earth's state of unsustainability being presented as a matter of fact. (Un)Sustainable development and (un)sustainability are usually regarded as two distinct concepts: Politicians often use them to their liking, while their differences are widely discussed in academic circles. Still, there tends to be general agreement on referring to (un)SD as human activity, and to (un)sustainability as state of nature.

The political development discourse surfaces the threats that a state of unsustainability poses to our planet and human life. Typical formulations are: "By the year ... so and so many people/children will live with/ suffer from/ die from/ ... (aids, eye-disease, poverty, hunger, unfair trade-relations, working with chemicals, child labour, etc.)" or "In so and so many years man will have caused/ destroyed/ ... (the ozone layer, species, rain forest to diminish, vanish)." This creates a politics of fear, and opens for a set of simply communicated answers that IDIs are able to provide.

Expressed in triple bottom spheres answers often mentioned to the sustainability

challenge are: Reduce pollution, freshwater shortages, global warming, forest destruction, species extinction, rich-poor gap, poverty, overpopulation, immigration, poor sanitation, aids, corruption, etc.; and promote development of global economic infrastructure, the rule of law and democracy, access to information, education, markets, medical care, etc. The important point here is not to give a precise account of the issues in question, only to flash headlines.

Responsibility is usually pushed aside by the general public and placed with institutions. Problems as well as solutions are defined on a global scale. What is interesting at this level is the way SD is presented as a response to a state of "unsustainability". This tells the story of nature being saved by human intervention. Had SD been suggested as a response to "unsustainable development", it would have told the story of an attempt to correct earlier mistakes. However, in the current light, by taking responsibility for global concerns, IDI's convey the image of coming to global rescue.

#### *The Social Science Level*

What was presented as a solution at the litany level is now discussed in greater technical detail. Questions are still placed within the triple bottom spheres: What environmental regulations are needed, and how to implement them and on to whom, (governments, companies, groups?); what economic adjustments are necessary to extend global trade networks and economic infrastructure, to change consumption patterns, to promote a fair distribution of goods and economic return, to increase private investment, to eradicate poverty, etc.; and what social aspects should be considered to succeed in introducing democracy, improving the health situation, increasing awareness on matters of gender, rights, birth control, etc.

Solutions to these concerns could be offered in a *three-legged response*, two of which work to reinforce each other. One is strategic, another evaluative, while the third is in challenge to the two first. The strategic considers what actions are necessary - at a technical level - to anticipate the above questions. Over the years, answers to unsustainability has been

debated along the lines of: Means and ends; top-down or bottom-up; state, market, or civil society; import or export substitution industrialisation; modernisation or leap-frogging; partnership, democracy, gender, basic needs, human rights, capacity, empowerment, enabling environment, civic engagements, principles of ownership, etc. It is characteristic that the conceptual development taking place for decades has tended to encompass and integrate more and more crystallised theories adding to the complexity of the development practice. Yet while the arguments stay true to the current framework of knowledge, effective sustainable development policies are in growing demand. The second leg of the response works to close this gap.

The only way to recognise a sustainable solution from an unsustainable one is by monitoring results. The second leg evaluates implemented strategies to prove and improve on SD practice. More often than not, though, monitoring activities post-project realisation only continues for another two to three years: (1) just long enough to prove a "lasting" effect - although today it is generally understood that this is not always the case; and (2) as a resource demanding activity, means are often not allocated to continue monitoring efforts long after project finalization. With a growing need for proving results that stem from SD activities the support industry of *monitoring* has developed to ensure delivery on demand, yet positive results are not guaranteed to materialize.

With two blind courses it is perhaps time to rethink the SD concept. The third leg of the response initiates this step at the next level.

While policies such as *participation and ownership* has been introduced as a way to make sustainability everybody's responsibility, institutions still carry the ability to monitor and communicate results. Consequences of unsustainability are still defined on a global scale, but solutions are now embedded in local environments. Interestingly, at this level SD is suggested as an answer to both unsustainability and to unsustainable development, since monitoring activities seek to improve on previous practice.

#### *Discourse/Worldview Level*

The third leg of the response challenges the SD concept by inviting contributions from unconventional sources to open a rethinking of SD. Looking for answers only at a social science level risks creating the illusion that it is possible to be sustainable without challenging the very system that makes us unsustainable. But what *system(s)* makes us unsustainable? To give an answer one must look towards knowledge categories that uphold the very levels of litany and social science - and then look to their alternatives.

#### **- SD as Political Ideology**

Friedmann<sup>6</sup> wrote that "*development has never been a scientific concept, it has always been ideology.*" The same could be said about SD. The SD concept gained widespread political acceptance during the '90s, upon its introduction in the Brundtland report, and is presently advocated by those who promote growth and/or development as well as by those who oppose it.

Originally the hobbyhorse of radical environmentalist on the far left wing, SD has grown into being *the* tool in obtaining political consensus. Today there really are no political alternatives to SD - in fact SD as political ideology is an alternative in itself. With SD gaining greater footage every day, even if increasingly questioned by the academia (next section), it is developing into a complete political ideology with principles of economic organisation comparable to those of free market mechanisms and state-led planning. While some would argue that SD is a natural synthesis of these, or of right and left wing politics, others see SD as essentially distinct from the traditional political continuum.

It could be argued that SD holds a complete worldview, which argues for a certain set of policies, whereas both free market mechanisms and state-led planning hold a set of principles, which determine the end goal.<sup>7</sup> This difference is what makes SD subject to endless debate, and also what gives it tremendous

potential as a new, progressive ideology. Already, elements of free market mechanisms as well as dimensions of state-led organisation are visible in the emerging SD ideology, yet this paper takes the stand that SD is qualitatively different from traditional political ideologies: In its vision, production mode, and global outreach. Western politics are often criticised for a lack of vision, for being based in a practical approach of realism. To this end SD offers a return to a politics of vision. Further more SD's production mode is essentially green and favours nature over man. It is borderless, and neglects national interest to embrace Mother Nature.

And SD is possibly different on one other stand: The notion of *partnership*. A partnership incorporates the ideal of an *informed democracy* with a sense of *comradery* in requiring the active involvement of and cooperation from the public. With these differences in mind it is likely that SD will depend upon an equally different dimension of governance - besides logic, rational thought, scientific proof, and authority. Identifying this dimension could be crucial in turning SD into a powerful ideology.

### - SD as Scientific Concept

While SD makes sense politically, this is not always the case academically. Commonly, researchers have written about what they would like development to be - development as project,<sup>8</sup> rather than trying to understand what it is - development as process.<sup>9</sup>

Hans Holmén<sup>10</sup> of University of Linköping offers insight to why SD is not always possible, probable, or preferable - to use a futures methodology. Holmén argues that various sustainabilities are difficult to combine and some seem not to be at all compatible. The following paragraphs built on Holmén's ideas.

Flooding, earth crakes, draughts, etc. can have devastating effects on local economies and cause social upheaval as a direct or indirect result. The Brundtland report supports not only "ecological sustainability" but talks of "ecological stability" to anticipate these events. We wish to control nature, and when we cannot, we suddenly find ourselves in a state of "poverty".

Environmental changes are taken for negative and are often blamed on human intervention. Theories of macro history seem forgotten. An example: Global warming will eventually open a sea route between Asia and Europe 30-40% shorter than the present one via the Suez channel.<sup>11</sup> This will extinguish some species and alter human livelihoods. Yet it is also likely to foster new economic and social ties, and animal life - including man - will most likely adapt to the new living conditions. As such, ecological developments are doomed to happen at the expense of social and economic sustainabilities, but are equally potential in letting new environments arise.

Upon the oil crises in the '70s and the tough economic times that followed in the '80s, sustainable economic growth without risks sounded appealing - but possible? In the western world it has been possible to maintain relative security while cultivating growth prospects. Though from a global perspective this kind of SD often happened at the environmental and socio-economic expense of the developing countries: Poverty has increased, also in absolute terms. In addition, the transitional changes needed in the developing world are unlikely to comply with SD policies. Instead, a break down and reformulation of social values and institutions can be expected.

When it comes to social sustainability the perspective changes - to this end it is also a question of whether or not sustainability is preferable. Are social systems always worth sustaining? Social sustainability is often portrayed as a balance between man and nature, between cultures, and any change of values or customs is seen as a loss of cultural heritage. Social institutions embedded in traditions of shifting cultivation, cast-system, patriarchy or female circumcision form part of our cultural legacy too, but should they be sustained? The answer is bound to be controversial. Yet so is a transition between systems: It will always be accompanied by much frustration and social tension and the reformulation of values is a natural way to adapt to new realities.

To sum up, Holmén argues that the SD assumption that development carries no envi-

ronmental, economic, or social costs is not realistic. In need of new ways of dealing with the consequences, solutions could be taking shape at deeper levels of our consciousness.

### - SD as Discourse

Concluding on the former sections suggests an alternative discourse on the SD concept. This could evolve and be applied in different ways. An immediate response would be to separate the use of the two terms. In this way difficulties in delivering scientific proof for the effect of SD would be overcome - advocating development in due course and sustainability in due course. As mentioned above, the two terms combined have high political value, but trouble with creating credibility around the concept as monitored results are falling short of stated goals, opens for a separation of terms, which could eventually help it regain credibility.

A change of discourse may also be triggered by a semantic analysis of SD. By disclosing hidden logics that causes our understanding of the term it may open for different modes of knowledge, and provide for alternate uses.

A quick look in the dictionary would reveal immediate internal complexities and prompt several questions: How is it possible to sustain and develop at the same time? What to sustain? What to develop? And who is to decide? The answer changes with the interpretations given to a deconstructed understanding of SD. Either IDIs develop to sustain. Or they sustain to develop. The first interpretation provides the most obvious power perspective. It leads thoughts to critical development theories on recolonisation and underdevelopment. It connotes on development as a zero-sum game. Raising it to a social science or litany level it creates a politics of fear as it implies using development as a means to conduct security politics. The latter invites the opposite understanding. It aspires to create synergies, to make development a win-win process. Expressed in business terms, a comparison to modern asset management theories<sup>12</sup> springs to mind as it implies that one plus one is three.

While IDIs would certainly identify with

the latter interpretation, political leaders are beginning to admit to the use of development institutions as an arm of national security policies. This point to a grain of truth in both interpretations. Both interpretations work to eliminate the presence of *risk* stemming from environmental, social and economic sources. Typical of a world obsessed with control, but with increasing levels of complexity and interdependence, is this at all a realistic goal?

To anticipate this dilemma perhaps focus should be given to expanding our knowledge paradigm and go beyond the positivistic tradition. Ensuring sustainability of future generations in empirical terms while attempting to eliminate the element of risk, all the while navigating in a world not in our total control... could be a certain disappointment. As it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain credibility around this approach, introducing a value dimension to the discourse, study and policies around the SD concept could provide the kind of guidance in sustainability work which lacks when empirical evidence falls short. Generating new mythical stories are crucial in triggering such developments.

Placing SD in a greater context of political, scientific, and discourse alternatives reveals the potential of SD as political ideology, and the problem with striving for sustainability in times of change, as well as the obstacles in the present discourse to justify the concept. At this level, both problems and solutions in rethinking the concept are found locally among members of the intellectual community. Solutions may be globally inspired, but apply to local thinking.

### Myth/Metaphor Level

At this deepest level of myths and metaphors, the ideals of SD are questioned as myths constituting unsustainability. SD is a product of western culture. While every culture is likely to have a philosophy on the SD concept, SD as applied by IDIs is undoubtedly a western idea. The following paragraphs will extract the myths behind the three spheres of the SD concept, and challenge them by going against the one way we try to reach them.

Behind each of the three spheres of SD lies

a myth on how the world would be if they were sustained. The myth behind ecological sustainability: The environment is our garden, our mother nature, our Eden. In an environment that never changes, in a garden unspoilt, we will live in *harmony* forever. Eden will persist, and we will never have to part from paradise again. The myth behind social sustainability: Our social life is our culture, our identity, ourselves. Social sustainability would indicate that our culture has survived and our sense of identity is intact. Social sustainability appeals to our instinct of *survival*. The myth behind economic sustainability: Economics is *power*. Economics are arguably the most powerful means known today. A sustained economy with sustained growth is a myth for sustained power. Economic sustainability also appeals to an instinct of survival as it sustains social status. To sum up, at a mythical level SD strives for power to ensure our survival in order to live in eternal harmony.

Behind each of these myths lies an even greater myth. One of the greatest narratives of modern western culture is that of controlling the course of events. In a SD context this makes us believe that in a linear fashion we are headed towards a world of ideal sustainability. It also makes us believe that we are unsustainable when we do not see this happen. SD and unsustainability are two sides of the same coin. If SD is questioned as a concept, it is necessary to disregard the perception of the future as de facto "unsustainable" as well. Turning the problem 180° spells: The future is sustainable! Could this be a problem? Experience tells us that not many things stay the same: That the only "sustainable" element in life is that of unsustainability. This could indeed become a problem. It would call the future essentially uncontrollable, it would call the efforts of IDIs pointless; and it would call for what will not change over time.

Most of the material world we know today is likely to change. Looking to find a solution that at the same time will nurture a sense of security, and give renewed meaning to the IDIs work is most likely found in the non-material world. When fighting unsustainability we are essentially fighting a dark destiny while believ-

ing that man eventually *will* conquer nature. Yet if the future is sustainable, a little room is given to a positive destiny and a more humble interpretation of man's influence on nature in that we cannot control the future. SD would be an expression of hope rather than fear, sustainability a beautiful picture worth striving for.

Solutions at this level can sound banal. The challenge lies in living by them, politicising them. Solutions can hardly be designed rationally. The one capable of evoking such emotions is likely to have power, and has not traditionally been an earthly figure. Myths of controlling the future are locally embedded; mythic solutions are equally locally grounded, but often aspire to reach further.

### Upward Motion - a Strategic Perspective

The richness of the CLA springs from the ability to move up and down the layers as to integrate different levels of analysis and different ways of knowing. Thereby alternatives appear which can translate into specific policy recommendations when raised through the layers of myth, worldview, and discourse.

The former section unpacked SD by inquiring into deeper levels of the concept. Now, in an upward, strategic motion using the same four level typology of CLA, strategies are developed to let IDIs overcome the challenging situation described in the introduction and mainstream the role of religion in the present development framework. Instead of beginning at the litany level, the analysis picks up where it ended, at the deepest mythical level. In this way it allows for a strategic use of the CLA framework and of a deconstructed understanding of the SD concept.

### Myth/Metaphor Level

The recognition of the future as essentially sustainable and uncontrollable is mentioned above as an alternative view to the problem of unsustainability, and it suggests exploring a solution in the non-material, or spiritual, world. When applied to the case, this of course does

not imply a discontinuation of activities. But it does call for acknowledging the need for greater given meaning attached to the work of IDIs and the need for new mythical stories to support this development.

In revising their purpose, IDIs need redefine stated development goals. A poverty-free world is the commonly declared primary goal of all development activities today. It is a humanitarian goal shared by many, contested by few, but still it is a politically chosen goal and as such subject to change at any time. To prepare and strengthen IDIs credibility in the process of revealing their partnership with religious agents they need to move beyond working for a political goal and towards fulfilling a divine task. When raised through the layers this purpose will ideally give rise to renewed public awe and confidence in IDIs and their work.

The myth of control, of IDIs ability to steer the course of events, needs be stretched to include a myth of divine nature. Practically, to initiate new abstract, mythical stories on IDIs "larger than life" purpose, it will be necessary to engage a human being capable of evoking such emotional changes. It would be a person with the authority to speak on behalf of the spiritual world, on behalf of God, and express His wish for human progress (spiritually as well as materially). These responsibilities are typically reserved to the priesthood or leaders of religious institutions. For the sake of IDIs credibility, an acknowledgement of their work within these circles will be of great importance. Together they should communicate the right and respon-

sibility of IDIs to undertake the work of God and help fulfill the divine task.

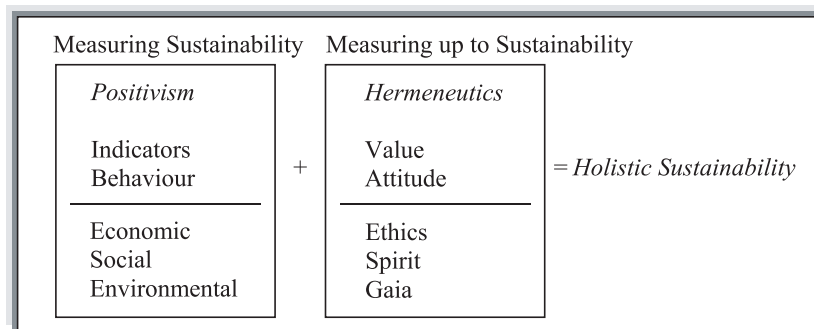
With a mythical purpose added to IDIs traditionally practical or tactical *raison d'être*, the concept of SD also takes on new dimensions.

### Discourse/Worldview Level

Integrating a new discourse on sustainability from an academic position would be of theoretical nature. A first step in this process has already been taken. New and more embracing definitions of poverty as defined by Nobel Price winner, Amartya Sen, has already been acknowledged by IDIs. They agree to the importance of a non-material dimension in poverty-reducing development work. This is where the analysis picks up on the IDIs work on adopting a non-material dimension in their sustainability approach and explores how religion - as a shared value-base and source to social movement - can have a role to play.

Adoption of new definitions can trigger new policies. Alan Fricker of Sustainable Futures Trust, New Zealand has worked in the cross-field of futures studies and sustainability studies for years. In "Measuring up to Sustainability"<sup>13</sup> he asks not how to measure sustainability, but how to measure up to sustainability. Fricker suggests reducing emphasis on the material, physical, external manifestations of sustainability as they merely measure sustainability, and turns to the internal manifestations of sustainability, the non-material, the subjective, to provide an avenue to more sustainable results. Fricker's ideas are tentatively illustrated below

Figure 2 Holistic Sustainability



Source: Own illustration, inspired by A. Fricker (1998)



## ..... MAINSTREAMING RELIGION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

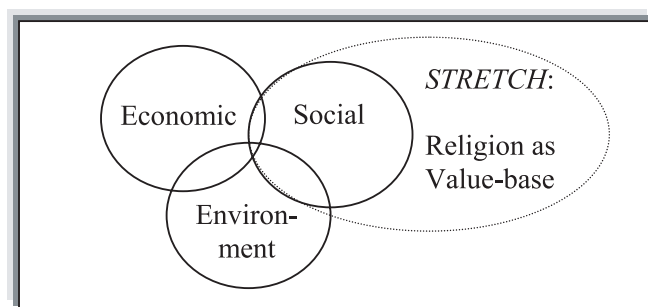
in a framework which is becoming more and more popular; holistic sustainability:

The next step is to apply this understanding of the sustainability term to the previously explained mainstream framework on SD (figure 1). At the SD Gateway sub-categories of each of the three Triple Bottom spheres are listed. Under the heading of social SD sensitive issues such as culture, indigenous knowledge, women's capacities, etc. are discussed. Mediating the issue of religion would find its

renewed respect for environmental concerns as well.

The above example is a small scale theoretical experiment on how a new discourse on the beneficial relation between SD and religion could be developed within the academia. Engaging new research efforts to explore this subject is key in letting SD fulfill its strategic role within the IDIs. New theorizing on syntheses between science, politics, and religion<sup>15</sup> could prove a new matrix of knowledge, and over time a new worldview could emerge. In the

Figure 3 Extended sphere of Social Sustainable Development



Source: Own illustration

space in this dimension as well. Practically, it would involve stretching the idea of social sustainable development to include a "value-base".

Here, it is important to note the applied understanding of religion as an absolute value-base; no concern is given to the study of religion as a relative issue. It refers to the kind of guidance that religion provides and to its capacity as a driver for social change. Charles Harper and Bryan LeBeau have made a study on the state of religion in American society and found a trend moving beyond secularization towards religion re-emerging on a macro level, tentatively expressed as "majority moral".<sup>14</sup> Seen in this context it points to the trend of turning development into a moral concern, and backs the argument of partnering with religious actors to move beyond political engagements and bypass scientific shortcomings. The overlap of the spheres is a reminder of the influence that any changes in one sphere have on the others. Introducing religion in the social sphere could mean a new era for economic activity and

short term, it would create renewed interest in the SD/sustainability concept. It would likely ease the pressure on IDIs to demonstrate results in SD as a redefinition of the concept is in the process. Potentially, it could ease the difficulties of the IDIs with changing the status of religion in development work from "secret" to "necessary". Catching momentum of this wave could be paramount to the survival of IDIs. Politicizing the matter helps maintain the power-grid in the hands of the IDIs.

### Social Science Level

If a new kind of understanding of sustainability is to penetrate political reality, this will be a step for the IDIs to take in partnership with a religious actor. At this level it becomes almost impossible to speak of religion in abstract terms. Affiliation to a specific religion, god, church, and priesthood begs to be identified at this level. Yet for the sake of analysis it can be argued from several positions<sup>16</sup> that world religions have several traits in common. E.g. they

have all identified some kind of code of ethics as well as developed a social dimension, which together guide social interaction. Further comparative studies would equally agree to similarities in concepts of good and bad and suggest a shared underlying basis for belief in the holy.<sup>17</sup>

Above, the currently credible notion of sustainability was theoretically extended to make room for a religious dimension. This level explores how this could unfold itself politically if IDIs were to mainstream the role of religion in development practice. With a re-ordered knowledge base, the aim is a set of innovative policies ready to be questioned and analyzed in the established academia. It works from the above stretched framework on sustainability and is organized around sub-categories of social sustainability provided by SD Gateway.<sup>18</sup> Proposing a full scenario is an empirical case of comprehensive nature and the ideas are not in any way meant to represent an exhaustive list of possible policy recommendations - just short visions of how the future could be designed.

*Poverty:* This category should be given extra attention. As mentioned, poverty eradication is IDIs commonly declared goal in all development work. Thus, connecting a religious purpose to this dimension is essential for developing credible cross-cutting policies. Different churches' relationship to society's poorest has varied over time as the idea of suffering has been subject to change. Today, no political elite of any country would assign poverty to people's own misfortune or sinful behavior - as it was usual in earlier times. Neither would any religious institution acting on the global political scene. Among IDIs political supporters - and non-supporters of the anti-globalization movement - a religious ethic has prevailed concerned with a moral responsibility towards the global material well-being of all people.

Thus on a political platform it seems feasible to form partnership with a church. Churches are likely to be the institution closest to materially deprived people. In a majority of societies different churches provide shelter, food, medicine, and education to those with limited means. A partnership would help promote work from a multiple understanding of the

poverty concept; respectful of the spiritual deprivation that follows and causes sustained economic stagnation and degradation. The church can help bring IDIs closer to the poor and mediate between them. The partnership might prove indispensable to halve world poverty by 2015.<sup>19</sup>

*Good governance:* A priority with regards to halving world poverty. A principle with roots in a base of social values that guides what is right and wrong in economic and environmental sustainability. Partnering with God would add a dimension of good governance to social sustainability. It lives up to requirements of being embedded in local environments along development principle of participation and ownership. Religion as a dimension of good governance calls for peace, honesty, and respect and adds to the developmental effect good governance has besides benefits of improved economic growth. It supports solutions to problems of good governance in issues of conflict, corruption, and terrorism; all issues on the international development agenda.

*Gender:* Another cross-cutting issue on the agenda. Women are usually those regarded most impoverished in the community and in the family. Also, they tend to be closest to the community church. Enhancing women's participation in society by way of a church can help improve sustainability.

*Health:* The threat of HIV/AIDS is overwhelming, especially in Africa and South Asia. Medical cures are rare and expensive, placing all trust and hope of eradication in physical infrastructures can prove dangerous if results are late. Counter-attacking the problem from a spiritual angle could prove effective. The church traditionally appeals to non-pre-marital sex and monogamy. This would help sustain the labor force and a much needed social infrastructure, which is often under severe pressure.

*Environment:* The church could also hold a role in the overlapping sphere of the environment. At the heart of all the major religions, there is an environmental ethic of one sort or another. A strong religious ethic could have a powerful influence on people's attitude towards the environment, and the link can be a powerful

ally in sustainable conservation programs.

*Private Sector Development:* If IDI's are partnering with a church - cooperating to do the work of God - then all colors of their palette of activities could be argued to have a divine purpose. This would also apply to their interest in promoting the driving wheels behind material progress; the private sector. If IDIs enter partnership with religious institutions, pursuit of material progress is made part of our sustainable legacy to future generations.

The recommendations fit well into the currently emerging discourse on a more holistic development approach. Poverty-eradication is turned into a deity justified goal. The previously pointed out "secret partnership" with the religious community is free to be revealed and can even be said to be an act of great foresight. At this level religion has been transformed into cross-cutting political recommendations on sustainability as an act of strategic survival. When analyzed in deeper layers the policies risk offending our common understanding, but when raised to policy levels they suddenly appear acceptable. This is partly due to the change of public opinion already happening, but could also be ascribed to the general bliss of ignorance characterizing these upper levels.

### Litany Level

No other level makes for as efficient a test as the litany level does on assessing the public validity of a policy. The workings at deeper layers should have created a popular understanding that conducting sustainable development is a lengthy process and results are not ripe for harvest the same year, the year after, or perhaps even the decade after. Patience should prevail and with a proactive prayer we do the best we can while maintaining faith, also when met with disappointment. When met with opposition, making a simple reference to the "necessity" of continued activities and/or the lack of a shared value-base transcending development efforts should be sufficient to shield against further inquiry. It should be possible to cultivate a politics of hope in replacing a politics of fear. Instead of presenting Earth's state of unsustainability as an argument for continued develop-

ment activities, IDIs now have a credible reason for pointing to the moral responsibility of continuing development work, even when empirical evaluations suggest otherwise.

This level ends the analysis on mainstreaming the role of religion in sustainable development.

### Conclusion

By way of a CLA, sustainable development is unpacked and reintroduced into the strategic environment of International Development Institutions. For every layer, SD evolves as a deconstructed concept, free of its political, scientific, and discursive understanding, to finally appear as a product of myths and fears, which blocks its own realization.

In a strategic upward motion, this argument is used to mainstream the role of religion in IDI's sustainability approach. Driving on the insights of the critical downward analysis, the SD concept is theoretically stretched to include religion as a values base arguing for the good and right in sustaining development activities even when empirical evidence is lacking. This holds several advantages. It will ideally give rise to renewed public faith and awe in IDI's and the work they do as problems of unsustainability are overcome, and at the same time IDIs are able to disclose, even justify, their involvement with religious actors. By teaming with religious institutions IDIs are arguably doing what God endorses, and their credibility is untouchable. Politicizing the matter makes for some interesting ideas, some of which are already visible in today's development practice.

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### Notes

1. S. Tikjoeb, "Mainstreaming Religion in Sustainable Development - A Futures Perspective", 2002.

2. J. D. Wolfensohn, "New Gender Mainstreaming Strategy", *World Bank Speeches*, 2002.
3. S. Inayatullah, *Causal Layered Analysis: Unveiling and Transforming the Future*, Essay, 2003: 10.
4. G. H. Brundtland, '*Brundtland Commission*', UN World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987.
5. SD Gateway, 'www.sdgateway.net', A site hosted by the International Institute for Sustainable Development for the Sustainable Development Communications Network, funded by Canadian International Development Assistance. <http://sdgateway.net/topics/74.htm>
6. J. Friedmann, "*Empowerment*", Cambridge Mass, Blackwell, 2002
7. Core curricular, "*Development Studies*", Master Program at Copenhagen Business School, Notes
8. As Jerry Taylor of the Cato Institute noted: "Imagine the economic planner of 1890 attempting to plan for the needs of today. Whale oil for heating, copper for telegram messages, rock salt for refrigeration, and draft horses for transportation and agriculture would all be high on the list of scarce resources he would worry about sustaining 100 years hence." The example illuminates how difficult it is to define that *project*. A look to the *process* reveals why.
9. Hans Holmen, "The Unsustainability of Development", *International Journal of Economic Development*, International Symposium on Sustainable Development, Vol. 3, no. 1, 2100 [http://spaef.com/IJED\\_PUB/v3n1.html](http://spaef.com/IJED_PUB/v3n1.html)
10. *Ibid.*
11. Danish Broadcasting Company, "Danmark er vokset", DR Online, Science / IT, November, 2003 <http://www.dr.dk/videnskab/minitema/is>.
12. Metaphor taken from W. Baue, '*Rio +10 Series: The Rhetoric of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*', SocialFunds.com, 2002.
13. A. Fricker, "Measuring up to Sustainability", *Futures*, 30, 4, 1998: 367-375
14. C. Harper and B. LeBeau, "*Social change and religion in America. Thinking beyond secularisation.*" Appearing in a recent edition of the online project: The American Religious Experience, a joint university project. <http://are.as.wvu.edu/>, 2002.
15. Literature is growing in volume on this matter. It is most easily available on the Internet, '*Science, Religion, and Development*', <http://www.bisharat.org/srd/lib.cfm?catnum=2>, Bisharat Media Development Associates, sponsored by International Development Research Centre, funded by Canadian International Development Agency. Bahá'í World News Service, '*New approach to development combines science and religion*', 2000 [www.bahaiworldnews.org/story.cfm?STORYID=73](http://www.bahaiworldnews.org/story.cfm?STORYID=73)
16. C. McIntosh, "*Symbolic Gardens in Europe and the Far East*", a slide lecture presented at the Palladian Academy conference, Vichenze, Italy, January, 1997. Dr. McIntosh, author of *The Rosicrucians* (Samuel Weiser Publications), and member of UNESCO's Educational Office, Hamburg, Germany, mentioned that the United Nations had recently sponsored a conference of its own in which alchemy was considered as a possible tool for the creation of new alloys.
17. Whether studied from a biological angle as a genome, from a sociobiological or cultural angle as a meme, from a sociocultural angle as an evolution, from a sociological angle as a community ethic (Principia Cybernetica Web, '<http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/Default.html>', 1993), from a mythical (Joseph Campbell, '*The Masks of God*', New York, Penguin USA, 1991) or theological (Bahá'í) angle as a spirituality, they all seem to agree at a very general level on a set of shared characteristics between world religions. The current movement of religious synergies also testifies to this, e.g. The Bahá'í Faith dominant within the UN (Bahá'í International Community, United Nations Office: [www.bic-un.bahai.org/](http://www.bic-un.bahai.org/)), the youngest of today's world religions. At [www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org) it is stated: "All religions share a common foundation. Aim and purpose are one".
18. [www.theology.edu](http://www.theology.edu), hosted by Quartz Hill School of Theology
19. [www.sdgateway.net](http://www.sdgateway.net), hosted by IISD/CIDA
20. Suggested by UN and a common goal for all IDIs.

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