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Sustainability thoughts 194: How can we show that the sustainable development solutions to the socio-environmental sustainability problem created by traditional market thinking by 1987 are both partial and without clear priority solutions?

By

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Abstract

The Brundtland commission documented the socio-environmental sustainability problem created by Adam Smith's traditional market thinking 1776-1987 as it was presented as a golden economy paradigm, a market that create no social and environmental externalities, but that assumption was wrong. There were full solutions and partial solutions to that socio-environmental sustainability problem, and the Brundtland Commission chose a partial solution among all solutions available in 1987 and called them sustainable development solutions. And as no priority was set on the problem that needed to be tackled first this led to a free for all school of thoughts competition and confusion, each school of thoughts undermining the goals of the other school of thoughts, opening the door to different forms of sustainable developmentwashing. And this raises the questions, How can we show that the sustainable development solutions to the socio-environmental sustainability problem created by traditional market thinking

by 1987 are both partial and without clear priority solutions? What are the expected implications of this?

Key concepts

Golden paradigms, Flawed paradigms, Sustainability, Sustainable development, Sustainability market, Green market, Red market, socially friendly sustainable development, environmentally friendly sustainable development, Optimality, Abnormalities, Socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development, Perfect traditional market

Introduction

1) The socio-environmental sustainability problem created by 1987 by the use of traditional market thinking

The structure of the critical socio-environmental sustainability problem created by the working of the traditional market by 1987 has been recently highlighted (Muñoz 2024) as detailed in Figure 1 below:

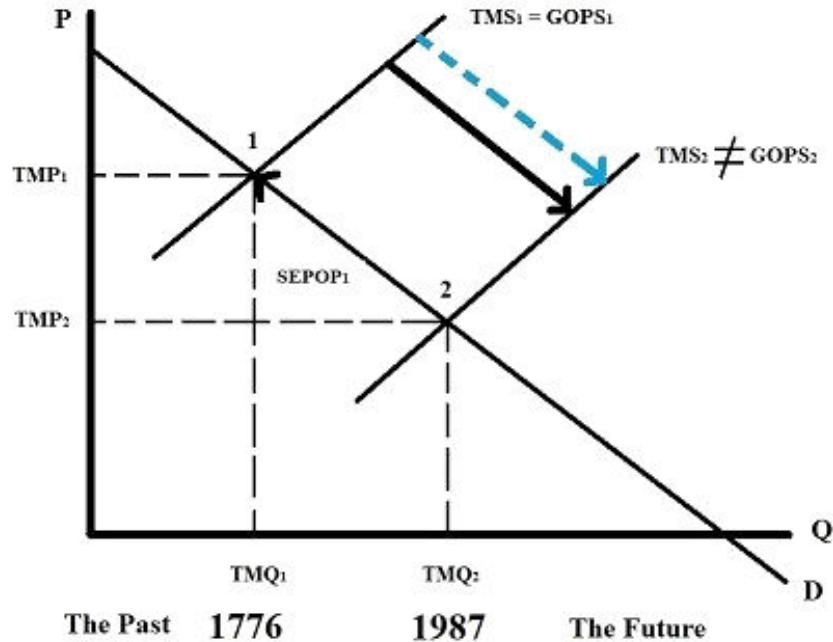


Figure 1 The socio-environmental sustainability problem(SEPOP1) created by the flawed traditional market from 1776 to 1987

Figure 1 above tells us that by 1987 the supposedly golden economic paradigm model(TM) has led the socio-environmental problem(SEPOP1) found between point 2 and point 1, a problem that expands as the traditional market races to producing to the lowest traditional market price possible and shift to the right of point 2. Hence, action needed to be taken in 1987 to put an end to the source of this socio-environmental sustainability problem.

2) The full solutions and partial solutions available in 1987 to partially or fully address the problem head on

There were full solutions and partial solutions to the socio-environmental sustainability problem in 1987 as shown in Figure 2 below:

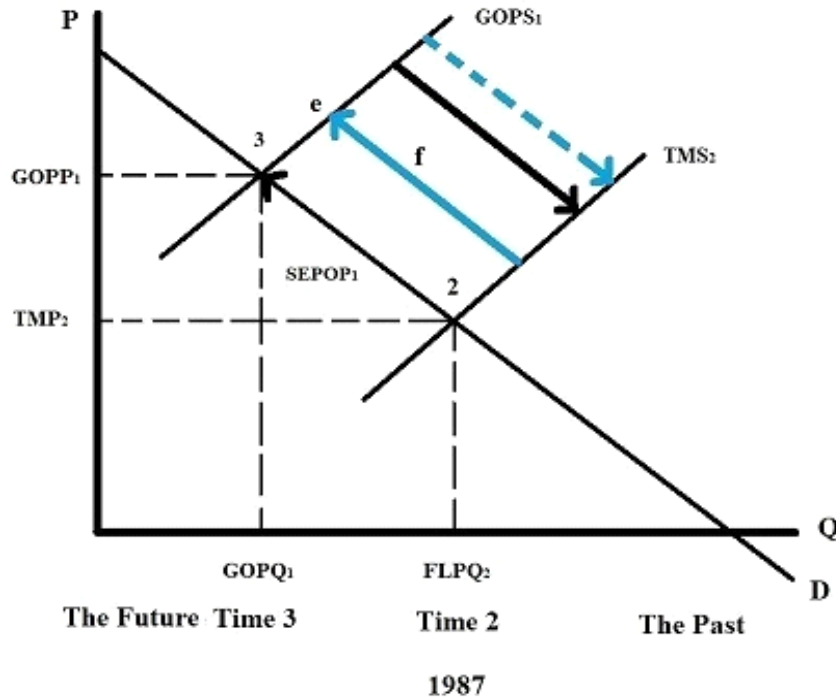


Figure 2 The full and partial corrections to the sustainability problems created by the traditional market model in 1987

Figure 2 above shows that i) there is a full solution at point "e" where the source of the socio-environmental sustainability problem (SEPOP1) is fully addressed as there is no longer a socio-environmental sustainability problem at point 3; and ii) there is a partial solution at point "f", where the source of the socio-environmental sustainability problem (SEPOP1) is partially addressed as there is still some remaining socio-environmental problem between point 2 and point 3. The nature of the full solutions and of the partial solutions varies depending on the type of solution that is given priority. For example, if addressing fully the environmental sustainability problem is the priority, then the full solution at point "e" would be a green market under perfect green market thinking or if addressing partially the environmental sustainability problem is the priority, then the partial solution at point "f" could be an environmentally friendly sustainable development model or a dwarf green market model; and in that case environmentally friendly sustainable development thinking and dwarf green market thinking would be needed at point "f" respectively. Sustainable development ideas took shape in 1987 (WCED 1987) while green market ideas (Muñoz 2016) and dwarf green market ideas (Muñoz 2019) have been recently pointed out. Notice that all the solutions to the socio-environmental sustainability problem (SEPOP1) in Figure 2

above are to the left of point 2 and into the future, meaning that to solve the source of the socio-environmental sustainability problem created by traditional market thinking by 1987 we need to leave that thinking behind, which is why the World Commission on Environment and Development(WCED 1987) called for going beyond business thinking as usual to solve the social and environmental sustainability issues of the day, and they called this thinking sustainable development thinking. In other words, you should not expect to be able to solve a sustainability problem created by and driven by traditional market thinking using the same thinking, a shift to a higher level model of thinking is required. Finally, notice that at any point between point 2 and point 3 in Figure 2 above such as at point "f" production and consumption is less than production and consumption in the traditional market at point 2, and more than the production and consumption in a fully corrected market at point 3.

3) Linking the partial solutions to the sustainable development solutions advanced by the Brundtland Commission in 1987

Hence, the Brundtland commission documented the socio-environmental sustainability problem created by Adam Smith's traditional market thinking 1776-1987(Smith 1776) as it was presented as a golden economy paradigm in 1776, a market that create no social and environmental externalities, but that assumption was wrong. There were full solutions and partial solutions to that 1987 socio-environmental sustainability problem as mentioned above, and the Brundtland Commission chose a partial solution among all solutions available in 1987 and called them sustainable development (SD) solutions. In other words, the Brundtland Commission (WCED 1987) chose sustainable development solutions for a socio-environmental sustainability issue, it chose partial solutions such as the one found at point "f" in Figure 2 above instead of a full sustainability solution as the one found at point "e". And as no priority was set on the problem that needed to be tackled first to solve this 1987 socio-environmental sustainability problem , then, this led to a free for all school of thoughts competition and confusion, each school of thoughts undermining the goals of the other school of thoughts, opening the door to different forms of sustainable developmentwashing. For example, point "f" could be a socially friendly sustainable development point or an environmentally friendly sustainability point or a socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development point under unclear priorities. And this raises the

questions, How can we show that the sustainable development solutions to the socio-environmental sustainability problem created by traditional market thinking by 1987 are both partial and without clear priority solutions? What are the expected implications of this?

Goals of this paper

i) To point out the structure of the sustainable development solutions to the socio-environmental sustainability problem the world faced in 1987; ii) To highlight the structure of socially friendly sustainable development, of environmentally friendly sustainable development; and of socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development if correcting social issues, environmental issues, and socio-environmental issues respectively is the priority solution; and iii) To point out the multi-goal structure of the sustainable development framework given to us by the Brundtland Commission in 1987.

Methodology

First, the terminology used in this paper and some operational concepts are given. Second, the structure of the sustainable development solutions to the socio-environmental sustainability problem the world faced in 1987 is shared. Third, the structure of the socially friendly sustainable development solutions if correcting the social sustainability problem has the priority is highlighted. Fourth, the structure of the environmentally friendly sustainable development solutions if correcting the environmental sustainability problem has the priority is stressed. Fifth, the structure of the environmentally friendly sustainable development solutions if correcting the socio-environmental sustainability problem has the priority is pointed out. Sixth, the multi-goal structure of the sustainable development framework given to us by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 is shown. And seventh, some food for thoughts and relevant conclusions are provided.

Terminology

TM = Traditional market

GOP = Golden paradigm

FLP = Flawed paradigm

P = Market price

D = Demand

TMS = Traditional market supply

GOPS = Golden paradigm supply SD = Sustainable development

SFSD = Socially friendly sustainable development

GOPP = Golden paradigm market price

FLPP = Flawed paradigm market price

EFSD = Environmentally friendly sustainable development

SEFSD = Socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development

SEPOP = Socio-environmental sustainability problem

RSEPOP = Remaining sustainability problem

Q = Quantity produced and consumed

FLPQ = Quantify produced and consumed in the flawed paradigm

Operational concepts

- 1) **Optimal development**, the one displayed by golden market paradigms.
- 2) **Flawed development**, the one displayed by flawed market paradigms.
- 3) **The traditional market**, the flawed market paradigm behind the creation of socio-environmental problems.

4) Sustainable development, the thinking that is aimed at bringing the world away from traditional market thinking through development that is socially and/or environmentally friendly.

5) Sustainability, the thinking that aims at shifting traditional market thinking to higher level market thinking such as red markets, green markets, and sustainability markets through social, environmental, and socio-environmental cost internalization, respectively.

6) Full solution, the one that fixes the sustainability problem by internalizing the source of unsustainability.

7) Partial solution, one that only patches the source of unsustainability.

8) Distorted traditional market prices, the traditional market tool behind socio-environmental problems.

The structure of the sustainable development solutions to the socio-environmental sustainability problem the world faced in 1987 given to us by the Brundtland Commission

As indicated in the introduction, the Brundtland Commission recommended in 1987 sustainable development thinking (SD) to solve the socio-environmental sustainability problem and move the world away that way from traditional economic thinking, but they did not set clear priorities as sustainable development has the limitation that it can mean many things at the same time, depending on the competing school of thoughts implementing it as shown in Figure 3 below:

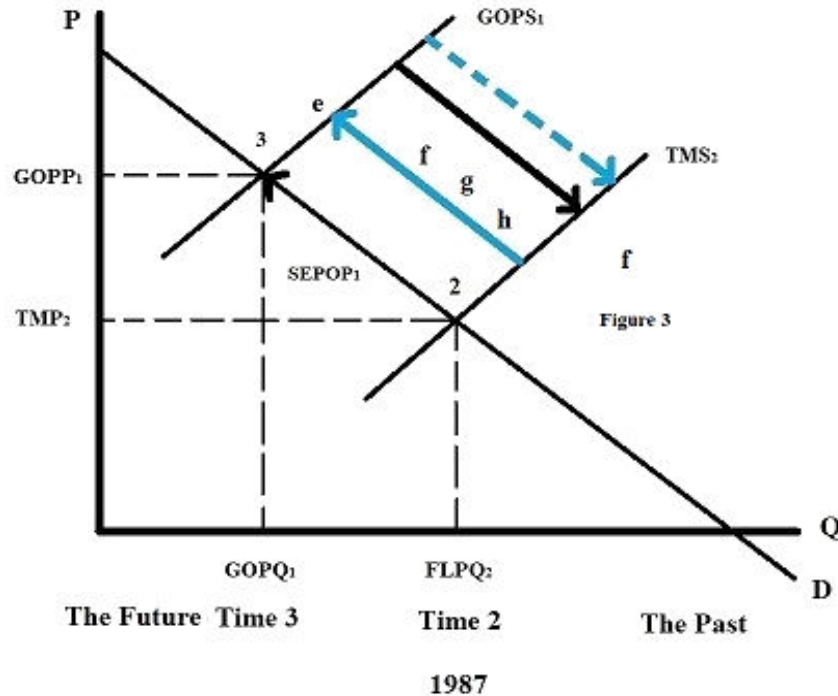


Figure 3 The partial sustainable development solutions to the socio-environmental sustainability problems created by the traditional market model by 1987

Figure 3 above shows three different sustainable development points coexisting at the same time: i) a socially friendly sustainable development (SFSD) point at point "h"; ii) an environmentally friendly sustainable development (EFSD) point at point "g"; and iii) a socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development (SEFSD) point at point "f", all partial solutions. As the Brundtland Commission did not set a priority goal to either step by step or at once address the socio-environmental sustainability issue (SEPOP₁) they were dealing with, and all approaches have been working at the same time, without a clear link to overcome the challenge of moving the world fully out of socio-environmental sustainability problems to avoid being stuck for ever in managing critical sustainability issues.

The structure of the socially friendly sustainable development solutions if correcting the social sustainability problem is the priority

Had the Brundtland Commission made solving the social sustainability issue the priority in 1987, then the structure of socially friendly sustainable development (SFSD) would have looked like as illustrated in Figure 4 below:

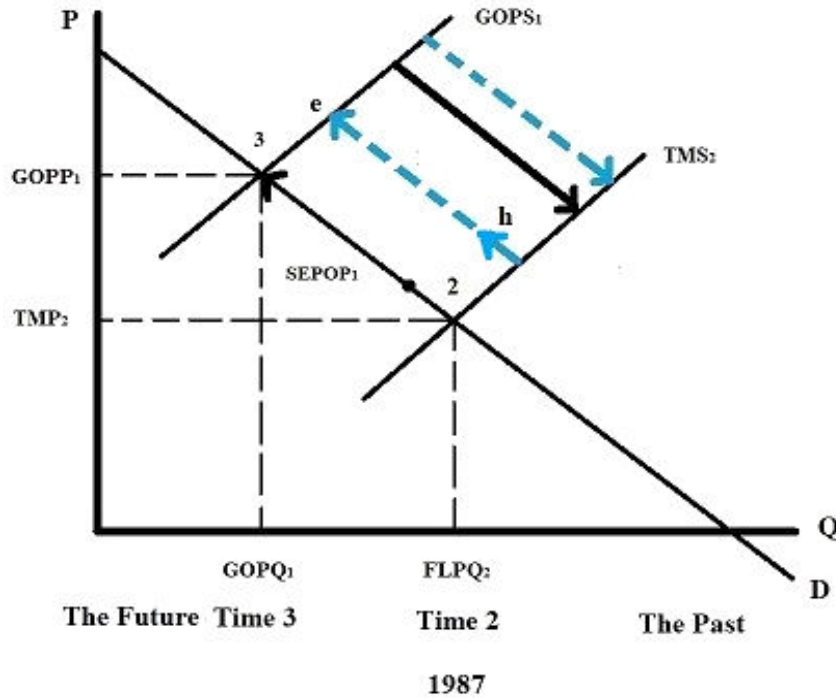


Figure 4 The socially friendly sustainable development solution if partially addressing social issues has the priority at that moment

We can appreciate the following based on Figure 4 above: i) At point "h" there is a socially friendly sustainable development(SFSD) point, where less is being produced and consumed in a way that is socially friendly as compared to the traditional market point(FLPQ₂) at point 2 as indicated by the continuous blue arrow from point 2 to point "h"; ii) there is still a remaining sustainability problem to be dealt with in the future as indicated by the broken blue arrow from point "h" to point "e"; and iii) hence, the socially friendly sustainable development(SFSD)) solution is a partial solution.

The structure of the environmentally friendly sustainable development solutions if correcting the environmental sustainability problem is the priority

Had the Brundtland Commission made solving the environmental sustainability issue the priority in 1987, then the structure of environmentally friendly sustainable development (EFSD) would have looked like as shown in Figure 5 below:

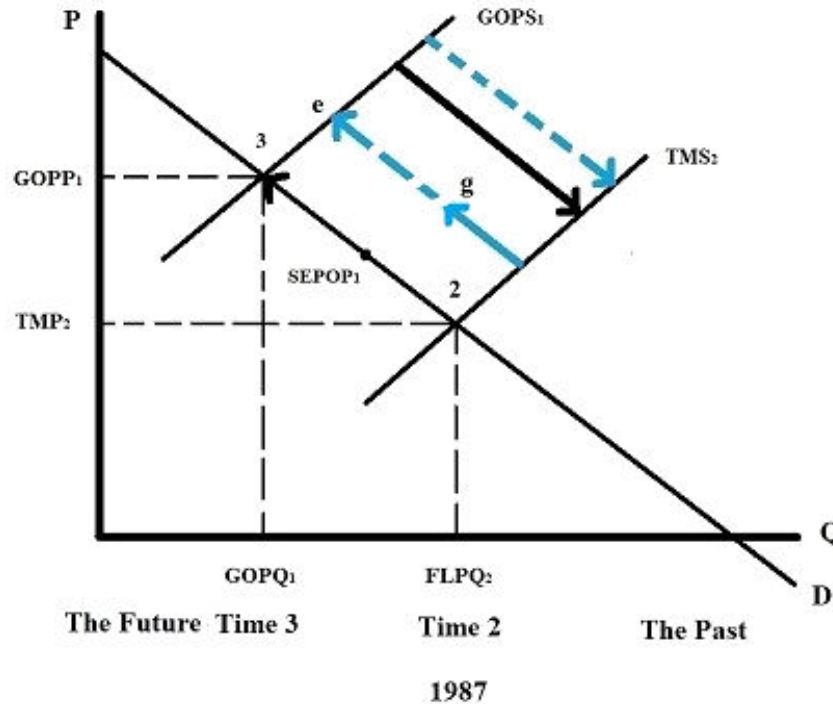


Figure 5 The environmentally friendly sustainable development solution if the priority of would have been to partially address the environmental sustainability problem

We can see the following based on Figure 5 above: i) At point "g" there is an environmentally friendly sustainable development (EFSD) point, where less is being produced and consumed in a way that is environmentally friendly as compared to the traditional market point (FLPQ₂) at point 2 as indicated by the continuous blue arrow from point 2 to point "g"; ii) there is still a remaining sustainability problem to be dealt with in the future as indicated by the broken blue arrow from point "g" to point "e"; and iii) hence, the environmentally friendly sustainable development (EFSD) solution is a partial solution.

The structure of the socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development solutions if correcting the socio-environmental sustainability problem is the priority

Had the Brundtland Commission made solving the socio-environmental sustainability issue the priority in 1987, then the structure of socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development (SEFSD) would have looked like as indicated in Figure 6 below:

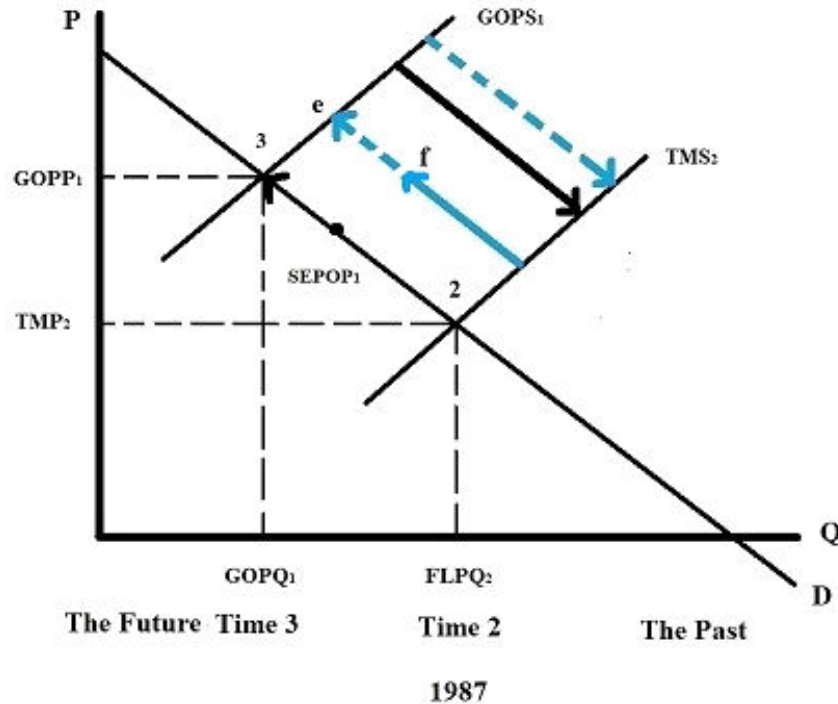


Figure 6 The socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development solution if addressing partially the socio-environmentally issue would have been the priority

We can highlight the following based on Figure 6 above: i) At point "f" there is a socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development(SEFSD) point, where less is being produced and consumed in a way that is socio-environmentally friendly as compared to the traditional market point(FLPQ₂) at point 2 as indicated by the continuous blue arrow from point 2 to point "f"; ii) there is still a remaining sustainability problem to be dealt with in the future as indicated by the broken blue arrow from point "f" to point "e"; and iii) hence, the socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development(SEFSD) solution is a partial solution.

The multi-goal structure of the sustainable development framework given to us by the Brundtland Commission in 1987

If there is no priority in sustainability problem solving then we end up with the multi-goal structure that the Brundtland Commission set in motion in 1987 as described in Figure 7 below:

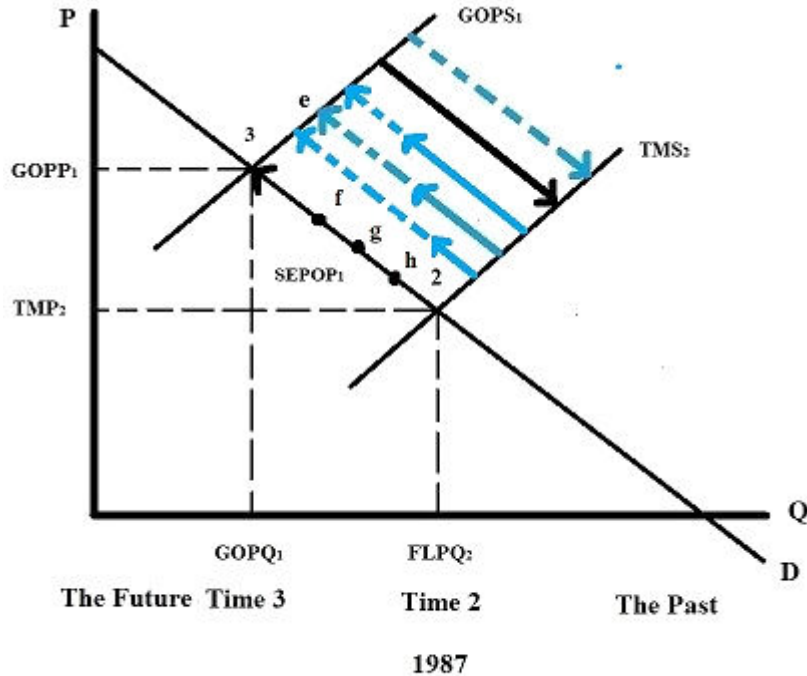


Figure 7 The multi-goal structure of the sustainable development framework given to use by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 with no priority goals

We can appreciate in Figure 7 above that i) all forms of sustainable development, at point "f" we have socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development(SEFSD), at point "g" we have environmentally friendly sustainable development(EFSD), and at point "h" we have socially friendly sustainable development(SFSD), are partial solutions as indicated by continuous blue arrows from the traditional market supply TMS_1 going left towards the golden paradigm supply $GOPS_1$, each attached to remaining socio-environmental sustainability gaps as indicated by respective broken blue arrows. Moreover, Figure 7 above illustrates that all types of sustainable development solutions consistent with the sustainable development thinking a la Brundtland Commission shown there active at the same time trying to solve their core issue while competing with other schools of thoughts seeking their own core issue under unsustainability. In other words, the sustainable development framework pursues several goals at the same time, that are unconnected with the aim of the other goals, and which are unconnected too to the overall goal of fully eradicating the socio-environmental sustainability problem one day or without a clear transition of how each of those types of sustainable development approaches will end up at a world without sustainability problems through their own development route or combined development route. Figure 7 above gives a sense that sustainable development a la Brundtland Commission and

its goals is a framework of islands managing their core value without any concern about how they are affecting or being affected by development in the other islands as shown at point "f" where there is socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development, at point "g" where there is environmentally friendly sustainable development, and at point "h" where there is socially friendly sustainable development, all attached to corresponding remaining socio-environmental sustainability problems, all active at the same time, pointing out the multi-goal nature of sustainable development working among competing core values.

In summary, as sustainable development a la Brundtland Commission did not set any specific priority in 1987 on what to address first to eliminate the socio-environmental sustainability problem created by traditional market thinking in the future it became a multi-goal framework based on a set of partial solutions at work at the same time under sustainable development core value competition or school of thoughts competition.

Food for thoughts

i) Can the difference between socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development and socially friendly sustainable development be expressed in environmental terms? I think Yes, what do you think?; and ii) Is the traditional market a flawed market because of embedded socially and environmentally driven traditional market price distortions? I think Yes, what do you think?

Conclusions

First, it was pointed out that there were full and partial solutions to the 1987 socio-environmental sustainability problem, and that the Brundtland Commission chose partial solutions, implemented at the same time as they did not set a clear path on how to go from a world under socio-environmental sustainability problems to a world under no socio-environmental sustainability problems. Second, it was highlighted that they gave us socially friendly sustainable development solutions, environmentally friendly sustainable development solutions, and socio-environmental friendly sustainable development solutions to be implemented at the

same time as all of them meet the sustainable development definition while reflecting their core values. Third, it was stressed, one by one, the structure of socially friendly sustainable development, environmentally friendly sustainable development, and socio-environmentally friendly sustainable development had the priority goal be set clearly to meet development goals as correcting the social issue, correcting the environmental issue or correcting the socio-environmental issue, respectively. And finally, it was stressed that not having set a clear development path to move from a world with socio-environmental sustainability problems to one without them has led to a framework where social goals, environmental goals, and socio-environmental goals exist like islands who can take care of addressing their core values without affecting or being affected by other schools of thoughts at work at the same time with conflicting and unconnected values.

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