

Sustainable society, economy and growth

Leena Viinamäki, Doctor of Social Science, Principal Lecturer, social welfare studies, Lapland University of Applied Sciences

Like other countries, Finland is facing the challenges of sustainable society, economy and growth intertwining with each other, and these can also include conflicting, stakeholder-specific goals. Therefore, it is good to consider what sustainable society, economy and growth mean from the perspectives of individual people, companies and local communities – without forgetting the division between rural areas and cities, the global dimension and the differences between different fields of science.

The challenges of an ecologically, socially and financially sustainable society and the alternative methods and opportunities for facing them will increasingly determine the social development in the 2020s. This is a good time to consider the following dimensions of intertwining economy and wellbeing: 1) What is the relationship of sustainable wellbeing and economic thinking to the annual economic growth goals and consideration of ecological questions in the current climate change discourse, and how can they be considered without confrontation or the threat of it?; 2) How are the decrease in biodiversity, the changing of habitats and the increasingly common extreme weather conditions experienced also in Finland reflected in the traditional economic growth, standard of living and wellbeing ideas?; 3) How are sustainability and sustainable development and their goals realised at workplaces and in educational institutes in everyday operations and in different groups of operators?; 4) What major and smaller actions citizens and organisations take to promote sustainable development?; 5) How can it be ensured that these goal-oriented words will become concrete everyday actions by people on every hierarchical level of an educational institute or a workplace?

This ongoing era of the fourth stage of industrialisation is characterised by the challenges of the traditional idea on continuous economic growth, the highlighted importance of renewable natural resources, and the evaluation and monitoring of the environmental impacts of human actions with the various calculators and information portals developed for both individuals and representatives of business life and different regions (e.g. Leitbild 2030 für ... 2019;

Environmental impact calculators, 2021; Pulkka, 2021; Rantanen, 2021; Tietoa ja tekija ilmastonmuutoksen hillitsemiseen, 2021; Woodcock et al., 2021; Rannanpää et al., 2022; Udet kestävät kunnat, 2022). In economics, the term green economics has gradually started to emerge, highlighting themes such as low carbon, resource efficiency and social inclusion (Green Economy s.a.; see also Cato, 2009; Vihreän kasvun mahdollisuudet, 2013). Other recent terms are ecological economics, which focuses on sustainability, quality of life, nurturing, and global and cross-generational fairness (Helne et al., 2012, p. 71; Naskali, 2015), and eco-social wellbeing politics (Helne et al. 2012, p. 104; Massa, 2009; Koch & Fritz, 2014). When moving from the level of politics to individual level, movements such as eco-social social work and green social work will consider the boundary conditions of the formation of an individual person's wellbeing in various risk situations (Matthies & Närhi, 2014; Dominelli, 2020).

This discussion of sustainable society and development is not an innovation of the 2010s, but actually dates back to the 1980s. The objectives of globally sustainable development have gradually been introduced to political agenda since the 1980s. In the European Union, sustainable development has established its status since 2001. In Finland, the sustainable development strategy was first compiled in 2006 as cooperation between different ministries. (Saari, 2010, pp. 124–131.; see also Kohti kestäviä valintoja ... 2006) However, academic sociological discussion about the significance of the natural environment on people's standard of living was first raised by Erik Allardt as early as in the 1970s (Helne et al., 2012, p. 66; see also Hirvilammi, 2015, pp. 65–75). In the 2010s, Juho Saari raised the topic of the interactive relationship between public procurements and sustainable development, with the different boundary conditions included, exploring the theme from the perspective of social policies (Saari, 2010, pp. 128–129).

In the 2020s, the principles of sustainable society and their compliance are becoming a lifeline for the different operational arenas of society when compared to previous decades. The awareness of sustainable society and its importance is increasing and becoming more of an everyday matter among citizens as well as locally and regionally, both nationally and internationally, for example during the Finnish National Rural Policy's week of sustainable development (26 September – 2 October 2022) and the European sustainable development week held across Europe 20–26 September 2022. The activities held during these weeks can have themes related to ecological, social or economic sustainability (European sustainable development week (ESDW) 2022; Sustainable development week 26 September–2 October 2022).

To understand the present, one must have enough knowledge about the past in order to be able to envision the future, also from the perspective of the challenges of intertwining sustainable society, economy and growth. Researched information, with its different publication forums and portals and various modelling, as well as public awareness among people and other operators about sustainable society and its challenges, demonstrated by the different theme weeks and days, are both growing nationally and internationally.

I would like to thank the author of the column, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, *Maria Ohisalo*, and everyone who contributed to the *Lumen* 3/2022 issue for their complex analyses of sustainable development, economy and growth. I wish eye-opening and inspiring moments with Lumen 3/2022 online magazine for all the readers!

Leena Viinamäki

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