



# Assessing Social Sustainability

Contributions to the structuring and empirical application of an  
assessment framework

Candidate: João José de Almeida Martins

PhD in Social Sustainability and Development

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Martinho

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## RESUMO

A presente tese de doutoramento tem como tema e objeto central o conceito de *sustentabilidade social* e a procura da sua operacionalização num modelo de *avaliação da sustentabilidade social*, orientador e pró-ativo, que avalie, mas também promova, a sustentabilidade das ações planeadas (políticas, planos, programas ou projetos). A partir de uma perspetiva crítica e emancipatória, analisa-se o processo de construção da conceção dominante de *desenvolvimento sustentável*, as suas principais características e as contradições estruturais que comporta. A análise é então centrada na noção de *sustentabilidade social*, em busca de uma clarificação do seu significado. Da análise crítica de várias propostas de definição e de operacionalização da noção, bem como de outras perspetivas, conceções e propostas, como os *direitos humanos*, o *capability approach* de Amartya Sen e Marta Nussbaum, a perspetiva do *buen vivir*, e a atualização do conceito aristotélico de *florescimento* desenvolvida pela corrente do realismo crítico, resultou uma proposta, aberta, de conceção de *sustentabilidade social* como *processo relacional de florescimento humano*, e como *processo de cuidar*, compreendendo, necessariamente, uma dimensão atual e uma dimensão utópica, entendendo como utopia, seguindo Karl Mannheim, a procura da concretização de futuros desejáveis, emancipatórios e realizáveis, num horizonte de possibilidades. Esta proposta foi configurada num conjunto de *princípios de sustentabilidade social* e de *objetivos de sustentabilidade social* procurando integrar e expressar a articulação das dimensões *individual e relacional*, de *estrutura e agência*, *objetiva e subjetiva*. Este conjunto de princípios e objetivos, de natureza ética, constitui uma base matricial para a orientação normativa da ação prática e, concomitantemente, de *referencial de valores* para a *avaliação da sustentabilidade social das ações planeadas*. Tendo como referência o campo da *avaliação da sustentabilidade*, é proposto um modelo de *avaliação e promoção da sustentabilidade social de projetos*, com contributos ao nível dos fundamentos teóricos, do processo metodológico, das dimensões de sustentabilidade social, da definição do âmbito e dos critérios de avaliação.

**Palavras-chave:** Sustentabilidade, sustentabilidade social, avaliação da sustentabilidade social, desenvolvimento sustentável

## SUMMARY

The main object of this doctoral thesis is *the concept of social sustainability and the search for its operationalization in a framework of social sustainability assessment, a framework not only reactive, but guiding and proactive, which assesses, but also promotes, the sustainability of planned actions (policies, plans, programs, or projects), from a critical and emancipatory perspective.* The process of constructing the dominant concept of *sustainable development*, its main characteristics, and the structural contradictions it entails has been analysed. The analysis was then centred on the notion of *social sustainability*, in search of a clarification of its meaning. From the critical analysis of various proposals for the definition and operationalization of the notion, as well as other perspectives, conceptions and proposals that, not directly addressing social sustainability, deal, in fact, with its problematics, such as *human rights approach*, *the capability approach* of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, the perspective of *buen vivir*, and the updating of the Aristotelian concept of *flourishing* developed by critical realism current, resulted a proposal of *social sustainability as a relational process of human flourishing, and as a process of caring*, comprising an actual dimension and an utopian dimension, understanding as utopia, following Karl Mannheim, the search for the realization of desirable, emancipatory and achievable futures, in a horizon of possibilities. This proposal was configured in a set of *principles* of social sustainability and *a set of social sustainability objectives*, resulting from those principles, presented as an open proposal, and seeking to integrate and express the articulation of the *individual and relational dimensions, structure and agency, objective and subjective*. This set of principles and objectives, of an ethical nature, constitutes a matrix basis for the normative orientation of practical action and, concomitantly, of *reference of values* for the *assessment of the social sustainability of planned actions*. Based on the field of sustainability assessment, a framework for assessing and promoting the social sustainability of projects is proposed, with contributions at the level of theoretical foundations, the methodological process, the dimensions of social sustainability, the definition of the scope and the assessment criteria.

**Key words:** Sustainability, social sustainability, social sustainability assessment, sustainable development.

For André, David, Márcia and Sérgio  
and for Afonso, Francisco, Guilherme, Inês, Mariana, Olivia, Patrícia, Raquel, Rodrigo,  
Simão and Vicente  
to make the future a sustainable present

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## ACRONYMS

SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
ADB	Asian Development Bank
GA	General Assembly
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
SA	Sustainability Assessment
SD	Sustainable Development
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
EIB	European Investment Bank
USA	United States of America
G-77	Group of 77
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
BR	Brundtland Report
HDR	Human Development Report
SSAF	Social Sustainability Assessment Framework
EU	European Union
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	The World Bank
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCS	World Conservation Strategy
WIR	World Inequality Report
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WVS	World Values Survey
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

## INTRODUCTION

This PhD Thesis is closely motivated by the professional practice that the author has been carrying out, for more than 30 years, in the field of environmental and social impact assessments - especially of projects, but also of plans and programs -, in which he specialized in the assessment of the social and territorial dimensions.

In any of the areas of assessment mentioned, the issue of environmental and social sustainability has acquired, in an increasing and progressive way, an unavoidable and increasingly decisive presence.

As these are complex and relatively new fields, the practical work in these areas, particularly regarding the themes of social assessment and social sustainability, is faced with great difficulties, resulting from the scarcity of theoretical and methodological references, not only because their upstream production (Universities, Research Centres) is, in Portugal, scarce, but also because it is a relatively recent field, even worldwide.

Empirical needs thus require an inevitable autodidacticism, often on a case-by-case basis, with recourse to external sources, especially English-speaking, seeking adaptations to the national reality, sometimes with inevitable and necessary improvisations.

In the last 15 years, the extension of the geographical scope of the author's professional work to Portuguese-speaking countries, namely Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and East Timor, has raised, with even greater urgency, both the need to think reflexively about practice and to think about it in terms of sustainability.

Although the intense work that characterizes the area of consulting leaves little free time for training/research, the author ventured to emerge from the empirical and seek to reflect on practice, with the aim of assessing, improving, consolidating theoretical and methodological frameworks, and requalifying his capacity for intervention, to the extent that he is aware that his practice has concrete effects on people and their ways of life.

In this context, the doctoral thesis presented has as its central theme and object the concept of *social sustainability* and the search for its operationalization in a *framework of social sustainability assessment*, a framework that is not only reactive, but guiding and proactive, which evaluates, but also promotes, the sustainability of planned actions (policies, plans, programs or projects). It is not, of course, a matter of inventing something

from nothing, but rather of dialoguing with other proposals and frameworks, from a critical and emancipatory perspective, in which the author positions himself unambiguously, and which he understands, in fact, as the one that best expresses the values of social sustainability.

The research carried out is therefore part of the field of *social sustainability assessment*. The relative novelty of the field and the complexity of the themes involved, determined, from the outset, an investigation of an eminently exploratory nature, in which the review of literature and the state of the art, and the reflection and critical elaboration based on the elements collected in it constituted fundamental tasks.

An evaluator, at an individual level or in the context of an assessment team, needs a map or roadmap that allows him to orient himself in the various levels of complexity. This map or conceptual structure is made up of the assessment frameworks.

In this sense, the research was faced with some crucial questions, such as:

- 1) What frameworks are available to assess the social dimensions of sustainability (state-of-the-art review)?
- 2) What are the main differences?
- 3) What (possible) gaps do they have?
- 4) Is it necessary to have a framework that is structured from a critical perspective?
- 5) What is the meaning and consequences of introducing a critical thinking perspective in the structuring of a social sustainability assessment framework?
- 6) How can this critical perspective be founded?
- 7) How to set up a critical social sustainability assessment framework?

The following text presents the answers that it was possible to reach, in the contingencies of time, space and mode that always mark any research process, especially when this research process takes place in parallel with the professional activity, never interrupted. This parallel process, which is both limiting and enriching, was an option of the author as a doctoral student.

As social sustainability is the central subject of the thesis, the treatment of the theme could not fail to begin with its contextualization in the more general scope of sustainability and

sustainable development. Part I of the thesis is thus dedicated to the analysis, from a critical perspective, of the notions of sustainable development and sustainability.

An attempt was made to analyse the process of construction of the dominant conception of *sustainable development*, its main characteristics and the structural contradictions it entails. The analysis provided some basis to support the perspective that there is a dialectical contradiction between the concerns and aspirations expressed in the concept of *sustainability* and embodied in its logic of creative transformation of reality, and the constraints posed by the dominant worldview and ideology that consider the current mode of production, appropriation, exchange, and consumption indisputable and irreplaceable. These constraints are reflected in the limitations of sustainable development design and policies, and their programmatic orientations, proposals and action measures that oscillate between voluntarism, goodwill and mere recommendation, and whose results fall far short of the needs expressed in sustainability concerns and aspirations.

In Part II, without losing the general perspective of socio-environmental sustainability, the analysis was focused on the notion of social sustainability, the central object of the thesis, seeking on the one hand to understand how it emerged in the context of the problematics of sustainability and sustainable development, and on the other hand how the themes it mobilizes also emerged in the scope of other fields, more or less close or confluent. Subsequently, a search for an understanding of the meaning of the notion of *social sustainability* began. Several proposals for the definition and operationalization of the notion were analysed, as well as other proposals that, although not directly referring to social sustainability, in fact address its problematics, such as *human rights*, the capability approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, the perspective of *buen vivir*, and the updating of the Aristotelian concept of *flourishing* developed by the current of critical realism. From the analyses and discussions developed, from a critical perspective, resulted a proposal for the conception of *social sustainability* as a *relational process of human flourishing and as a process of caring*, necessarily comprising an actual dimension and a utopian dimension, understanding as utopia, following Karl Mannheim, the search for the realization of desirable, emancipatory and achievable futures, in a horizon of possibilities.

This proposal was set out in a set of *social sustainability principles and a set of social sustainability objectives* resulting from those principles. This set of principles and objectives, presented as an open proposal, sought to integrate and express the articulation of the *individual and relational, structure and agency, objective and subjective* dimensions. This set of principles and objectives, of an ethical nature, constitutes, consequently, a matrix basis for the normative orientation of practical action and, concomitantly, a *reference of values for the assessment of the social sustainability of the planned actions*, the complementary object of the doctoral thesis.

This assessment and its process are the subject of Part III. Starting from that values reference, it is intended that each planned action, each policy, each plan, each program, each project, can be questioned in order to obtain an answer to the following questions:

- Does it contribute to the achievement of social sustainability objectives? In what way? To what extent? Is such a contribution sufficient or should it be deepened and amplified?
- If it doesn't contribute, what is the reason or reasons for this to happen? What needs to be changed? What needs to be done?

This involves operationalising the principles and objectives of social sustainability in *assessment criteria* and, as far as possible, in *indicators*. On the other hand, it is important to discuss and define the *configuration of assessment processes as social processes*.

The general perspective of environmental and social assessment based on sustainability principles and objectives is not exactly new and is at the heart of the perspectives that have emerged in the first quarter of the 21st century and which advocate *sustainability assessment as the third generation of assessment processes*, succeeding the older and more consolidated environmental and social impact assessment, and the already institutionalized strategic environmental assessment. The contribution that is intended to be made with the present work is only at the level of the content and objectives of the assessment of the social dimension of sustainability, both as an assessment tool and as a social process.

To achieve this contribution, several aspects are addressed, starting with an overview of the emergence of several generations of environmental and social assessment, followed

by a more detailed analysis on the perspective of sustainability assessment. The focus then shifted to the assessment of the social dimension.

It begins by reflecting on the more general configuration of the assessment processes, structured in two interconnected but distinct levels of analysis and action, which translate the dual nature of participatory assessment processes: that of an instrument of analysis and assessment, and that of a social process. At the first level, which has been called the *conceptual level*, there are analytical, scientific and technical requirements, but also requirements of an ethical-normative type. The second level — usually referred to as public participation or involvement of affected and interested parties, but which, in the present work, taking as reference Norbert Elias' concept of *figurations*, was preferred to be called the *configurational level* — is *emergent* in relation to the first, configuring a social process of communication, discussion and deliberation, structured by interests, values and powers. To this process, requirements of representativeness, information/communication, expressiveness, commensurability between forms and ways of thinking and knowing, and democratic deliberation, are placed. Considering the complexity of the themes, the limits of a doctoral thesis and the specific objectives of the present work, the *configurational level* was not the object of an in-depth study. The central theme of chapter 11 of Part III is, therefore, *the conceptual level*, that is, the level at which, in the position and perspective of the evaluator, the process of knowledge about the reality in which the project will be inserted and which will change is structured; the level at which the assessment criteria that make it possible to determine the positive, negative or neutral value of the actions assessed are structured, from a social sustainability perspective; the level at which actions are proposed and established to ensure and/or promote social sustainability.

The subject matter of institutionalised sustainability assessments is planned actions, whether public or private, whether policies, plans and programmes or projects. For any of these types of action, it is possible to operationalize a framework for assessing social sustainability, but this operationalization has specific requirements, depending on the objectives, the scale of intervention, and the level of operation.

Therefore, although the sustainability principles and objectives proposed at the end of Part II are also applicable and operationalizable at the level of policies, plans and programs, the

reflection on their operationalization, made in Part III, is applied only to projects. Several reasons contribute to this option: the need to restrict and delimit the object, the fact that projects' assessment is the main area of activity of the author of this work and, last but not least, because it is at the level of projects that actions are translated and materialized into effects on people, groups and communities, and can promote change, both individually and socially. The analysis then focuses on the aspects that constitute the main motivation of Part III: the methodological process, the analytical framework, the dimensions, sub-dimensions and criteria of social sustainability that guide the assessment, seeking to operationalize the sustainability principles and objectives with which Part II was concluded. To make these social sustainability principles and objectives applicable in assessment processes is the main contribution of this work to the *assessment and promotion* of social sustainability.

The reflection concludes with a reference to other moments and aspects of the assessment process that are not subject to further study, such as the issue of indicators, the analysis of cumulative effects and the monitoring of processes.

In summary, the framework analysed and proposed in the present work develops theoretical foundations, proposes principles and objectives of social sustainability, analyses the methodological process of assessment, proposes an analytical framework, dimensions, subdimensions and criteria for assessment of social sustainability. Assessment techniques and participation processes are addressed, but not deepened.

In the final chapter, a synthesis is made of the path taken throughout this work, through the complex but hopeful paths of environmental and social sustainability.

## **PART I – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**



# **1. Short historical perspective on the emergence and construction of the concept of *sustainable development***

## **1.1 The period prior to the Brundtland Report**

To the extent that the relationship of human societies with the biophysical environment is inherent to the need for the production and reproduction of individual and social life, concerns with the modes and effects of this relationship are ancestral and find expression in different cultures over time (Talbot, 2008; Gibson, 2005).

Until the advent of modernity, however, environmental changes of anthropogenic origin were relatively limited and proceeded at a slow incremental pace.

Modernity introduces a rupture with the traditional forms of social reproduction and relationship with nature. The articulation of rationalism with the logic of penetration and reproduction of capital in the sphere of agricultural and, above all, industrial production, enabled and enhanced by technological development, would introduce an unprecedented dynamic of anthropogenic intervention and instrumentalization of nature and the relationship with the *human other*, which would never cease to accelerate.

The consequences of this dynamic begin to be felt early, with effects on the transformation of space and landscape, on pollution of industrial origin, as well as on human relations, which are progressively objectified and monetised. Hence, as early as the nineteenth century, reactions to this type of development emerged, leading to the constitution of the first movements and organizations for the conservation of nature and the first conservationist environmental policies.

In the twentieth century, the First World War, the financial and economic crisis of 1929, and the Second World War did not constitute a favourable context, but in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and at the dawn of the constitution of the United Nations, the *International Union for the Conservation of Nature* (IUCN) was founded in 1948, on the initiative of UNESCO, composed of representatives of governments and civil society organizations.

In the 1960s, the decade of all the contestations, environmental issues re-emerged in the public space, increasingly asserting themselves, never to leave the spotlight to this day. However, this return takes place in a quantitatively and qualitatively different socio-

political and socio-ecological context, following the post-war economic boom and significant social and technological transformations, a context that would mark the conditions, direction and results of the debate and, consequently, the orientation and content of environmental policies.

As Talbot (2008) points out, since 1955 there have been profound changes in several parameters: the human population has grown two and a half times; more than half of the area covered by tropical forests has been lost; desertification processes have increased significantly; pollution, alteration of estuarine habitats and overfishing have significantly altered marine habitats; biodiversity loss has become a global concern; the effects of chemical pollution have become widespread; the burning of fossil fuels has accelerated significantly, contributing decisively to the increase in the production of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases, causing the global drama of climate change. On the other hand, there has been an increasing flow of financial resources from the first to the third world, in the hundreds of billions of dollars per year, without any real benefits for the peoples of the 'recipient' countries, and many of the development projects involved have not taken into account the environmental and social impacts.

In other words, in an increasingly global and globalized context, environmental problems (in the strict sense of environment) and social problems, namely around the issue of development/underdevelopment, would assume unavoidable relevance on the international scene. It is not surprising, therefore, that these themes would 'intersect' in the problematics of *sustainable development*.

Regarding development, it should be noted that the processes of decolonisation in Asia, Indochina and Africa have not only questioned colonial domination, but also raised the question of dependence, underdevelopment and neo-colonialism, common to the newly independent and decolonised countries, particularly in Latin America. It should be recalled that the Group of 77 (G-77), bringing together countries from the so-called third world, was formed in June 1964, within the framework of the *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development* (UNCTAD).

Although the UN, through UNESCO, played an important role in the creation of the IUCN, environmental problems only emerged at the forefront of the UN system in 1968, when

the Swedish government presented a resolution calling for a conference to discuss the problems of environmental degradation and the need for international cooperation to mitigate future damage (Talbot, 2008). The following year, the UN General Assembly approved the *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment* (UNCHE), also known as the Stockholm Conference, appointing Canadian Maurice Strong as Secretary-General. The Stockholm Conference was to take place in July 1972 and marked the definitive institutionalization of the environmental problematics on the international scene. However, the road to the Conference was not easy. In the preparatory meetings, there is a fracture between the 'North', whose concerns are focused on the biophysical aspects of the environment, and the 'South', whose concerns are focused on social and development issues. In fact, the G-77 and non-capitalist bloc countries, especially China, threatened not to participate in the Conference if development issues were not part of the agenda (Egelston, 2013). Maurice Strong would later mention in his autobiography (referenced in Egelston, 2013) that he sought to articulate the issues of environment and development in order to obtain the necessary political support for the Conference to take place. The Panel of Experts on Environment and Development, which would meet in June 1971 in Founex, Switzerland, sought to refine this articulation, in what would come to be called eco-development by some. According to Egelston (2013), the Report produced by the Panel would argue that the production and overconsumption of goods were at the root of environmental problems in the North, while poverty and underdevelopment were at the root of environmental problems in the South.

The results of the 1972 Stockholm Conference are still the subject of debate today. Springett and Redclift (2015) state that, despite efforts by the South not to restrict the conference to issues of environmental responsibility, but to extend it to issues of social justice, the agenda of the conference remained based on a neo-Malthusian doctrine, which was unattractive to representatives of developing countries, in whom it aroused distrust. Egelston (2013) highlights three positive aspects: the creation of the *United Nations Environmental Programme* (UNEP), the development of an action plan for governments to create portfolios with responsibilities for the environment, and the establishment of a global monitoring mechanism, currently called Earthwatch. He also points out, however,

that the Conference did not address the structural socio-economic problems underlying environmental degradation, nor did it address development alternatives to capital-intensive infrastructure projects.

In the following years, several steps were taken, within the UN system, in the search for the definition of the meaning of the articulation between environment and development. According to Egelston (2013), the symposium, sponsored by UNCTAD and UNEP, on resource use, environment and development strategies, which took place in Cocoyoc, Mexico, in 1974, would introduce the theme of social justice, namely, access to food, clothing, housing, health and education, broadening the notion of 'eco-development', which came out of the Stockholm Conference, in the sense of introducing the issue of the satisfaction of basic needs.

The term sustainable development was used for the first time in the final text of the World Conservation Strategy (WCS), published in 1980. The WCS was the result of the joint action of UNEP, IUCN and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), with the objective of preparing a document that would constitute a guideline for environmental policies to be adopted by governments. However, and notwithstanding the occurrence of previous developments, as is the case of the Cocoyoc symposium, the concept of sustainable development used in the WCS would be restricted to ecological sustainability (Lélé, 1991). Although prefiguring the concern for the needs of future generations, it would not effectively integrate the notion of meeting basic needs (Egelston, 2013), focusing on an environmental perspective of resource conservation and eliding the analysis of the social and political changes necessary to achieve the objectives of this conservation (Springett and Redclift, 2015).

Following a recommendation of the special session of the UNEP Governing Council held in May 1982 in Nairobi, ten years after Stockholm, the UN General Assembly approved in 1983 the constitution of a special commission with the mission of articulating a vision of long-term environmental protection that would take into account, at the same time, the different stages of development of the member states, and also established that the report to be produced by the Commission would not be binding (Egleston, 2013). The General Assembly mandated the at the time Secretary-General Pérez de Cuellar to choose the President and Vice-President of the Commission, with the choice falling to Gro Harlem

Brundtland of Norway and Mansour Khalid of Sudan, respectively. As is well known, the commission was later called the *World Commission on Environment and Development* (WCED) and the report produced was published in 1987 under the title *Our Common Future*, also commonly known as the Brundtland Report (BR).

## **1.2 WCED and the Brundtland Report**

As the name of the commission indicates, the WCED had the express mission of analysing environmental and development problems, giving them the same level of importance from the outset, and development has no longer the subordinate place it had occupied since its emergence, imposed by the South at the Stockholm Conference.

It can be seen, therefore, that in the definition of the objectives of the WCED there is a certain resistance to the hegemony of the North (Springett and Redclift, 2015) which is also translated into the composition of the commission itself. In fact, 7 members (including the President) come from 'first world' countries (Germany, Canada (2), Italy, USA, Japan and Norway), 4 from 'second world' countries (China, Yugoslavia, Hungary and the USSR), and 12 (including the Vice-President) come from 'third world' countries (Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Brazil, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Sudan and Zimbabwe) (WCED, 1987).

The fact that the chairman of the committee is Gro Brundtland is not unrelated to the importance attached to development issues. Prime Minister of Norway, leader of the Labour Party and vice-president of the Socialist International, Gro Brundtland had collaborated with *the International Commission on International Development Issues*, chaired by Willy Brandt, whose report, published in 1980 under the title *North-South: a Programme for Survival*, analysed development issues and the negative consequences that changes in international relations and the world economy had for developing countries (ODI, 1980). The report also addressed the link between environmental and development issues, noting that "(...) it can no longer be argued that protection of the environment is an obstacle to development. On the contrary, the care of the natural environment is an essential aspect of development." (cited in Talbot, 2008, p. 21).

In the foreword to *Our Common Future*, Gro Brundtland is very clear in this regard: "When the terms of reference of our Commission were originally being discussed in 1982, there

were those who wanted its considerations to be limited to 'environmental issues' only. This would have been a grave mistake. The environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions, and needs (...)" (WCED, 1987, pp. 6-7).

From the analysis that has been carried out, it is therefore clear that the whole process that leads to the elaboration of the concept of sustainable development, from Stockholm to the Brundtland Report, is a political process and that the very articulation between environment and development is the result of political proposals, in a context of North-South cleavage, and to a certain extent East-West, and not of scientific or technical analyses, although throughout the process there has been no lack of participation of scientists and technicians. The Brundtland report is, moreover, the first serious attempt to structure some of the foundations of this link between environment and development.

The political nature of the Brundtland report is acknowledged by those responsible. Lloyd Timberlake, Gro Brundtland's WCED advisor, said: "Science was not the driving force in the making of the Brundtland Report. Although some premises were delivered by scientists, generally they were not attributed much weight. Nor were the main conclusions scientifically founded (...) The report is a *political* document, not a *scientific* one (...)" (quoted in Egelston, 2013, p 86).

Bearing in mind the political genealogy of the concept of sustainable development is indispensable to understand its ambiguity, contradictions, contestability, as well as the difficulties of operationalization that it implies.

The concept of sustainable development is the result of the confrontation of two types of concerns. The capitalist economies of the industrialized countries of the North are aware, albeit insufficiently, of the seriousness of environmental problems – understood in the dual dimension of environmental pollution/degradation/destruction and the finiteness of natural resources – and of the threats they pose to the process of permanent economic growth. Hence the need to take measures, possibly restrictive, with the inherent economic and financial costs. For the developing and dependent countries of the South, the concerns are of a social nature, they are at the level of the satisfaction of basic needs (food, housing, water, energy, sanitation, health, education) and the obstacles to development. They argue that environmental problems are not the result of industrialisation, but of poverty, and that

restrictions on economic growth and financial costs are therefore not acceptable in a context of indebtedness and dependence.

The Stockholm political path to the Brundtland report is to seek to establish a common basis for these two concerns and, consequently, to pursue environmental and development policies at the same time in order to find solutions to both.

But if environmental problems and development problems have a common 'knot', how is it constituted? How to solve it? It is this 'knot' that the Brundtland Report seeks to understand and untie. It remains to be seen whether this is not, after all, a veritable Gordian knot, which the Commission has not been able to unravel, and which remains unresolved to date.

The adjective "common" occupies a structuring place in the Brundtland Report, from the general title, *Our Common Future*, to the titles of each of the 3 parts that make up the report: "Common concerns", "Common problems" and "Common efforts". This affirmation of the "common" underlines the will and postulates the need for integration between ecological and socio-economic issues, both in the countries of the North and in those of the South, and also in the relations between all countries: "Ecology and economy are becoming ever more interwoven locally, regionally, nationally, and globally into a seamless net of causes and effects" (WCED, 1987, p. 14). There is, therefore, no longer a place for watertight compartments and piecemeal responses to face a crisis that, being multiple, is unique: "Until recently, the planet was a large world in which human activities and their effects were neatly compartmentalized within nations, within sectors (energy, agriculture, trade), and within broad areas of concern (environment, economics, social). These compartments have begun to dissolve. This applies in particular to the various global 'crises' that have seized public concern, particularly over the past decade. These are not separate crises: an environmental crisis, a development crisis, an energy crisis. They are all one." (Idem, p.13).

But what is the common cause of the crisis(es), ecological and socio-economic problems, environmental and development problems?

The answer given in the Brundtland Report is far-fetched, indirect and incomplete. On the one hand, it uses the circular argument of the interdetermination between environmental

degradation and poverty: "Poverty is a major cause and effect of global environmental problems" (idem, p. 12). On the other hand, it points to the international economic system as the origin of the increase in inequality and poverty, a system that, as such, needs to be rectified: "All nations will have a role to play in changing trends, and in righting an international economic system that increases rather than decreases inequality, that increases rather than decreases numbers of poor and hungry." (idem, p. 27). Regarding the origin of environmental problems in developed countries, the wording of the report is always ambiguous and even euphemistic: "Environmental concern arose from damage caused by the rapid economic growth following the Second World War (idem, p. 17)"; "Economic activity has multiplied to create a \$13 trillion world economy, and this could grow five to tenfold in the coming half century. Industrial production has grown more than fiftyfold over the past century, four-fifths of this growth since 1950. Such figures reflect and presage profound impacts upon the biosphere (...)" (idem, p. 13); "Thus today's environmental challenges arise both from the lack of development and from the unintended consequences of some forms of economic growth." (idem, p. 29). In short, accelerated economic growth causes significant environmental impacts in the North. Poverty and underdevelopment are factors of environmental degradation in the South. The "international economic system", i.e. the model that structures economic relations between countries, causes and deepens poverty and underdevelopment in the South. However, the Report never questions or analyses what underlies the triad of factors mentioned, namely the economic system that structures infinite economic growth, that structures international economic relations and that produces both progress and environmental degradation, wealth and poverty, development and underdevelopment. In other words, the Brundtland Report never questions the capitalist economic system and the rationalities associated with it, subsuming it as the 'natural' and therefore indisputable basis of the path of progress and development, although it needs to be rectified by means of appropriate policies, complemented by technological development.

Within these limits, it is a fact, however, that the report calls for change, not least because time is pressing: "The next few decades are crucial. The time has come to break out of past patterns. Attempts to maintain social and ecological stability through old approaches to

development and environmental protection will increase instability. Security must be sought through change." (idem, p. 27).

So, what needs to change and what needs to be done to change? As has been said, the Report is a political document, drawn up in a context of political cleavage, with some heterogeneity and contradictions, more radical passages and more conservative aspects. In general, it can be said that the Programmatic Proposals of the Report fall short of the challenges that result from the diagnosis made and the principles and objectives of sustainability defined.

The definition of the concept of sustainable development is presented in Part I of the Report, in particular in Chapter 2 *Towards Sustainable Development*.

The first lines of the definition are probably the most frequently quoted passage in recent decades. Paradoxically, the definition is rarely cited in its entirety, and it is on the entire definition that is important to reflect on. The definition is given at the beginning of Chapter 2 of Part I of the report and consists of 3 bullet points.

1. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:
  - the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
  - the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.
2. Thus the goals of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries - developed or developing, market-oriented or centrally planned. Interpretations will vary, but must share certain general features and must flow from a consensus on the basic concept of sustainable development and on a broad strategic framework for achieving it.
3. Development involves a progressive transformation of economy and society. A development path that is sustainable in a physical sense could theoretically be pursued even in a rigid social and political setting. But physical sustainability cannot be secured unless development policies pay attention to such considerations as changes in access to resources and in the distribution of costs and benefits. Even the narrow notion of physical sustainability implies a concern for social equity between generations, a concern that must logically be extended to equity within each generation. (WCED, 1987, p. 41).

Sustainable development, then, involves two basic concepts: the concept of human "needs", particularly the essential needs of the poorest, and the concept of "limits". The latter reflects the notion that the capacity of the environment (here in the sense of biophysical environment) to provide for the satisfaction of human needs is limited. This is, however, a limitation that is not absolute, since it depends both on the state of available technology and on the state of "social organization". It is curious that, in relation to this

dyad, the issue of technology is recurrently addressed in the debates on sustainable development, but the same is not true of the issue of social organization. This notion that a sustainable relationship between society and nature depends on the type of social organisation deserves to be highlighted, even if the meaning of the concept of 'social organisation' remains to be clarified, which the report does not analyse in a systematic way, although it does give some clues in the conclusions of Chapter 2:

In its broadest sense, the strategy for sustainable development aims to promote harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature. In the specific context of the development and environment crises of the 1980s, which current national and international political and economic institutions have not and perhaps cannot overcome, the pursuit of sustainable development requires:

- a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making.
- an economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis
- a social system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development.
- a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development,
- a technological system that can search continuously for new solutions,
- an international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance, and
- an administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction.

(WCED, 1987, p. 41)

On the other hand, it is important to highlight the interconnection of the concepts of "needs" and "limits", configuring an interconnection between two dimensions of sustainability: the biophysical and the human. This does not seem to result in a support in three 'pillars' (ecological, economic and social), but rather a dynamic interconnection between the ecological and social dimensions (in the broad sense of the term) of sustainability, an issue that will be analysed in more detail elsewhere in this work.

Once the general scope of the concept has been explained, the definition continues at the beginning of point 2. with the affirmation that, considering this scope, "the objectives of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability". This proposition is of central importance and is certainly one of the most important in the whole report. From the outset, it clarifies the relative positions of the concepts of development and sustainability. Economic and social development can certainly take on different characteristics and follow different paths. However, it will only be sustainable if it is directed towards the satisfaction of human needs (in an equitable way, as will be seen below) and if it respects the limits set by the biophysical environment. In other words, in

the relationship between sustainability and development, sustainability occupies the place of reference, simultaneously establishing the guiding objectives and the assessment criteria for development. This implies a paradigm shift. Development is not considered an end in itself, but only a means to achieve the satisfaction of human needs while respecting nature. It is not only the rationality of the ends that is altered, but also the rationality of the relation between means and ends that is reformulated: the ends cannot be achieved by any means. The satisfaction of human needs must therefore be achieved by means that ensure equity and respect for nature.

The issue of *equity* is dealt with in point 3 of the definition. The text begins by stating that it is theoretically possible to consider sustainability only from a biophysical point of view. However, it is not only a question of biophysical sustainability, but also of the sustainability of meeting human needs. In short, what is at stake is the sustainability of society-nature relations. That sustainability implies the notion of equity. Why? Because, as long as it is viewed from the point of view of human needs, even a strict notion of biophysical sustainability means that future generations will be in a situation of equality with contemporary generations, with regard to the biophysical environment. Logically, this opportunity for equity cannot but extend to contemporary generations, not only regarding the biophysical environment, but also regarding the satisfaction of needs, and therefore in terms of "access to resources and the distribution of costs and benefits".

In short, "needs", inter and intra-generational "equity", and "limits" are the guiding principles of a development which is intended to be sustainable. And what is the socio-geographical scope of application of this desideratum? As stated in point 2 of the definition, the scope is universal. It encompasses all countries, developed and undeveloped, capitalist and non-capitalist, it is for the present and for the future, in common. It is an opportunity for humanity.

This definition is the most important legacy of the Brundtland Report. More than *a concept of sustainable development*, the definition should be interpreted as a concept of *sustainability for development*. A concept that integrates a utopian dimension, in the positive and affirmative sense of the term.

In addition to the definition analysed, there are other passages in Part I of the Report that deserve mention. Regarding questions of power, "environmental and economic problems are linked to many social and political factors. (...) It could be argued that the distribution of power and influence within society lies at the heart of most environment and development challenges. Hence new approaches must involve programmes of social development, particularly to improve the position of women in society, to protect vulnerable groups, and to promote local participation in decision making." (idem, p. 37).

And, regarding the satisfaction of human needs, the Report also states: "Meeting essential needs depends in part on achieving full growth potential, and sustainable development clearly requires economic growth in places where such needs are not being met. Elsewhere, it can be consistent with economic growth, provided the content of growth reflects the broad principles of sustainability and non-exploitation of others" (idem, p. 42). This passage is as contradictory as it is interesting. It postulates that economic growth is not only compatible with, but also a necessary factor for sustainable development, which will be one of the central theses of the dominant conception of sustainable development (and also one of the most contested), distinguishing, however, between areas or places where basic needs have not yet been met and those that rest. In the former, economic growth is key. In the others, economic growth is congruent with sustainable development, as long as it obeys the general principles of sustainability and non-exploitation of others. This assertion that economic growth in developed countries is congruent with sustainable development as long as it does not involve the exploitation of one's fellow human beings is nevertheless remarkable. However, it does not seem to apply to countries where basic needs have not still been met, where the exploitation of the other is implied to be acceptable.

The contradictions that run through the Report are also reflected in the strategic objectives (or operational objectives, Lélé, 1991), which configure the change towards sustainable development, to be implemented within each country and within the scope of international relations.

The Report distinguishes between domestic policy and international policy objectives. The internal objectives are as follows:

1. Reviving growth;
2. Changing the quality of growth;

3. Meeting essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water, and sanitation;
4. Ensuring a sustainable level of population;
5. Conserving and enhancing the resource base;
6. Reorienting technology and managing risk;
7. Merging environment and economics in decision making. (WCED, 1987, pp. 41 and 46)

At the international level, the aim is to "reorient international economic relations" (idem, p. 41) towards faster economic growth, particularly in the least developed countries that should have easier access to the international market for their products, benefit from lower interest rates, greater capital inflows and technology transfer.

In addition to these eight objectives, the promotion of public participation in decision-making, we have a set of nine principles that, according to Léle (1991), represent the mainstream conception of sustainable development that results from BR. This conception has become hegemonic, being adopted by most international institutions, such as UNEP, the World Bank, the European Union and government development agencies.

This hegemonic conception, largely only sketched in the Brundtland Report, would be developed in Agenda 21, approved at the *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (UNCED), held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, also known as the Rio Conference.

### **1.3 The 1992 Rio Conference**

The Rio Conference took place five years after the Brundtland Report, of which it is a corollary and development, and 20 years after the Stockholm Conference. As in Stockholm, Maurice Strong was the Secretary-General.

The North-South divide was even more marked than it had been in Stockholm, in a context in which the East-West conflict was fading with the collapse of the Eastern regimes. In fact, 20 years later, the problems of poverty, debt, and the price of raw materials and products of the South had not only not been solved, but to a large extent had become more pronounced, hence the insistence of the countries of the South on the issue of development (Sandbrook, 1992).

The Conference produced several agreements, including a declaration of principles on environment and development, a set of non-binding principles on sustainable forest management, binding conventions on climate change and biological diversity, and a comprehensive programme of action, called Agenda 21.

Opinions on the outcome of the Conference are, as might be expected, mixed. For some, the Conference, despite all the compromises and shortcomings, was an important milestone for sustainable development (Blewitt, 2015) while, for others, the conference clearly showed the gap between the technical-scientific capacity to diagnose problems and the timidity and impotence of political decision-makers, leading to the mutilation of its main objectives (Soromenho-Marques, 1994). For still others, the conference was largely influenced by the business world, which in Stockholm had played a limited role but which, after the Brundtland Report, took a central role in the preparation of UNCED (Springett and Redclift, 2015). As such, the dominant discourse produced at the Conference took for granted that the economic development is an indispensable condition (and that, therefore, the absence of growth implies more poverty and environmental degradation) because only economic growth can guarantee environmental protection and poverty reduction (idem). Seen from another angle, Richard Sandbrook, then vice-president of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), said that one of the possible readings of the results of the conference was that it was not a conference on the environment, but on the world economy and how it is affected by the environment (Sandbrook, 1992).

In other words, the assumption of economic growth, which was already clearly stated in the BR, but which appeared there as something contradictory to the diagnosis made and to some defined principles of sustainability, now constitutes a basic postulate. And if the BR could be read as a guiding definition of *sustainability for development*, from the Rio Conference onwards it is undoubtedly about *sustainable development*, in which development takes precedence over sustainability.

Be that as it may, there are a number of aspects that need to be highlighted in the documents adopted, in particular Agenda 21, which is the main document resulting from the Conference. Agenda 21 and the conventions on biological diversity and climate change, with all their shortcomings and limitations, constitute a framework and the basis for guiding the environmental policies developed since then. It can be said that the mainstream programme (Lélé, 1991) outlined in the Brundtland Report will be systematised and developed in Agenda 21, a detailed programme of action, covering the various dimensions considered relevant to sustainable development, from economic, social and environmental

issues, to legislative contexts, environmental education, the role of science, institutional organisation, public participation, the circulation of information (UN, 1992).

Although already mentioned in previous documents, the environmental (biophysical), economic and social dimensions are now clearly referenced in Agenda 21, paving the way for the use of the metaphor of the 'three pillars'. However, the prominence of the economic growth dimension gives the economic dimension a dominance over the others, reflected in the approach to environmental problems under the title "Conservation and Management of Resources for Development" (UN, 1992, Section II) and in the fact that the social dimension seems to be restricted to developing countries.

#### **1.4 From the Rio Conference to the present**

The Rio Conference culminates the process of building the foundations of the dominant conception of sustainable development, begun twenty years earlier in Stockholm, and defining the scope and guidelines of the resulting policies.

In the period following the Rio Conference, up to the present, sustainable development policies have continued to develop on the basis of this matrix. However, the international political, social and economic context has changed significantly compared to the previous twenty years.

The process of disintegration of the 'Eastern bloc', which was still in its infancy in 1992, developed rapidly in the following years into the structuring of market economies and regimes more or less close to the so-called Western democracies. China has also opted for a path of controlled capitalist development. The process of globalization was increasing. Neoliberalism was spreading triumphantly. The 'end of history' was asserted.

The 21st century came to put a brake on the euphoria. The 9/11 and the global terrorist threat, the shock of the financial and economic crisis that began in 2007/2008, showed, to paraphrase Mark Twain, that the announcement of the death of history was manifestly exaggerated.

In developing countries there is a profound differentiation. China, Brazil and India are in leading processes of accelerated economic growth that, paradoxically, contribute to cushioning the effects of economic and financial crises in developed countries. But even in this field the good news was short-lived. The wave of economic growth has not solved the

social problems in these countries and the processes of industrialization have led to new environmental problems, especially in China. The pace of growth itself has slowed down and, in the case of Brazil, has regressed into a serious social and economic crisis. The rest of the 'third world' countries continue to face serious development problems, particularly in Africa. On the other hand, the environmental problems in the North are not being solved and the threats and risks are becoming definitely serious and global, as is the case with climate change, the effects of which are becoming more and more evident.

It is in this general context that the subsequent United Nations conferences on sustainable development take place, namely the 2002 *World Summit on Sustainable Development* (WSSD), held in Johannesburg between June 3rd and 14th, and the 2012 *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20*, held again in Rio de Janeiro between June 20th and 22nd.

If, despite the divergences and contestations, the scope and breadth of Agenda 21 had raised some hopes, at the time of the WSSD not only had few expectations been fulfilled, but the accentuation of tendencies towards unsustainability became evident (Gibson, 2005). The Final Declaration adopted at the Summit itself recognizes the deep fracture that divides human societies between rich and poor, the growing gap between developed and developing countries, the deepening of the environmental crisis (loss of biodiversity, desertification, climate change, air and water pollution) and the challenges that the accentuation of the globalization process poses to all these problems whose real risk of becoming entrenched (UN, 2002, p. 2-3).

Apart from the emphatic reaffirmation of the commitments made in Rio, little else will have come out of the Johannesburg Summit, apart from the specification of some additional objectives and the establishment of some partnerships (Gibson, 2005; Blewitt, 2015, Springett and Redclift, 2015). The effective implementation of Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals (meanwhile approved at the Millennium Summit held in 2002) and the Implementation Plan approved at the Summit are the main objectives stated in the Declaration (UN, 2002, p. 4).

It is also interesting to note that in the Declaration, the metaphor of the three pillars is expressly used, underlining their interdependence and interdetermination: "(...) we

assume a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development - economic development, social development and environmental protection - at the local, national, regional and global levels." (UN, 2002, p. 1).

Perhaps more than at the 2002 Summit, the poor results of the 2012 Rio+20 Conference were largely disappointing, even causing some general concern (Blewitt, 2015, Springett and Redclift, 2015), not unrelated to the fact that it took place in the context of the international economic and financial crisis, which began in 2007. The outcome document that emerged from the Conference – *The Future We Want* (UN, 2012) – is largely a repository of confirmations and reaffirmations of principles and commitments established at previous summits, with no new agreements or objectives outlined (Blewitt, 2015). Much of the debate was polarised around the theme of the "green economy", with many participants perceiving that the concept was crystallised more around the greening of technology than in the definition of a new economic paradigm (Blewitt, 2015) or the fear, particularly on the part of the South, that it was a manoeuvre to replace the concept of sustainable development with the concept of *ecological* modernisation or "greener business as usual", giving less importance to social issues (Springett and Redclift, 2015, p. 11).

In fact, the theme of the green economy would be addressed in the articulation of *The Future We Want*, although with care to integrate it in the context of sustainable development and to mark it according to the documents approved at previous summits: "(..) we consider green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development" (UN, 2012, para. 56); "We affirm that policies for green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should be guided by and in accordance with all the Rio Principles, Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and contribute towards achieving relevant internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals." (idem, paragraph 57).

There are also two aspects that should be highlighted in *The Future We Want*. First, the reference to the strengthening of the three "dimensions" of sustainability (environmental,

economic and social) and the need to consider them in an integrated, articulated and balanced way (UN, 2012, paras. 75, 76). It is no longer just a question of the metaphor of the 'three pillars' (an expression that is not used, to the detriment of the term dimensions), but of an onto-epistemological conception. Secondly, the resolution to establish an intergovernmental process with the aim of defining a new set of global sustainability goals, to be adopted by the General Assembly (UN, 2012, para. 275). This was to become, albeit in a deferred form, the main measure resulting from the Conference.

This process of defining new sustainability goals culminated in the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Resolution *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* on 25 September 2015. This document deserves particular attention.

Similar to Agenda 21, although with a much smaller dimension and development, but in a simpler, more objective and accessible way, this new agenda not only reaffirms principles, commitments and a certain vision for sustainable development but, above all, details 17 general goals for sustainable development, disaggregated into 169 particular objectives, to be achieved by the year 2030.

One of the aspects that emerge from this resolution is the dramatic, even harrowing, tone that permeates the document, the emphatic way in which the objectives are affirmed, and the urgency given to its implementation. In fact, the Resolution sets the objective of solving, within 15 years, problems that have not been solved in the previous 43 years, since Stockholm, so a new approach with an unprecedented scope is needed. "We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want to heal and secure our planet" (UN; 2015, p. 1); "We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries" (idem, p.3); "This is an Agenda of unprecedented scope and significance" (idem, ibidem); "The challenges and commitments identified at these major conferences and summits are interrelated and call for integrated solutions. To address them effectively, a new approach is needed" (idem, p.4); "We are announcing today 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 associated targets which are integrated and indivisible. Never before have world leaders pledged common action and endeavour across such a broad and universal policy agenda" (idem, p.

6); "Seventy years ago, an earlier generation of world leaders came together to create the United Nations (...) Today we are also taking a decision of great historic significance (...) We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet" (idem, p.12); "The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands" (idem, ibidem).

The *pathos* of the document is even expressed in the inclusion of the expression "Mother Earth" (derived from the cosmovisions of indigenous peoples): "we reaffirm that the planet Earth and its ecosystems are our common home, and that 'Mother Earth' is a common expression in a number of countries and regions" (idem, p. 13).

The integration and balanced articulation between the three dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, economic and social) is recurrently reaffirmed in the document.

The 17 sustainable development goals proposed in the document are reproduced in Table 1.1. Some aspects deserve to be highlighted. First of all, the ambitious nature of the objectives, considering that the time horizon for achievement is the year 2030. Secondly, the reference to the sustainability of cities. Thirdly, the central role that, once again, economic growth and industrialisation occupy in the paradigm of sustainable development (the document never expressly refers to the 'green economy', which is curious given the prominent place that the theme occupied at Rio+20). In the disaggregated objectives, the "sustained growth" of the Gross National Product is emphasized, even mentioning that in the least developed countries this growth should reach a minimum rate of 7% (UN, 2015, p. 19). On the other hand, the old aspiration to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation is reaffirmed, namely through the implementation of programmes on sustainable consumption and production (idem, p.20). With regard to industrialization, the objective is to significantly increase the participation of industry in job creation and in the gross national product, ensuring its sustainability through requalification, efficient use of resources, the adoption of environmentally clean industrial processes and technologies, thus requiring the "strengthening of scientific research and an upgrade of the technological capacities of industrial sectors" (idem, ibid.).

**Table 1.1 – Sustainable Development Goals**

Sustainable Development Goals
Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*
Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development
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* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

Source: UN, 2015, p.14

In short, it can be said that *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, expresses well the maximum that the dominant paradigm of sustainable development can achieve, within the limits imposed by its own internal contradictions. It remains to be seen if this maximum is enough, or if another paradigm is needed, because, in fact, time is pressing and "the future of humanity and the planet is in our hands".



## **2. Critical analysis of the concept of sustainable development**

### **2.1 The dominant conception of sustainable development**

The analyses carried out in chapter 1 of this work allowed us to understand that, although with certain and inevitable influence of the debates held in civil society and in the political contexts of national scope, the dominant concept of *sustainable development* (SD) has been constructed within the scope of a political process developed in the institutional context of the United Nations being, therefore, a concept with political origins.

It is not a definitively fixed concept, but a notion in permanent construction, depending on the discourses that express and result from the confrontation of different social, political and economic positions and interests, and the consequent deliberations.

In the case of an institutional context (UN) for the representation of States, the divergences and fractures that are expressed in the debates reflect power relations and conflicts of interest between States or groups of States and, only in a mediated or indirect way, power relations and interests between classes or other social strata or groups (age groups, gender, ethnicities, peoples). That is why the main contradictions that emerge in the debates are between North and South, between developed and developing countries, between former colonizers and colonized.

The dominant conception of SD thus translates, for the most part, the positions of the politically and economically dominant countries in the international system and, concomitantly, in the context of the United Nations, i.e. the countries of the North. However, since the United Nations General Assembly is a body of universal representation, the resolutions that emanate from it also reflect commitments which, to a certain extent, include the expression of the views and interests that are not dominant, particularly those of the countries of the South.

The political (and, necessarily, ideological) nature and the degree of compromise between different discourses that it embodies give the concept of SD an inevitable ambiguity, contestability, plurality of faces, and interpretations.

This ambiguity is accentuated (and complexified) by the ideological (in the sense of concealing) nature of the narratives about the origins of the environmental and social crisis, both in the North and in the South.

But its political nature also implies a dynamic of orientation towards action, towards the configuration and application of measures and evaluation of results. This operationalization requires, on the one hand, a progressive organizational institutionalization, both at the strategic level and in the implementation of the action and, on the other hand, it requires efforts to clarify the concept, namely within the scope of the scientific field.

That said, the main characteristics of the dominant design of SD are analysed below.

In view of its origin and political construction, it is considered appropriate to analyse the concept of sustainable development as a discourse, more particularly as a form of political discourse.

According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), *discourse* is the social use of language in social contexts. A central characteristic of discourse is the production of meanings as an element of the social process and constitutes a form of construction of aspects of the world, associated with a certain social perspective. Political discourse is the discourse associated with politics as a particular field of social practice. For the authors, the primacy of politics is decision-making for action, namely in conditions of uncertainty and disagreement, and has to do, fundamentally, with choices regarding how to act to respond to certain circumstances and events, according to certain values and objectives. Thus, political discourse is fundamentally constituted by a process of *practical argumentation*, a process that consists of welcoming and providing reasons for people to accept or favour certain lines of action over others. In addition to the practical argumentative genre, political discourse also includes narrative, explanatory and descriptive genres. However, the latter have a subordinate role to the former, since the purpose of political discourse is not ultimately to describe the world, but to underpin decisions and actions.

Practical argumentation is a linguistic object that takes the form of premisses-conclusions. *Practical reasoning* is the mental process that corresponds to practical argumentation as a linguistic object. The premisses-conclusion structure of practical argumentation is defined as follows (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, chapter 2):

*Circumstantial premisses*: they represent the current state of affairs and the problems it poses, they represent the contexts of action;

*Goal Premises:* describe and 'imagine' the future state of affairs that the actors intend to achieve or consider should be achieved, as a response to the problems existing in the current state of affairs;

*Value Premises:* represent values and concerns underlying the actors' objectives; These values and concerns also influence the way in which the actors represent the contexts of the action;

*Means-Ends Premises:* represent the proposed course of action as a (hypothetical) means that will presumably lead the actors from the current state of affairs to the future state of affairs that constitutes the goal;

*Conclusion:* judgment or practical statement as to what ought to be done, what is good to do, the proper, right, just course of action.

The following approach uses this framework as a general guideline for the analysis of the concept of sustainable development as a form of political discourse. This approach is not intended to reduce the concept to its expression in the political-argumentative genre. The concept is permanently constructed based on narrative, explanatory and descriptive genres, with particular relevance to scientific discourse. However, it is in the political dimension that the definition and decision on the practical form of implementation of the action is at stake. To put it more prosaically, it is in the political dimension that *the formulation and practical resolution of problems and the evaluation of the effectiveness of action* are played, issues that constitute the ultimate concern of this doctoral research. It is, therefore, essential to verify how the political-argumentative dimension defines the problems and objectives that constitute guiding parameters for the other dimensions of the construction of the concept, namely the scientific one.

As mentioned above, the concept of SD results from a process of permanent construction and expresses, in its current dominant form, a compromise between a 'North' and a 'South' perspective. The concept of SD thus results from the 'coupling' of two discourses, with the discourse in the 'North' assuming a hegemonic position and the discourse of the 'South' a subordinate but influential position.

The text of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) is used as the axis of the discussion, which is one of the most recent formulations of the concept/process of SD.

Table 2.1 reproduces two excerpts from the text of the 2030 Agenda that express the current state of affairs (*circumstantial premises*) and define the vision of a desirable future state of affairs *that is intended to be achieved* (*goal premises*).

The diagnosis of the current state of affairs echoes the discourse of the "immense challenges" posed by social and environmental problems, repeatedly expressed in successive documents over the previous decades, and also refers to the "immense opportunities" that the development has opened up both in terms of progress in meeting basic needs and the potential resulting from the digital age, the globalisation of communication networks, scientific progress and technological innovation.

The desirable future is foreshadowed in what the text claims is an "extremely ambitious and transformative vision."

Broadly speaking, this vision envisions a future world in which human needs are met, human rights are fully respected, where peace, security, democracy and good governance are ensured, where economic growth is continuous and beneficial to all, but sustainable from an ecological and natural resource management point of view, allowing humanity to live in harmony with nature.

**Table 2.1 – 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: problems of the present and vision of the future that is intended to be achieved**

Current state of affairs (circumstances, contexts, problems)	Future state of affairs (vision, goals, solutions)
<p><b>Our world today</b>            14. We are meeting at a time of immense challenges to sustainable development. Billions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity. There are rising inequalities within and among countries. There are enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power. Gender inequality remains a key challenge. Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern. Global health threats, more frequent and intense natural disasters, spiralling conflict, violent extremism, terrorism and related humanitarian crises and forced displacement of people threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades. Natural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental</p>	<p><b>Our vision</b>            7. In these Goals and targets, we are setting out a supremely ambitious and transformational vision. We envisage a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive. We envisage a world free of fear and violence. A world with universal literacy. A world with equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, to health care and social protection, where physical, mental and social well-being are assured. A world where we reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation and where there is improved hygiene; and where food is sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious. A world where human habitats are safe, resilient and sustainable and where there is universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy.            8. We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and</p>

Current state of affairs (circumstances, contexts, problems)	Future state of affairs (vision, goals, solutions)
<p>degradation, including desertification, drought, land degradation, freshwater scarcity and loss of biodiversity, add to and exacerbate the list of challenges which humanity faces. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time (...).</p> <p>15. It is also, however, a time of immense opportunity. Significant progress has been made in meeting many development challenges. Within the past generation, hundreds of millions of people have emerged from extreme poverty. Access to education has greatly increased for both boys and girls. The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies, as does scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy. (UN, 2015, paras. 14 and 15)</p>	<p>cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity. A world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met.</p> <p>9. We envisage a world in which every country enjoys sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all. A world in which consumption and production patterns and use of all natural resources — from air to land, from rivers, lakes and aquifers to oceans and seas — are sustainable. One in which democracy, good governance and the rule of law, as well as an enabling environment at the national and international levels, are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger. One in which development and the application of technology are climate-sensitive, respect biodiversity and are resilient. One in which humanity lives in harmony with nature and in which wildlife and other living species are protected. (UN 2015, paras. 7 to 9)</p>

Source: UN, 2015

The content of the texts is well illustrative of the effect of 'universal attraction' that the concept of sustainable development exerts. With the possible exception of some more or less neoliberal right-wing extremism, there will be few who do not subscribe, at least to a large extent, to either the diagnosis or the vision of the desirable future, formulated with the degree of generality that they present.

The problem lies in the lack of explanation, on the part of the dominant discourse, of the foundations of the current problems and, concomitantly, of the foundations that make it possible to build the desirable future. In fact, these foundations are only implicit in the discourse and, in order to be understood, it is necessary to unveil them. This unveiling operation makes it clear that the underlying foundations of the current situation and the future situation have, in the end, a common basis, which raises the pertinent question of how a problematic situation is resolved on the basis of the foundations that led to it. The lack of explicitness thus functions as a factor of ideological concealment of this central contradiction, which is necessarily reflected in the configuration of the measures and

means to achieve the desirable future, which assume a nature on the one hand contradictory, on the other profoundly voluntarist, whose application and implementation are based, to a large extent, on goodwill, even if it is a universal goodwill ("Global Partnership for Sustainable Development"). In this way, the future state of affairs, which is intended to be urgently realized, paradoxically ends up appearing as a distant and difficult goal to achieve.

In fact, the problems listed in the current state of affairs appear as decontextualized and almost reified realities, as situations, states and difficulties almost comparable to those resulting from natural catastrophes, always unpredictable and of diffuse origin. They appear as events, apparently autonomous, which are, in the end, obstacles and factors of retrogression in relation to a line of "progress" that, without them, would be continuous. In order to find some causal links, we have to analyse the implicit ones of the discourse.

The basic question is what factors are at the root of environmental and social (development) problems, because only after identifying and understanding them will it be possible to act accordingly in order to achieve the desirable future. Is it 'only' a question of 'bad habits', 'bad behaviour', 'bad practices', or is it *not only but also and in a determinant way* a question of structural and systemic causes?

With the relative exception of the Brundtland Report, this issue is never directly and explicitly raised and analysed in the documents and resolutions of the world conferences on environment and development (UN, 1992, 2002, 2012) nor is it in the 2030 Agenda.

In the latter case (as also in Agenda 21), the implicit answers are mainly to be found in practical measures, namely in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the measures to achieve them.

Table 2.2, left column, reproduces the 17 SDGs which, together with the 169 disaggregated measures, constitute the *means-ends premise*, i.e., the set of means and actions proposed to move from the current state of affairs to the desired future state. In the right-hand column, some of the disaggregated measures or objectives are reproduced by way of example.

**Table 2.2 – 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: measures and means to achieve the vision of the future**

Measures to deliver on the vision (proposed line of action, specific objectives)	Means of achieving the specific objectives (proposed line of action, means of action)
<p><b>Sustainable Development Goals</b></p> <p>Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere</p> <p>Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</p> <p>Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p> <p>Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</p> <p>Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</p> <p>Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</p> <p>Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</p> <p>Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</p> <p>Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p> <p>Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries</p> <p>Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p> <p>Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</p> <p>Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p> <p>Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</p> <p>Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse</p>	<p>[Goal] 8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries</p> <p>[Goal] 8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation (...) with developed countries taking the lead</p> <p>[Goal] 9.2 Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries</p> <p>[Goal] 9.4 By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities</p> <p>[Goal] 9.5 Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries (...).</p> <p>[Goal] 12.1 Implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries</p> <p>[Goal] 12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources</p> <p>[Goal] 12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment</p> <p>[Goal] 12.5 By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse</p> <p>[Goal] 12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle</p> <p>[Goal] 12.8 By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature</p> <p>[Goal 17]</p> <p><b>Systemic issues</b></p> <p><i>Policy and institutional coherence</i></p> <p>17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence</p>

Measures to deliver on the vision (proposed line of action, specific objectives)	Means of achieving the specific objectives (proposed line of action, means of action)
land degradation and halt biodiversity loss Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015, p.14)	17.15 Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development <i>Multi-stakeholder partnerships</i> 17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships (UN, 2015, pp. 19-27)

Source: UN, 2015

Analysing the 17 SDGs, a certain circularity of the discourse stands out, such as 'to eliminate, correct or avoid unsustainable situations and processes, it is necessary to act sustainably'. This circularity is maintained in the disaggregated measures, although in this case it is possible to find more concrete and specific guidelines.

Returning to the question of fundamentals, in order to find references to some of the causes of environmental and social problems, it is necessary to analyse the 'negatives' of some of the central measures. Measure 8.4 calls for the decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation, which implicitly means that these factors are linked, i.e. that economic growth produces or at least has produced environmental degradation. Measure 9.4 calls for the retrofitting of industries to make them sustainable, which implicitly means that they are not. Measure 12.1 calls for the implementation of programmes to achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns, which means that current patterns of economic production and productive consumption or final consumption are not sustainable.

One could multiply the illustrative examples that, in the dominant discourse, the causal relations between the economic system and environmental and social unsustainability are not sufficiently clarified (the same happens, concomitantly, with the causal relations between the economic system, development and underdevelopment).

Consequently, the question whether the relationship between the economic system and unsustainability is structural and systemic in nature or merely incidental is also answered

only implicitly and without reasoning. Indeed, if we should *endeavour to decouple* economic growth from environmental degradation, it is because such decoupling is possible, i.e. it is because the ultimate cause of unsustainability is not systemic, but only the result of bad practices or incorrect actions that can therefore be corrected, at least sufficiently, to avoid great evils. Even in the Brundtland Report, where these issues are addressed more explicitly, environmental problems "arise both from the lack of development and from the unintended consequences of some forms of economic growth" (WCED, p.29) that can be corrected or changed.

But this assumption is never properly substantiated. It is to a large extent a *belief*, and questioning its plausibility is a real taboo for the dominant discourse. The current economic system is not discussed in its foundations, in its inherent and intrinsic logic of growth and continuous reproduction, with increasing and continuous consumption of resources and production of 'garbage', in its forms of production and appropriation of the product, of continuous reproduction of inequalities between people, social groups and countries. It is an eternally acquired reality. As such, the only thing you can do is try to fix the problems you pose. A sign, however, that even in the dominant discourse this belief is the object of some disbelief, is reflected in the way in which defensive concepts, such as *mitigation, adaptation and resilience*, have emerged and have been gaining increasing attention and use within the dominant discourse, particularly since Rio+20. The dramatic *and exhortative pathos of the 2030 Agenda, already commented on in chapter 1 of this work, reveals the distressing uncertainties that run through the dominant discourse itself.*

All this is reflected in the nature of the 17 SDGs and their 169 measures that contain contradictions and oscillate between pure voluntarism and mere recommendation. To achieve the desired future state of affairs, what needs to be done by 2030? First of all, to ensure greater economic growth and to develop industrialisation (objectives 8 and 9 and their measures). But is this not a factor in aggravating the problems? No, because by 2030, we will take measures that will not only reverse the trends and dynamics that have brought us to the *current state of affairs* but will also prevent or offset the effects of the new spurt of economic growth and industrialization. In other words, in 15 years, we will strive to achieve what has not been achieved in recent decades, i.e. decoupling economic growth

from environmental degradation (measure 8.4), upgrading industries to make them sustainable by developing science and technology (measures 9.4 and 9.5), ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns (goal 12) and combating climate change and conserving ecosystems (goal 13, 14 and 15). In addition, we will end poverty, hunger, ensure healthy lives and well-being for all, quality education and gender equality (goals 1 to 5). And how do you achieve these goals? "Encouraging" companies, in particular large ones and multinationals, to adopt sustainable practices (measure 12.6) and, above all, ensuring global macroeconomic stability and promoting a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations, as well as multi-partnerships between stakeholders (goal 17 and its measures).

Analysing the dominant discourse from the point of view of its unsaid, forbidden, form and contradictions, it is not possible to avoid strong scepticism about the effective implementation and implementation of the 2030 Agenda action programme, as well as the programmes that preceded it, which is indeed worrying given the seriousness of the problems at stake and the urgent need to address them. The debates, struggles and resistances surrounding the implementation of measures to combat climate change are an example of the problems and contradictions inherent in the dominant conception of sustainable development and its effective implementation. Where will we be in less than 10 years?

But does a critical perspective on the measures of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the successive documents emanating from the various conferences on environment and development, imply their global rejection because they do not get to the bottom of the problems? To answer this question in the affirmative would, of course, be not only nihilistic but, above all, irresponsible. The dominant discourse (and practice) of sustainable development is intrinsically contradictory. It mixes necessary and urgent measures with designs and actions that hinder the former and create new problems. Many of the defined measures go beyond the limits of the system and striving to implement them is not only a necessity in itself, but also contributes to a revelation and social learning about these same limits and their consequences.

This contradictory aspect of the dominant discourse can also be evidenced by analysing the underlying values, so before proceeding to the construction of the conclusion that results from the premises of the argument of the sustainable development discourse, it is also important to identify which *value premises* underly, as a "source of normativity" (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012), the characterization of the current state of affairs, the vision of the future and the definition of the actions necessary to move from one state to another.

Table 2.3 provides a proposal to identify the main values underpinning the 2030 Agenda. A distinction is made between explicit values, i.e. values that are expressed in the text, and implicit values that are only implied or insufficiently expressed.

Most of the explicit values refer to the social dimension, configuring a set of defining values of what can be called social *sustainability*. There are also the main guiding values of the environmental and economic dimensions. The implicit values translate, essentially, the 'interdictions' already discussed above, and which refer to the indisputable and unassailable foundations of the capitalist system.

**Table 2.3 – 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: underlying values**

Values as reasons for action
<p><b>Explicit values:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concern for the elimination of poverty and the satisfaction of basic needs (food, health, education, water, sanitation, energy);</li> <li>- Employment and decent work for all;</li> <li>- Gender equality and <i>women's</i> empowerment;</li> <li>- Freedom from fear and violence;</li> <li>- Physical, mental and social well-being;</li> <li>- Concern about inequality within and between countries;</li> <li>- Respect for human rights, and the principles of human dignity, rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination;</li> <li>- Democracy, good governance and participatory decision-making;</li> <li>- Accountable and inclusive institutions;</li> <li>- Respect for racial, ethnic and cultural diversity;</li> <li>- Equal opportunities that allow for the full realisation of human potential;</li> <li>- Prosperity must be shared;</li> <li>- A fair, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world;</li> <li>- Protection and conservation of ecosystems, wildlife and other living species;</li> <li>- Respect nature, live in harmony with nature;</li> <li>- All countries should be able to enjoy sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth;</li> <li>- The international trading system should be universal, regulated, open, fair, non-discriminatory and multilateral;</li> <li>- The development of knowledge, science and technology are key to sustaining economic growth and making production and consumption patterns sustainable.</li> </ul> <p><b>Implicit or insufficiently explicit and substantiated values:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The actual economic system is not in dispute, in its essence and fundamentals, and is irreplaceable;</li> </ul>

Values as reasons for action
- The actual economic system is good and must be maintained and improved, for it alone can bring about well-being, development and progress;
- The actual economic system can be corrected to become socially and environmentally sustainable.



Fairclough and Fairclough (2012, pp. 176-177) distinguish between (normative) reasons for action, which have to do with what agents "want to do" (their "real concerns"), and reasons for action that have to do with what actors are obliged to do ("bound to do") in light of the moral and institutional orders in which they are embedded. In this way, the normative framework can function either as a motivating premise of the action, or as a circumstantial premise, that is, as an external reason that constrains the action.

Considering the distinction between implicit and explicit values, made above, we can say that, in the dominant discourse of sustainable development, explicit values function, above all, as motivators of action, and implicit values function, essentially, as a structural constraint of action. This is not to say that the constraining values are found in the 2030 Agenda only implicitly, but only that the *main* constraining values are expressed implicitly or insufficiently explicitly.

The constraint values define the limits that the pursuit of the mobilisation values should not and cannot exceed. Therefore, it remains to be considered what kind of coherence relationship exists between these two types of values. There are essentially two hypotheses. The first is that there is no fundamental contradiction and that, therefore, the mobilizing values can be fully implemented in the context of the limits set by the constraining values. The second is that there is an essential contradiction between the two types of values, and that, consequently, the values of mobilization cannot be implemented, in coherence and in their fullness, within the limits set by the values of structural constraint. In this case, the values of constraint therefore have a limiting power over the values of mobilization. However, as there is no power dynamics without counter-power dynamics, this hypothesis allows us to envisage that action leading to the full pursuit of mobilization values can create a dynamic not only of revelation, but also of delegitimization of constraints, that is, an emancipatory dynamic.

One of the central concerns of this doctoral research is precisely to seek to verify to what extent a consistent pursuit of the values of *social sustainability* configures an emancipatory dynamic, with repercussions in the more general scope of socio-ecological sustainability. Thus, based on what was previously discussed, it was considered, as a guiding hypothesis of the doctoral research, that the deepening, development and pursuit of the explicit values listed in Table 2.3, namely the values that configure *social sustainability*, constitute not only a necessity and a way to solve problems, but also entails an emancipatory potential, regarding the 'constraints' of the system.

To conclude the analysis of the dominant discourse, it is now necessary to construct the conclusions that result from the various premises and in which the contradictions and justifications of an ideological nature are patent. These conclusions are set out in Table 2.4.

**Table 2.4 – 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: conclusion**

<b>Conclusions of the sustainable development arguments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic growth and industrialisation are essential to solve social and development problems as well as environmental problems.</li> <li>- Economic growth and industrialization can only be provided within the framework of the processes of production, reproduction and appropriation of the capitalist system.</li> <li>- Sustainable development is economic growth and industrialization purified of its environmentally and socially unsustainable practices.</li> <li>- This purification, in addition to the implementation of conservationist policies, is achieved through technological development and the modification and adoption of practices and behaviors, in terms of the management of natural resources, production, exchanges and consumption, in the sense of eco-efficiency and social justice.</li> <li>- To this end, it is necessary to implement the SDGs and their measures;</li> <li>- To be effective, this realization requires a global gathering of goodwill and the mobilization of all in a partnership between the United Nations, governments, the private sector, academia, NGOs, as well as in particular partnerships between stakeholders, in different contexts and scales. It also requires good governance at all levels and the participation of citizens in decision-making.</li> <li>- The outcome of this journey and the success of the process are uncertain, so it is necessary to adopt mitigation, adaptation and resilience measures to prevent and face, as best as possible, the consequences of possible failures and failures.</li> </ul>

The 2030 Agenda is the most recent general policy framework for the adoption of policies, the definition of programmes and the implementation of measures, both at the level of national and sectoral public policies, as well as in international trade relations, business practices, as well as policies and guidelines, directions and choices for research in academia.

This framework has not only 'political' consequences, but also epistemological consequences. The latter are particularly embodied in the conceptions and debates around

the three 'pillars' or three dimensions of sustainability, and their articulation, which should also be analysed.

## **2.2 Alternative conceptions of sustainable development**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

In the previous points of this work, we tried to analyse the process of construction of the dominant conception of *sustainable development*, its main characteristics and the structural contradictions it entails.

The analysis provided some basis to support the perspective that there is a dialectical contradiction between the concerns and desires expressed in the concept of *sustainability* and the constraints posed by the dominant worldview and ideology that consider the current mode of production, appropriation, exchange and consumption indisputable and irreplaceable. These constraints are reflected in the limitations of sustainable development design and policies, and their programmatic orientations, proposals and action measures that oscillate between voluntarism, goodwill and recommendation, and whose results fall far short of the needs expressed in sustainability concerns and aspirations.

Hence the paradoxical dynamic that characterizes the last few decades. On the one hand, there is the growing importance and attention given to environmental and sustainability issues at the political and institutional, scientific, business, public opinion and ordinary citizen levels. On the other hand, there is evidence that situations of social and environmental unsustainability are not resolved and, in many cases, continue to worsen.

In fact, as Talbot (2008) points out, in the last 50/60 years we have gone from a situation in which few governments had departments or institutions dedicated to environmental and sustainability problems to a situation in which practically all governments have this type of organization, as well as a vast body of legislation on the subject, and national strategies for sustainable development. Environmental and sustainability issues have become a central theme in international institutions such as the EU, the UN and associated agencies. From a few international agreements, a wide range of agreements and conventions has been passed. From half a dozen environmental and development NGOs it has become thousands of such organisations.

And yet, the problems are still 'there', as well as the need to solve them urgently, because, as stated in the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015, p. 12), "We may be the last [generation] to have a chance of saving the planet".

It is therefore important to face this paradox, this "abyss" between 'activity' and lack of results (Lélé, 2013), to envisage alternative ways of understanding sustainability and acting accordingly.

### **2.2.2 Beyond the dominant design of SD**

Hopwood et al. (2005) consider the concept of sustainable development as a potentially important change in the way of understanding the relations between humanity and nature, as well as social relations themselves, implying a break with the dichotomy between environmental and socio-economic issues, as well as with the Promethean conception that human knowledge and technology would make it possible to overcome all obstacles, including the natural and environmental ones, a vision closely linked to the development of capitalism, the industrial revolution and modern science.

The concept of SD stems, then, from the growing awareness of the global link between environmental problems, issues of poverty and inequality, and the search for a healthy future for humanity. However, the authors point out, the way in which the Brundtland Report shaped the concept of sustainable development, linking the satisfaction of the needs of the poor and environmental protection, with economic growth, as a solution to both, would prevent an effective confrontation of the problems and create a field of ambiguity, open to a wide range of interpretations that oscillate between the irrelevance attributed to the concept and the extreme importance for humanity that is given to it.

The authors address the different visions of sustainable development and seek to map their distribution in a vector space, based on their respective positions regarding the importance given to human well-being and equality, environmental concerns, and the articulation between them, grouping the visions into three major perspectives: "status quo", "reform" and "transformation".

Proponents of the *status quo* recognize the need for change but consider that social and environmental problems are surmountable in the context of the existing society, and that the growth provided by the market economy is the means to achieve sustainability.

Increased information, changes in values, development of management and assessment techniques (such as environmental impact assessment, environmental auditing and management systems, cost-benefit analyses) and technology in the market context are the best means of achieving sustainable development, particularly in the context of partnerships between governments, the business world, moderate environmentalists and scientists. This is the dominant position in governments, international agencies, the business world and certain currents of thought such as *ecological modernization*.

Those who are in a *perspective of reform* recognize the seriousness and urgency of the problems, are critical of the current policies of governments and the business world, but do not consider the need for fundamental changes, since the root of the problems does not lie in the nature of today's society, but in imbalances that occur in it and in gaps in knowledge and information that can be overcome. Significant changes in policies and lifestyles will be necessary but can be achieved progressively and within the framework of current social and economic structures. The key issue is to persuade governments and international agencies to introduce the necessary reforms, based on technology, good science and information, market change and governance reform. According to the authors, this perspective encompasses a wide range of people, some of whom are part of government agencies and public agencies, but it is expressed mainly in academic circles and among experts from *mainstream* NGOs, such as *Greenpeace*, *Friends of the Earth* and *the Sierra Club*. The focus on technology, energy efficiency, alternative energies, the green economy and the internalisation of environmental costs, the central importance given to the role of governments on the path to sustainable development, the need to introduce reforms in the political system towards an increase in democracy and participation, are some of the main characteristics attributed to the reformist perspective. According to the authors, the Brundtland Report is broadly part of the reformist perspective, but in the concrete proposals and measures advocated it remains in a *status quo* perspective, in particular by rejecting the idea that there are limits to economic growth. As for the Meadows Report (*Meadows et al*, 1972), it would fall within the reformist perspective, insofar as it contradicts the notion of unlimited growth, inherent in the capitalist economy, and the concomitant assertion that growth is the way to improve environmental quality.

Finally, proponents of *transformation* consider that environmental and social problems are grounded in fundamental aspects of today's society and in the way humans interrelate and relate to the environment. Reforms are not enough, as much of the problem lies at the heart of economic and social structures that focus neither on human well-being nor on environmental sustainability. Hence the need for social and political action in the sense of transformation, bringing together all those who are outside the centres of power, such as indigenous peoples, the poor, the working class and women. The authors subdivide the 'transformationists' into three currents: those who are fundamentally concerned with the environment, such as the partisans of deep ecology, and who sideline or ignore social problems; those who are concerned with social problems but make environmental problems secondary, such as the "Cornucopian socialists"; and those who seek to articulate both dimensions and consider both types of problems.

The authors focus their analysis on the latter current, which in turn encompasses a wide range of points of view. The perspective of Social Ecology and Dialectical Naturalism, associated with Murray Bookchin's eco-anarchism, a vision that defends the dialectical relationship between nature and humanity and the need to address environmental problems from the point of view of social criticism and reconstruction, structured in a direct and grassroots democracy. Ecofeminist currents that associate the problems of environmental degradation with the situation of subordination of women and, in some cases, with the structures of domination and exploitation of the capitalist system. Eco-socialist currents that seek to extend Marx's critique of the capitalist mode of production to environmental problems, articulating social inequality and environmental degradation as a result of the exploitation of people and the exploitation of nature. In addition to these currents, the transformationist perspective is also expressed in a diversity of grassroots social movements, especially in the South, that articulate social, environmental, economic and anti-globalization struggles, such as the movements in defense of the rights of indigenous peoples that also contribute an alternative worldview.

The authors conclude that the plurality of points of view highlights the lack of a unified conception of sustainable development, with several debates and perspectives taking place around the nature of the concept, the changes that need to be made, the means and the

actors that should lead them. However, despite this diversity, the concept encompasses key issues for humanity, related to how humans relate to nature, and ways to ensure lives worth living. As such, the concept should not be dismissed, as it provides a useful platform for debating humanity's choices.

The positions developed in previous points of this work share the authors' conviction that there are core elements in the concept of sustainability that need to be developed, deepened and implemented.

This is also a concern of Spriggett and Redclift (2015). For the authors, a critical perspective on the concept of sustainable development implies understanding it as a multiply constructed and strongly contested, political and radical concept. It is therefore necessary to ascertain whether the accusation of vacuity with which the concept is described is a way of obscuring and silencing its radical aspects or whether the concept is in fact mere jargon without content.

However, for the authors, this discussion should leave the field of disputes around the establishment of a definition, since being a concept with a strong political and ethical component, it entails a complexity and a set of contradictions that cannot be subsumed in a simple definition. Thus, focusing the discussion there results either in the search for a consensual definition, largely determined by the power of the dominant conception, or in a continuous proliferation of definitions that ends up leading the concept to indeterminacy and emptying. Both extremes of this oscillation imply the concealment of the critical and emancipatory potential of the concept, while discouraging practical action. It will then be important to focus the discussion on discourses and action and not on definitions, a perspective that allows us to highlight the emergence of conceptions that challenge the control and hegemony that have been exercised by the dominant discourse, proceeding to its deconstruction and placing the emphasis on the need for change, as well as on the valorisation and operationalization of the emancipatory dimension. These emerging discourses represent an antithesis of the modern metatheory of economic rationality, promoted through capitalist development, to which they oppose a rationality based on environmental justice, equity and ecological rationality. From these discourses emerges a narrative of 'good living', characterized by democratic participation and deliberative

democracy, as well as an increased concern for well-being and what constitutes happiness. This perspective problematizes and reconstructs the concept of sustainable development, opposing the dominant discourse, focused on the environment, conservation and the 'eco-cracy' of growth, a discourse focused on social crisis and human action. The emphasis on human action necessarily implies a democratization of decision-making processes, *empowerment*, the construction of power from the bottom up, which is indispensable for a redefinition of power relations on the concept of sustainable development and the way in which it is implemented.

This refocusing of the discussion, defended by the authors, on the social crisis and on human action, seems to us to be particularly important, insofar as it puts the emphasis on an apparently obvious aspect: if it is humans who cause the unsustainability, it cannot be anyone other than humans who solve the problem. But in order to go beyond the appearance of evidence, it is necessary to consider whether the problem of unsustainability lies in 'humanity', as an unavoidably 'predatory' species of nature, or, rather, in certain forms of social relations, historically determined, which dig the gap of society/nature differentiation in order to construct the instrumentalization of the latter.

On the other hand, this refocusing has ontological, epistemological and methodological consequences. In the first place, the centre of the analysis now resides neither in the relations between society and nature nor in social relations, but rather in the way (and in time) in which social relations and relations between society and nature are interdetermined. From this perspective, the anthropocentrism/ecocentrism dichotomy loses its meaning and must be overcome. Secondly, the problem of social sustainability is at the heart of the problem of sustainability in general, but only if it does not disconnect the social aspects from the environmental problems and if it knows how to build itself from a socio-ecological perspective.

Concerns about the construction of a critical alternative to the concept of sustainable development are also developed by Lélé (1991, 2013) who, however, places the emphasis on the need to move from theory to practice and pragmatic action. For Lélé, the rejection of the limited and limiting dominant conception of SD and the proposal of alternative conceptions have emanated, fundamentally, from various groups of civil society and some

academic circles and presents differentiations both in terms of normative concerns and analytical frameworks. The author argues for the need to overcome the manifest inability to construct a common alternative vision, as a necessary, though not sufficient, condition to make the structuring of a more substantive version of sustainable development feasible. The author classifies the critical ways of understanding SD into three major perspectives: the perspective of the "critique of political economy", the perspective of the "critique of technological arrogance", and the perspective of the need for "inner change", at the ethical and cultural level (Lélé, 2013, pp. 313-315).

The perspective of the critique of political economy constitutes, according to Lélé, the strongest and most "obvious" current of criticism of the dominant conception of SD. It includes several strands, namely the critique of capitalism, state power and colonial and neocolonial structures, converging on the issue of inequalities of power, in several dimensions. For this current, social and environmental unsustainability is anchored in the economic structure itself and in the relations of exploitation, and its prolongation in the relations of colonial exploitation and neocolonial dependence that will therefore have to be changed.

For Lélé, although the perspective of the critique of political economy allows us to explain the structural persistence of unsustainability, it does not, however, allow us to explain the origin of some of the environmental problems, namely those that result from the scientific and technological triumphalism that claims the capacity of human beings to completely dominate nature. Now, this "triumphalist reductionism", while it may favour the dominant economic interests, plays a role relatively independent of capitalism itself.

Finally, the third perspective argues that the problem does not lie in the 'outside', in the structures of material power or in the structures of thought, but in the 'inside', at the level of the culture and value systems of individuals that need to be changed, namely through environmental education.

For Lélé, the challenge from a sustainable development perspective is to converge or at least to bring these different currents into dialogue, both at a normative and analytical level. The starting point for this dialogue and convergence could be the acceptance of a "broad normative framework", in which the notion of environmental sustainability includes

not only intergenerational sustainability, but also intragenerational environmental justice and quality of life, and in which the notion of well-being includes not only freedom from material deprivation, of illness, of ignorance, but also the provision of a space to respect and experience nature, for its own sake, as a way of elevating the human spirit. In short, "sustainable development has to be redefined as the pursuit of material and non-material well-being, ecologically sustainable and socially just" (idem, p. 316).

Lélé's perspective seems to us to clearly point to an integrated and articulated conception, in which environmental sustainability includes a social dimension and social sustainability includes an environmental dimension, that is, to a socio-ecological sustainability.

But returning to the question of the dialogue between the various critical perspectives of sustainable development, if this can be achieved at the normative level, and at the analytical level, for Lélé, convergence becomes more difficult, namely due to some inclination of intellectuals and academics towards a one-dimensional, disciplinarily guided way of thinking, which is not adequately in line with reality and practical needs. Therefore, "it is quite possible that the practical will surpass the intellectuals on the way to achieving a synthesis" (idem, p. 316). In other words, if one considers the 'triangle' values-norms / politics-deliberation-organization-action / knowledge-science, it is precisely in this last field that, for Lélé, there seem to be greater difficulties in establishing the bases for a critical dialogue.

The general 'programme' proposed by Lélé seems to us to be quite interesting insofar as it expresses the need to construct a critical vision of sustainable development, multidimensional and articulated (ethical critique, ecological critique, critique of political economy), a need that is particularly felt from the perspective of practical action and, therefore, on the part of those who are faced with the problems and needs of solving practical problems from a sustainability perspective. This is precisely the basic requirement that arises at the level of the definition and implementation of sustainability policies and, concomitantly, the assessment of sustainability, the central object of this research.

In summary, from the authors' positions, summarized above, we draw three central ideas: i) the emancipatory potential of the concept of sustainability; ii) the need to transform social structures and relations and society-nature relations, in the sense of social and

ecological sustainability, i.e. socio-ecological; iii) the need to articulate, around a 'programme' for action, the various critical perspectives regarding the dominant conception of sustainable development and, fundamentally, the need to build alternatives in practice and action.

These three central ideas allow us to structure a new level for the development of the discussion that has been developed in this work, around the structuring of a critical perspective of sustainable development.

This discussion encompasses several interconnected practical-conceptual dimensions with areas of overlap that must be understood from a dynamic and relational perspective (social relations, society/nature relations):

- i) The dimension of the *needs*. The concept of *needs* is a cornerstone of the concept of sustainable development set out in the Brundtland Report. This notion, without which the related notion of equity loses substance, needs clarification, as does the latter (*equity* or *equality*?). In both cases, it is a task whose treatment has a privileged place in the field of *social sustainability*.
- ii) The dimension of *ecological sustainability* and the meaning that, in this dimension, the notion of *sustaining* and *caring assumes*.
- iii) The *ethical dimension*, of the values and norms that guide the perception and construction of reality, the consubstantiation of concerns and the definition of desires, of the ultimate objectives of the action, and that define the reference for evaluating the results.
- iv) The *political dimension*, structured in power relations, encompassing the organizational, deliberative and configuration and planning sub-dimensions of practical action.
- v) The *pragmatic dimension*, of *how to do it*, depending on the objectives, moments and circumstances.
- vi) The dimension of *knowledge* (philosophical, scientific, common) of *what exists and how it exists*, so that we know how to do what *we decide to do*, because we consider it *must* be done.

The first two dimensions do not belong to the same logical order as the others, since it is from the articulated application of the latter that answers to the questions posed by the first two are constructed.

Obviously, in the context of this work, or even of the doctoral thesis, it is not appropriate to discuss all these issues, but it is important to consider some relevant aspects for the continuation of the research.

### **2.2.3 To know what? How?**

Throughout this work, greater attention has been given to the political and, to a limited extent, to the ethical dimension of the concept of sustainability. To conclude Part I of this work, and before starting a first approach to the concept of social sustainability, which will be the theme of Part II, it is important to analyse, in a synthetic way, some issues of the *knowledge dimension*, and some of the main problems that arise therein.

One of the central issues that the emergence of the environmental problematics put back on the agenda has been the need to understand the relations between humanity and nature in a holistic, dynamic and articulated way. This need is at the heart of the concept of sustainable development. Even in the most *mainstream versions*, nature, the environment, can no longer be merely objectified, as a permanent and inexhaustible source of resources and a dumping ground for waste. At the very least, it is necessary to sufficiently understand the interactions and their consequences in order to maintain the sustainability of those functions or 'services'.

Now, this seems to be the privileged field for scientific knowledge. However, here too, ideological perspectives, conceptions of the world and rationality influence or determine the options, processes and limits of research.

In the *mainstream conception of* sustainable development, the approach to the articulation of human/nature relations is built, in a privileged way, around the metaphor of the 'three pillars' (ecological, economic and social), either in the simplest version of the image of three pillars that support sustainability, or in more dynamic versions, such as the triangle whose vertices are the three aforementioned dimensions or that of the three intersecting circles. to more sophisticated versions, such as the multiplication of intersecting circles, resulting from the integration of other dimensions such as the political, institutional, cultural, or as

the image of the 'sustainability prism' that places the various dimensions of sustainability in a three-dimensional configuration (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2014).

Criticism of the weaknesses and limitations of the 'three pillars' metaphor-based design has long been made in the context of debates on sustainability and sustainable development (Giddings et al. 2002; Gibson, 2005, 2006).

One of the main lines of critical argument focuses on the nature and consequences of separation, autonomy and limited articulation between the 'pillars'.

Whatever its degree of sophistication, the metaphor of the 'three pillars' translates a conception in which ontology is largely reduced to epistemology. Reality is conceived as being made up of three large, relatively autonomous spheres: ecological, economic and social. Sustainability is defined in each of them and global sustainability results from the contributions of each of the spheres, and sustainability gains in one of the spheres may imply losses in another(s), as a result of the interactions that are established between them. These interactions are not properly conceived in a holistic and systemic way but are exercised in certain areas of 'overlap' or 'intersection', in certain circumstances and through certain 'channels'.

The perspective of the 'three pillars' is convenient because it corresponds to three traditionally established fields (environmental, economic and social) in terms of public policy making, academic research and specialised research (Gibson, 2005). This perspective of relative autonomy and limited interaction has, however, a double implication: upstream, it diverts attention or undervalues the consideration and analysis of the interconnections between the various dimensions; downstream, it facilitates and encourages a dynamic of compartmentalization in the analysis and treatment of sustainability issues (Giddings et al., 2002; Gibson, 2005).

From this twofold implication derive, in turn, a number of consequences. First of all, the paradoxical logic that consists in affirming the ideal of interconnection, but, in practice, perpetuating fragmentation and the logics of disciplinary specialization and the interests that are inherent to it, discouraging substantive innovation (Gibson, 2005, 2006).

In this context, science can continue to work predominantly in a traditional way, within the reductionist paradigm of determinism, objectivism, universalism, positivism; in

specialization, in the analytical partition of the whole into its components, in the sense of control, appropriation and manipulation of the object.

On the other hand, the separation favours the uneven development of the pillars, with the predominance of some and the subordination of others, as well as the assumption of a logic of *trade-offs* between the three sectors (Giddings et al., 2002; Gibson, 2005, 2006). Now, in a society dominated by the hypertrophy of the economy associated with continuous economic growth, and in which environmental problems appear as a limit and threat to this growth, it is not surprising that the economic and environmental (biophysical) pillars are prioritized, although with a predominance of the former over the latter, in debates on sustainable development (Giddings et al., 2002).

From this perspective, the economic sphere and economic growth take a central place in their interaction with the ecological sphere, namely through the so-called 'externalities'. The social dimension is generally subordinated. It should be recalled how elements of this dimension (needs, equity) were introduced by political pressure, throughout the process of constructing the concept of sustainable development that leads to the Brundtland Report, a process already analysed previously in this work.

The perspective of the 'pillars' does not conceive, nor does it seek to understand, reality in its history and in its becoming, but reflects the conviction that the nature, size and characteristics of the economic system, as it exists, is a natural and eternal reality. The 'pillars' are what they are, reality is what it is, so it is not interesting to ask if they can or should cease to be, if they were once something else or can become so. What matters is to understand the best way to maintain and secure economic growth.

But it is an economic growth of the capitalist type, especially in its neoliberal drive, in which everything is subject to commodification and reducible to economic capital, and in which social relations and the environment are conceived, described and reduced to the status of 'capital', 'social' or 'natural', and the provision of 'services' (Giddings et al., 2002).

One of the paradigmatic expressions of this reduction emerges in the discussions around the conceptions of 'weak' versus 'strong' sustainability and the way in which the former argues that sustainability is achievable as long as the total capital 'stock' is maintained or increases, since the various 'capitals' are 'convertible', i.e. that 'capital' losses in a given

pillar(s) are substitutable for 'capital' gains in another(s) (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2014). And even if the conceptions of 'strong' sustainability deny this possibility of substitution, reducing the discussion to the one-dimensional and economic question of 'capital' can only divert us (and alienate us) from the paths of sustainability.

However, the concept of sustainability does not emerge to justify what exists. On the contrary, it is built in reaction and as an attempt to respond to situations and trends that are ecologically and socially unaffordable and that must be faced and resolved. It is, therefore, a critical concept (Gibson, 2006).

This critical perspective cannot fail to be exercised in the ontological and epistemological domains, and at the level of the respective methodological consequences, so it is important to go beyond the rigidity of the 'pillars' and conceive reality in its articulations and interdeterminations, in order to understand the roots of the problems and seek solutions. In other words, considering that the understanding of concrete events requires a double movement concrete→abstract, abstract→concrete (Sayer, 2010), the conception of the 'pillars', from a sustainability perspective, constitutes an insufficient and limited form of abstraction of the concrete. The seriousness, persistence and aggravation of socio-ecological problems require richer forms of abstraction that allow a better approximation to the complexity of the concrete.

However, as Giddings et al. (2002) point out, the conception of 'pillars' is a form of abstraction that minimizes permanent change and reinforces the conception of the world as something static, in which the dominant structures and priorities have always existed and will continue to exist. And, more than highlighting the interconnections, the design of the pillars tends to reinforce the autonomy and separation between economy, society and nature.

This problem is not solved by the addition of new 'pillars' (cultural, institutional, political...), but requires the understanding that everyone is included in a relationship of socio-ecological interdependence (Gibson, 2006).

Abstraction into the 'pillars' (whatever their number) can be useful in identifying the existence and inter-implication of various factors, but it cannot consist of a movement of

reification. The approach to the concrete requires its relativization, revitalization and interrelationship in the context of the totalities in which they are inserted.

From this perspective, conceiving the economy as a subsystem of society and society as a subsystem of the global environment (image of three concentric circles) can be a starting point for an alternative conception to the 'pillars' (Giddings et al., 2002; Gibson, 2005).

However, even this perspective has limitations and needs to be improved:

An improvement would be to remove the separation of the economy from other human activities. This separation inflates the importance of the market, assumes it is autonomous and does not focus primarily on meeting of human needs whether by the market or other means. We would suggest that human activity and well being, both material and cultural, should be viewed as interconnected and within the environment. Humanity's well being depends on the environment, although we should recognize that the natural world, although it would change without humans, would survive without us. The same cannot be said for humanity. The boundary between the environment and human activity is itself not neat and sharp; rather, it is fuzzy. There is a constant flow of material and energy between human activities and the environment and both constantly interact with each other". (Giddings et al., 2002, p. 193).

The authors propose, therefore, a 'movement' of decentring on the 'economy' and refocusing on material and cultural well-being, in a context of recognition of integration and dependence on nature. This refocusing is justified as follows:

Defining the aim as human well-being would encourage seeing discrimination in any form as contrary to sustainable development, rather than as at present, as undesirable but justified by gains elsewhere. Instead of having a priority on the economy, which is a means to an end, the focus should be on human provisioning and satisfying needs, which may be done in many more ways than those described within economy." (ibid.).

In the logical sequence of their argument, the authors then argue for the need for sustainable development theories to adopt a holistic and integrated, systemic perspective, which considers complexity, interactions and emergent properties.

However, they draw attention to a crucial point. The focus on human well-being, respect for nature, and the adoption of systemic perspectives do not exhaust the need to reconfigure alternative perspectives for sustainable development, as there is still a need to integrate the ethical dimension. In other words, it is necessary to define values and guidelines that establish the benchmarks for priority setting and decision-making. "Sustainable development needs to be based on principles that would apply to all issues

whether they are classified as environmental, social, economic or any mix of the three" (Giddings et al. 2002, p. 194).

In other words, both the processes of knowledge and the processes of practical action (deliberation, decision, action, evaluation), from a sustainability perspective, have to be guided by a system of values that must be established and defined. It is not enough, therefore, to adopt systemic perspectives that reduce the complexity of socio-ecological systems to measurable models. It is necessary to bring to light the normative dimensions and implications of complexity (Audouin et al. 2013; Cilliers and Preiser, 2010).

Midgley (1992, p. 149) goes even further, also introducing the dimension of subjectivity: "If systems scientists are to deal adequately with complexity, they will have to look at *object relations, moral decision making, and subjectivity* [emphasis added]. Moreover, complex interrelationships among these forms of complexity will often have to be explored."

Systemic perspectives have been making their way, also in the field of sustainability and sustainable development. In fact, the emergence of environmental problems and the development of complex thinking in recent decades is not a mere coincidence, nor are they mere parallel realities (Audouin, 2009, 2013; Midgley, 1992). Humanity struggles with problems that it cannot face without (re)constructing complex thought and knowledge (Morin, 2008, 2011), without recovering the holistic 'soul' that it has 'sold to the devil' in exchange for the instrumental omniscience of Cartesian rationality and modern science. The contemporary revaluation of the "epistemologies of the South" (Santos, 2012), of the cosmovisions of indigenous peoples who have never lost this 'soul' is but one of the ways in this demand.

That there is no critical thought without complex and dynamic knowledge is nothing new, as Karl Marx has long since shown, who lacked, in retrospect, to accompany the critique of political economy with a 'critique of political ecology', although, unlike those who limit themselves to attaching to him the label of prometheism, it is possible to find in his work some sketches of this critique (Bensaid, 2002).

The central importance of complex thinking for the present research, both at the ontological and epistemological levels and, particularly, at the methodological and practical levels, has been established from the outset. However, this is not yet the time to move in

this direction, since it seems necessary to us, first, to attack the issue of sustainability from another front, and to make a first exploratory approach to the problem of *social sustainability* that will be the theme of Part II of this work.

## **PART II – SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**



### 3. The social dimension of sustainability

In the literature on the concept of *social sustainability*, several considerations about the less developed stage and the lesser or subordinate status of the social dimension emerge recurrently over time, in relation to the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. These statements can be summarised as follows:

- The social dimension was belatedly integrated into the debates on sustainable development, which were initially dominated by environmental and economic issues (Litig and Grießler, 2005; Collantonio, 2011; Eisenberg and Jabareen, 2017) and, despite the increasing attention given to it since the 1990s, it remains a subordinated dimension, often treated as the poor relative or weakest link in sustainable development (Litig and Grießler 2005; Collantonio and Dixon, 2011; Böstrom, 2012; Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2014).
- Although there is a progressive emergence of productions, there is still a scarcity of theoretical and empirical works on social sustainability, and the concept remains diffuse, insufficiently theorized, excessively simplified and limited by theoretical and methodological constraints (Litig and Grießler 2005; Collantonio and Dixon, 2011; Murphy, 2012; Boyer et al., 2016; Eisenberg and Jabareen, 2017; Missimer et al., 2017).
- The lack of definition of the concept of social sustainability translates into a lack of consensus regarding its scope (including the term 'social'), meaning and 'nature' (analytical, political, normative?) and the emergence of a growing plurality of interpretations, depending on worldviews, disciplinary perspectives, socio-cultural priorities and particularities of research (Collantonio and Dixon, 2011; Manzy et al., 2011; Böstrom, 2012; Murphy, 2012; Dalal-Clayton, 2014; Boyer et al., 2016).
- These aspects contribute to the difficulty of developing cumulative knowledge, with the various authors proposing to fill the existing gaps on their own (Collantonio and Dixon, 2011; Manzy et al., 2011; Eisenberg and Jabareen, 2017).
- Despite these difficulties, there is beginning to be a greater consensus regarding the identification of the main themes that make up social sustainability, including the recognition of the emergence of new themes in relation to more traditional themes

(Collantonio and Dixon, 2011; Manzy et al., 2011; Böstrom, 2012; Murphy, 2012; Dalal-Clayton, 2014; Boyer et al., 2016; Missimer et al., 2017).

Some authors draw attention to the fact that, although at a formative stage, the development of the problematics of social sustainability can be informed by more mature research traditions, which are related to it, namely around human well-being, such as human development and community well-being (Magis and Shinn, 2009) and quality of life (Pinto, 2004).

Bearing this background in mind, we will deal with the following aspects:

- 1) Genealogy of the notion of *social sustainability* in the context of the problem of sustainable development.
- 2) Affinities, articulation and influence of other traditions of reflection on human development, needs and quality of life.
- 3) The specificities of the sustainability perspective and the contributions of this specificity to the general issue of human well-being and flourishing.

## **4. Brief history of genealogy and gestation of the notion of social sustainability**

### **4.1 Social sustainability within the framework of sustainable development**

As mentioned in the first part of this research, the social dimension, through the discussions around the theme of development, has been part of the debate on sustainable development from the beginning.

However, the inclusion of social and development problematics was neither linear nor 'peaceful' since it largely resulted from pressure from the countries of the 'South' and some countries of the former 'second world', as illustrated in the preparation of the 1972 Stockholm Conference (Egelston, 2013). The results of this Conference would, however, be very limited from the perspective of social and development issues (Egelston, 2013; Springett and Redclift, 2015) that remained relatively marginalized until the 1980s, not being integrated into the first formulation of the concept of sustainable development, expressed in the final text (published in 1980) of the World Conservation Strategy, promoted by UNEP, IUCN and WWF (Lelé, 1991; Egelston, 2013; Springett and Redclift, 2015).

The most notable exception to this trend of relative marginalization of social and development problems during the 1970s is the Cocoyoc Declaration of 1974, referred to above. This declaration was adopted at the *Symposium on Patterns of Resource Use, Environment and Development Strategies*, sponsored by UNEP and UNCTAD, held in Cocoyoc, Mexico, from 8 to 12 October 1974. The symposium brought together numerous experts from different backgrounds and orientations. It was not therefore an intergovernmental conference, and the declaration was never submitted for approval by the United Nations bodies.

The declaration constitutes a milestone in the redefinition of the purposes of development as human development and not "development of things" and defines the scope of the notion of human *needs*. While setting as a priority the satisfaction of basic needs (food, housing, health, clothing and education), the text broadens the scope of needs to be met by development:

Development should not be limited to the satisfaction of basic needs. There are other needs, other goals, and other values. Development includes freedom of expression and impression, the right to give and to receive ideas and stimulus. There is a deep social need to participate in shaping the basis of one's own existence, and to make some contribution to the fashioning of the world's future. Above all, development includes the right to work, by which we mean not simply having a job but finding self-realization in work, the right not to be alienated through production processes that use human beings simply as tools (CD, 1974, p. 3).

The Cocoyoc Declaration, in addition to conceiving human needs as going beyond basic needs, including the right to work, development and personal fulfilment, as well as social needs for interaction, participation and intervention in the construction of the future, has, above all, the merit of affirming the centrality of the satisfaction of human needs as a goal of development (ODI, 1978; TESE, 2008).

In the "Suggestions for Action", the text of the declaration anticipates guidelines that will be echoed in the Brundtland Report and, in fact, would only be adopted in sustainable development policies after the 1992 Rio Conference:

We call on political leaders, Governments, international organizations and the scientific community to use their imagination and resources to elaborate and start implementing, as soon as possible, programmes aimed at satisfying the basic needs of the poorest peoples all over the world, including wherever appropriate, the distribution of goods in kind. These programmes should be designed in such a way as to ensure adequate conservation of resources and protection of the environment. (CD, 1974, p. 4-5).

In short, the Cocoyoc Declaration clearly supports for the first time on the international institutional stage the notion that environmental and development issues cannot be separated and that the goal of development is the satisfaction of human needs and not economic growth per se. The discomfort and resistance aroused by this type of statement, at the time, is well illustrated by the fact that Henry Kissinger, then US Secretary of State, a few days after the Symposium, criticized the political and social content of the Declaration, protesting the fact that the document went beyond strictly environmental issues, intending to "relate everything to everything", and underlining that UNEP's mandate was restricted to environmental issues (UNCTAD, 2011, p. 88).

In fact, these issues were only taken up again in 1982, in the context of the preliminary discussions of the Brundtland Commission, and then materialized in the Commission's Report in 1987.

The Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987), in addition to affirming the inseparability of environmental and development issues, would return to the centrality of the concept of needs as an objective of development. However, the scope of the concept of needs is restricted to *basic needs*, to which is added intra and intergenerational *participation* and *equity*. This set of notions, articulated by the concept of *sustainability* (which postulates the submission of development, on the one hand, to the limits imposed by resources and biophysical systems and, on the other, to the satisfaction of human needs) constitutes the main legacy of the Report, which, however, postulates that the resolution of environmental and development problems can only be achieved through economic growth.

This basic notion of the concept of sustainable development would be developed and systematized in the documents produced at the 1992 Rio Conference (UNCED).

Regardless of the discussion about the scope and limits of the results of the Conference, it is important to note that the documents produced constitute a milestone in the problem of sustainable development, structuring the matrix for the subsequent development of the concept and definition of policies and practical actions within the United Nations system and most international organizations for cooperation and development.

From the perspective of the theme of social sustainability, it is important to highlight some aspects.

For the first time, the existence of a social dimension to sustainable development is expressly mentioned in Section I of Agenda 21 (UN, 1992), together with an economic and an ecological dimension.

The centrality of human needs and intra and intergenerational equity is reaffirmed in Principle 3 of the Rio Declaration (UN, 1992a).

The scope of the concept of needs is largely limited to basic needs (food, housing, health, education) and priority is given to the fight against hunger and poverty.

However, some issues that already appeared in the Brundtland Report, albeit in an unassertive way, are now expressly placed on the agenda, such as the rights of women and indigenous peoples (Principles 20 and 22 of the Declaration and Section I of Agenda 21). In this context, themes such as *organization*, participation, *empowerment* of individuals and communities, respect for *cultural integrity*, are affirmed as basic principles and objectives

to be achieved. Annex III of the UNCED Report to the United Nations General Assembly, dedicated to the theme of forests, states that "The management of forest resources and areas should be developed in such a way as to meet the *social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual needs* of present and future generations" (UN, 1992b).

We are therefore a long way from strictly environmental issues, as advocated by Henri Kissinger. However, the treatment of these issues is very much focused on the sections of Agenda 21 dedicated to the fight against poverty and the satisfaction of basic needs, explicitly or implicitly, in the most disadvantaged and vulnerable countries or regions, as if the problems of gender discrimination or ethnic minorities did not arise in the 'developed' countries. This 'restraint' of the treatment of more 'advanced' issues in the context of the least developed countries has remained, to this day, a trend of sustainable development policies.

The third aspect that should be highlighted is the fact that the Rio Conference extends to the entire United Nations system and its agencies and programmes, namely UNEP, UNDP and UNCTAD, the commitment to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the implementation of sustainable development (Section IV, Chapter 38 of Agenda 21).

This transversality, which would be extended to other international organisations and institutions, such as the European Union, would therefore simultaneously disseminate and universalise the concept of sustainable development and create a plurality of sources, discussion processes and contributions on the substance and operationalisation of the concept and, at the same time, of the social dimension, despite its relative minorization, as analysed at the beginning of this text.

However, it is important to make this point that the issues that make up the concept of social sustainability are not, in themselves and in general, a novelty resulting from the debates on sustainable development. Discussions about human needs, about what constitutes 'good living' in society, are rooted in centuries-old and millennial traditions. What is new is its re-elaboration through the mediation of the concept of *sustainability*. To what extent this re-elaboration is more or less significant is one of the concerns of the present investigation.

Before focusing on this issue, it is also important to note that general contributions to the configuration of social sustainability have emerged within the United Nations system from the Rio Conference to the present day.

The *World Summit on Social Development in 1995*, the Millennium Declaration in 2000 and the resulting Millennium Development Goals, *the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002*, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in 2007, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20 in 2012, and the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development* of 2015, and the resulting *Sustainable Development Goals*, are among the main moments of this process that spans the last 30 years.

With advances and setbacks, with a greater or lesser broadening of the scope, with greater or lesser emphasis given to certain aspects, issues that it is not appropriate at this time to particularize and deepen, from these events and the documents produced in them, a set of themes emerged that allow us to define the configuration of what, in this context, can be understood as the social dimension of sustainability.

In summary, it is important to highlight the following:

- Priority is consistently given to meeting *basic needs* (food, housing, health, education), with a strong focus on the poorest and most vulnerable.
- In addition, the issue of women's rights is also given central importance. Themes such as *non-discrimination, equality, dignity, respect, freedom, participation* and *empowerment* often arise in this context.
- The issue of the rights of indigenous peoples has undergone important developments, particularly since the *2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. It is a context where themes emerge that go far beyond *basic needs* or *the right to land and resources*, such as *well-being, justice, dignity, non-discrimination, the right to diversity, cultural identity, belonging, integrity, autonomy, self-determination, participation, freedom, security*.
- Themes such as *social cohesion, inclusion, social capital, equity, justice, dignity, solidarity, security, well-being, freedom, participation, governance*, are also used in more global contexts.

- There is, however, a considerable gap between the development of these themes at the level of the affirmation of principles and rights, and their operationalization and integration into concrete policies and materialization in programmed actions. In this regard, the focus is on meeting the basic needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

The emergence and existence of all this wealth of themes and the work developed around each one of them, however, did not give rise to a systematic and global elaboration of the concept of social sustainability or, if one prefers, of the configuration of the social dimension of sustainability. We are therefore back to the starting point, that is, to the issues of vagueness, sub-theorisation and minorization of the social dimension of sustainability.

Before moving forward on this issue and articulating it with the question previously left in abeyance, regarding the re-elaboration of these themes through the mediation of the concept of sustainability, it is interesting to analyse the main lines of reflection on these themes, which are developed in other contexts, although they intersect and relate, are influenced and influence the debate on sustainable development.

#### **4.2 Other contexts for reflection on the notion of social sustainability**

Magis and Shinn (2009) identify three traditions of research and practice where important contributions have been made to social sustainability:

- Human Development (namely within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme);
- Sustainability (namely around the United Nations Conferences on Environment and Development);
- The tradition of Sustainable Communities and Community Well-Being, referring here mainly to the tradition of the *American Community Movement*.

According to the authors, these three currents, although with their own identity, emanate from the same roots, developed in the same time period and in very similar directions. In these traditions, they identify the emergence of four major groups of principles that characterize social sustainability:

- **Human Well-Being**, which includes *basic needs (food, education, health, sanitation, water supply and housing), poverty eradication, the right to work and a productive life, social, cultural and spiritual needs, security and empowerment.*
- **Equity**, which includes ensuring *economic and political opportunities, reducing economic and living disparities, equity in access to justice, and the expression of social and cultural values.*
- **Democratic Government**, including *democratic institutions and laws, transparency, political freedoms, civil rights.*
- **Democratic Civil Society**, including *democratic participation, self-determination, cultural identity and national identity, political freedoms, empowerment, expression of minorities, women and youth, public involvement, public decision-making informed by dialogue and participation, inclusion and social integration.*

From this perspective, the authors propose and defend that *human well-being, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society* constitute the four structuring principles of the concept of social sustainability, an issue to which we will return in another section.

Of the three traditions mentioned above, that of sustainability and sustainable development has already been dealt with in the previous sections. It is now important to devote some attention to the perspectives of Human Development and Well-Being.

### **Human Development**

In the context of human development or "human-centred development", Magis and Shinn (2009) identify three approaches: *Basic Needs, Human Development*, led by Mahbub ul Haq and developed within the UNDP, and *Freedoms*, based on the conceptions of Amartya Sen.

#### *Basic Needs*

The background and impetus for the emergence and development from the perspective of basic needs is the same as that we have already mentioned in the analysis of the emergence of the concept of sustainable development: the understanding that the unprecedented economic growth that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s did not solve the problems of poverty, inequality, illiteracy and health, which have worsened, especially in the least

developed third world countries. This understanding would motivate awareness of the need for a change in the focus or objectives of development: from economic growth, per se, to people and the satisfaction of their needs (Streeten and Burki, 1978; ODI, 1978; Streeten et al. 1981).

Some of the main points of reference for the emergence and development of the basic needs perspective are, among others, the Cocoyoc Declaration of 1974, the report of the World Conference for Employment of the International Labour Organization of 1976 (ODI, 1978), and the work carried out within the framework of the World Bank that culminated in the publication of the book *First Things First: Meeting Basic Human Needs in the Developing Countries*, 1981 (Streeten et al. 1981).

Although it refers to 'non-material' needs (*job satisfaction, self-determination, self-reliance, political freedom, participation in decision-making, cultural identity, sense of purpose* in life), the focus of the 'current' of *Basic Needs* is the satisfaction of *basic needs* (food, water, shelter, sanitation, health, education) and, within these, priority is given to "*core basic needs*" (food, water, shelter and sanitation) (Streeten, 1978; Streeten et al. 1981, Magis and Shinn, 2009).

As we have seen, the notion of basic needs was integrated into the Brundtland Report in 1987 as one of the central themes of the concept of sustainable development.

### *Human Development*

The human *development perspective* was largely driven by Mahbub ul Haq in the framework of the *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP). This perspective encompasses the perspective of basic needs, <sup>1</sup>but seeks to go further, also integrating influences from the theories of Amartya Sen.

The work carried out in this area would result in the creation of the Human Development Index and the publication of the Human Development Reports, which have been prepared within the framework of the UNDP from 1990 to the present.

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<sup>1</sup> Mahbub ul Haq was one of the authors of the referred report *First Things First: Meeting Basic Human Needs in the Developing Countries* (Streeten et al, 1981) and Paul Streeten would later collaborate with ul Haq, having prefaced his book *Reflections on Human Development* (Haq, 1995).

In the wake of the Basic Needs perspective, Human Development starts from the reaffirmation that the focus of development is people and not economic growth. However, the way in which the issue of needs is considered undergoes a dynamic mutation, moving from a 'receptive' approach to meeting needs, to a perspective of the acquisition of *capabilities* (health, knowledge, skills, for example), of *choices* and use of these *capabilities* (employment, productive activities, political activity, leisure) and, inherently, of equity of opportunities (UNDP, 1990; Haq, 1995).

According to Haq (1995), the new paradigm comprises four essential dimensions: *equity*, *sustainability*, *productivity* and *empowerment*.

*Equity*, defined as equal access to opportunities; *Sustainability*, in the sense of sustainability of human opportunities, understood as "sustaining of all forms of capital – physical, human, financial and environmental"; *Productivity*, understood as "an essential element of the human development paradigm", requiring "investments in people and an enabling macroeconomic environment for them to achieve their maximum potential"; *Empowerment*, insofar as "The human development paradigm is neither paternalistic nor based on charity or welfare concepts" and its focus is "on the development by the people, who must participate in the activities, events and processes that shape their lives" (Haq, 1995, pp. 16-20).

The first Human Development Report (UNDP, 1990) defines the main lines of this conception, assuming a liberal perspective of human development as empowerment and freedom of choice, in a market economy, according to the needs and interests of the individual: "Human development is the process of enlarging people's choices (...) No one can guarantee human happiness and the choices people make are their own concern (...) Human freedom is vital for human development. People must be free to exercise their choices in properly functioning markets" (UNDP, 1990, p. 1).

Development processes should, however, create a conducive environment so that people can, individually and collectively, develop their potential and have reasonable opportunities to lead creative and productive lives in accordance with their needs and interests. From this perspective, what is at stake is more than the growth of the Gross

Domestic Product (GDP), than income and wealth, than the production of commodities and the accumulation of capital (*idem, ibidem*).

Hence the need to create a new index to measure development – the Human Development Index (HDI) – which, in addition to income, aggregates other indicators, such as life expectancy, literacy and control over resources to enjoy a decent life. The Report recognises some limitations of the HDI, not only regarding the same type of limitations posed by other indexes, namely the fact that national averages hide the form of distribution at regional and local level, but also because a quantitative measure of human freedom remains to be defined (*idem, ibidem*).

This gap would persist over time, allegedly due to the opposition of some authoritarian governments, as well as the difficulties inherent in the construction of an indicator on human freedom (Magis and Shinn, 2009).

Paul Streeten (1995) would also come to recognise not only the limitations of concealment in terms of the geographical distribution of inequalities, but also in terms of discrepancies in differences in gender, age, standard of living, ethnicity and religious beliefs, aspects that, in his opinion, can be overcome by disaggregating the index, at least in some countries. Streeten would also argue that the issue of human freedoms and rights can be further monitored through other indices.

Indeed, although the overall index has not overcome these limitations, the Human Development Reports, especially at the regional and national levels, would develop and integrate other indices that allow some of these discrepancies to be accounted for (Lengfelder and Cazabat, 2016).

The HDI would be subject to changes in 2010 (UNDP, 2010), especially regarding the determination of the income indicator, replacing GDP with Gross National Income (GNI) as one of the dimensions of the HDI, along with the Education and Life Expectancy Indices.

It is also important to mention that the 2014 Report (UNDP, 2014) would welcome two new themes – *vulnerability* and *resilience*, relevant to the problem of social sustainability that, in the meantime, had emerged in the debate on sustainable development.

### *Approach to Freedoms*

Under the designation of *freedoms approach*, Magis and Shinn (2009) refer to Amartya Sen's theories on human development, more often referred to as *capability approach*.

Sen's theories and their development by Martha Nussbaum constitute a very relevant contribution to the problem of social sustainability and will therefore be the object of a more detailed analysis in another chapter of this work. In the 'panoramic' context of this chapter, it is intended only to give an account of its general outlines.

As mentioned, Sen's influence on the UNDP's approach to Human Development, analysed in the previous point, is recognized, although, for some authors, it has not effectively integrated the central premises of the *capability approach* (Dean, 2009; Nussbaum, 2011). Sen has been a member of the Human Development Reports advisory panel since its first edition in 1990. The 2000 Report, whose central theme is *human rights and development*, includes a glossary on human rights and development, which contains the following entry:

**Functionings, capabilities and freedom:** The **functionings** of a person refer to the valuable things that the person can do or be (such as being well nourished, living long and taking part in the life of a community). The capability of a person stands for the different combinations of functionings the person can achieve. Capabilities thus reflect the freedom to achieve functionings. In that sense, human development is freedom (UNDP, 2000, p. 17).

This entry introduces and synthesizes the triad of concepts that structure *Amartya Sen's* capability approach: *functionings*, *capabilities* and *freedom*.

Sen defines *functionings* as "the various things a person may value doing or being" which "may vary from elementary ones, such as being adequately nourished and being free from avoidable disease, to very complex activities or personal states, such as being able to take part in the life of the community and having self-respect" (Sen, 1999, p. 75).

"A person's 'capability' refers to the alternative combinations of functionalities that are feasible for her to achieve. *Capability* is thus a kind of freedom: *the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or, less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles)*" (*idem, ibidem*).

It can be seen, therefore, that not only is it no longer a question of the simple satisfaction of basic needs, but a dimension of active *agency*, of the exercise of freedom of orientation and choices, is introduced. The exercise of this freedom depends on the capabilities of a

person to achieve and enjoy functionalities and combinations of functionalities, and the development and exercise of capabilities depends on the freedom to access, enjoy or exercise functionalities.

As Nussbaum (2011, p. 20) points out, capabilities "are not just abilities residing inside a person, but also the freedoms or opportunities created by the combination of personal abilities and the political, social and economic environment".

Sen has always rejected presenting or developing a list of functionalities and capabilities considered important for human development, arguing that, since functionalities are things that people *value* doing or being, their definition should be made by each person and not pre-defined, much less imposed.

This position of ethical individualism translates a dimension of incompleteness of the *capability approach* to the extent that what people value and consider relevant can be determined by structures of domination, inequality and discrimination, and not all human freedoms are equally valueable (Deneulin and Shahani, 2009).

Marta Nussbaum sought to overcome this position, defending the possibility and the need to establish a set of essential capabilities transcending individual valuations, basing this possibility on the concept of *dignity*, which allows, for example, to attribute capabilities to people who are not in a position to value them, as is the case of the attribution of the right to education to people with significant cognitive disabilities who may not be able to value education as a need to be satisfied. From this perspective, Nussbaum argues that the focus of the *capability approach* is "on the protection of areas of freedom so central that their removal makes a life not worthy of human dignity ", so that the basic question that arises is to know "what does a life worthy of human dignity require?" (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 31-32). From this perspective, any "decent political order must secure to all citizens at least a threshold level of these ten Central Capabilities" (idem, pp. 33-34): *Life* (normal life expectancy); *bodily health*; *bodily integrity*; *senses, imagination and thought*; *emotions*; *practical reason*; *affiliation*; *other species* (relationship with); *play*; *control over one's environment* (political and material).

Marta Nussbaum, while remaining within a liberal perspective, deepens and takes much further the concepts of human development and empowerment. Elsewhere in this text, we will analyse in more detail the aforementioned 'list' of capabilities, as well as some

criticisms that the capability approach has raised, both in Amartya Sen's version and in Martha Nussbaum's version.

### **Community well-being and quality of life**

Continuing with the overview of the sources, traditions and contributions to the concept of social sustainability, we now turn to the tradition of community well-being and quality of life.

Magis and Shinn (2009, pp. 29-30) refer this tradition, fundamentally, to the *American Community Movement*, which, although not a homogeneous movement, integrates a diversity of self-organized movements around the themes of well-being, *quality of life* and *sustainable communities*.

From the analysis of the indicators used by the different components of this 'movement', the authors identify four structuring principles: *livable communities, equity, democratic civil society, democratic governance*.

The theme of *livable communities*, centred on human well-being, includes basic needs such as education, health, access to public goods and services, employment, transport and housing.

*Equity* includes equal access to justice for all economic groups and strata, as well as for future generations.

*Democratic governance* refers to a type of government that promotes community participation in public discourse, as well as in the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies.

*Democratic civil society* translates into public dialogue and informed decision-making, collaboration to build results desired by the community, and intentional social integration of residents, in their full diversity.

According to the authors, these democratic processes trigger a virtuous cycle, reinforcing skills and knowledge, social relations, more and better communication, greater capacity for initiative, and increasing adaptive capacity or resilience, elements necessary for the success of communities and a continued development of social capital.

Reflection and practices around the theme of sustainable urban communities are not, however, limited to the *American community movement*, but have developed widely,

namely in other American countries, such as Canada (City of Vancouver, 2005), as well as in Europe (Manzi et al., 2009; Collantonio and Dixon, 2011).

In Canada, the municipal authorities of the city of Vancouver promoted a social development plan in 2005, within which a framework for analysing and promoting social sustainability was developed. This framework is based on three components and four guiding principles (City of Vancouver, 2005, p. 3):

- Social sustainability components:

- \* *Basic needs* (such as housing and sufficient income, as necessary and preconditions for capacity building);
- \* *Individual or human capacity* or opportunities for learning and self-development;
- \* *Social or community capacity* for the development of community organizations, networks of relationships and development of interaction.

- Guiding principles of social sustainability:

- \* *Equity*;
- \* *Social inclusion and interaction*;
- \* *Security*;
- \* *Adaptability*.

Within the European Union, discussions on these issues date back to the early 1990s, with the Green Paper on the Urban Environment (CCE, 1990) and the Sustainable European Cities Project, initiated in 1993 following the Green Paper.

In the report of this project (EGUE, 1996) the theme of *quality of life* is placed at the centre of the problem of sustainability, converging in it the various aspects (economic, social and ecological) that configure this sustainability. Articulated in the context of the notion of *quality of life*, the social dimension of urban sustainability is structured around the themes of *well-being*, *health* and *housing*.

In the context of *well-being*, sub-themes such as the right to housing, water and sanitation, education and vocational training, creative employment, and the issues of poverty, social exclusion, access to information, participation and identities are considered.

The theme of *health* is configured in its broadest sense, including social, political, cultural and economic determinants.

The issue of *housing* is also considered in its various dimensions: social equipment, social or collective good, an element of the community and the social fabric, a shelter, a factor in the creation of communities and not only of physical spaces and equipment.

Reflecting on the context of the definition and development of sustainability policies in the United Kingdom, Manzi et al. (2009, p. 18) propose the following set of themes for the construction of local social sustainability agendas:

- Promoting neighbourhood well-being and 'liveability'.
- Supporting resident participation and empowerment.
- Encouraging social cohesion and integration.
- Integrating core services, such as housing, planning, education, transport and health.
- Facilitate partnerships and collaboration in service provision.
- Ensuring safety, security and protection from environmental hazards.
- Promoting access to communications and information technology.
- Providing the conditions for equality of opportunity for all.

Also in the United Kingdom, Colantonio and Dixon (2011) propose a *Social Sustainability Assessment Framework (SSAF)*, structured around six principles and objectives, and ten dimensions of analysis/assessment, disaggregated into more than 6 dozen sub-dimensions and more than 100 indicators of a quantitative or qualitative nature.

The proposed principles and dimensions are as follows (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011, p. 216):

- Guiding principles and general objectives:
  - \* Intra and intergenerational equity;
  - \* Recognition and preservation of diversity;
  - \* Protection and promotion of health and safety;
  - \* Principles of uncertainty, precaution and subsidiarity.
- Dimensions of social sustainability:
  - \* Housing, education, employment, health and safety, demography;
  - \* Social mixing/cohesion;
  - \* Empowerment and participation;
  - \* Identity/image/heritage;
  - \* Social capital;
  - \* Well-being.

## **5. What is social sustainability all about?**

### **5.1 Main themes and some proposals for structuring**

The review made in the previous sections, although far from exhaustive, is sufficiently illustrative of some of the problems posed by the concept of social sustainability, as referred to in the previous chapter.

The enormous diversity of topics involved, their complexity, the plurality of perspectives and structuring proposals (different from author to author) translate into problems of uncertainty regarding the scope, meaning and nature of the concept (or conglomerate of concepts) of social sustainability.

Although the recurrence of some central themes is notorious, the number of themes involved is significant, even calling into question the feasibility of a systematic analysis of the concept and, consequently, of its operationalization.

Colantonio and Dixon (2011) identify about 30 key themes, distributed by various sources and authors.

Considering dimensions, themes and sub-themes (the distribution within this hierarchy varies from author to author) we identified more than 50 themes (see Table 5.4 below), in a 'list' that is not intended to be exhaustive.

It also emerges from the above analyses, however, that the diversity of themes (which, moreover, have constant interconnections and areas of overlap) and the plurality of approaches do not transform the area of social sustainability into a new Babel. There are no incommensurabilities in the different discourses and conceptions, and the various proposals for structuring the concepts involved, although heterogeneous, have common elements and are meaning-producing, within the scope of the general discourse on social sustainability.

The most productive way to move forward in these difficulties is in the work not only of distinction, but, above all, of structuring concepts, a structuring that, in turn, cannot be limited to the logic of discourses, but extends to the referents, to the reality that underlies them.

Following the more panoramic approach made in the previous sections, we will seek in this section to develop a more analytical approach to the concept of social sustainability,

namely around different proposals for structuring the concept, some of which have already been presented previously, in general.

Structuring concepts necessarily involves establishing and using classification and structuring criteria. We will analyse several of the criteria used in the literature, namely, a descriptive temporal criterion (traditional themes, emerging themes), a substantive criterion (key themes and complementary themes), a functional criterion (substantive themes, operative themes).

### ***Traditional Themes and Emerging Themes***

Colantonio & Dixon (2011) identify in the literature on social sustainability several central themes for the operationalization of the concept, as previously mentioned. The chronological perspective is one of the criteria they use in this identification, distinguishing between the more traditional themes and those that have emerged more recently in the discourse on sustainability (Table 5.1).

Over the last few decades, themes such as basic needs, poverty reduction, equity, human rights, and gender issues have been complemented by others of a more intangible and complex nature, which are not susceptible to quantitative measurement, such as social cohesion, identity, sense of place, social capital, empowerment, well-being, happiness, quality of life.

In other words, the chronological evolution of the emergence of themes in the discourse on sustainability seems to be concomitant with the increase in their complexity and the greater difficulty of developing merely or predominantly quantitative approaches and operationalizations.

The authors draw attention to the fact that even in the case where emerging themes are more susceptible to quantification, their analysis and treatment have increasingly integrated a more qualitative perspective, as is the case with the study of migratory flows, in which there has been a move from the simple production and analysis of statistical data to the characterization of migrants according to their perceptions, histories, choices and expectations.

This chronological evolution, in the sense of complexification, is interesting and contradictory to the processes of development of areas of scientific research that tend to

evolve towards constant 'simplification', through the decomposition of the object through analytical abstraction. On the contrary, the concept of social sustainability seems to encompass more and more things and greater complexity.

**Table 5.1 – Social sustainability: traditional and emerging themes**

Traditional Themes	Emerging themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic needs, including housing and environmental health</li> <li>- Education and skills</li> <li>-Employment</li> <li>-Equity</li> <li>- Human rights and gender issues</li> <li>-Poverty</li> <li>- Social justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demographic changes (ageing, migration and mobility)</li> <li>- Social mixing and cohesion</li> <li>- Identity, sense of place and culture</li> <li>- Empowerment, participation and access</li> <li>- Health and safety</li> <li>- Social capital</li> <li>- Well-being, happiness and quality of life</li> </ul>

Source: Colantonio and Dixon (2011)

***Key themes, complementary themes and sub-themes***

The differentiation between key themes and complementary themes, and their disaggregation into sub-themes, from an operationalization perspective, is a step forward in the search for a substantive structuring of the concept of social sustainability.

In the literature it is possible to find a variety of proposals, as diverse as the diversity of authors and the contexts in which they are intended to be applied. A number of proposals are presented by way of illustration, including some already mentioned above.

Although all of them focus on the identification of key themes, their degree of organization and complexity is very variable. We can find simple lists (Manzi et al., 2010), hierarchical structuring proposals (Magis and Shinn, 2009; Murphy, 2012; Lamorgese and Geneletti, 2015; Eisenberg and Jabareen, 2017) and distinguishing between guiding principles and dimensions of operationalization (City of Vancouver, 2005; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Lamorgese and Geneletti, 2015; Eisenberg and Jabareen, 2017).

The proposals of Lamorgese and Geneletti, and Eisenberg and Jabareen, present some particularities that should be highlighted.

Both deal with the social dimension of sustainability in the general context of socio-environmental sustainability, not considering social sustainability as an autonomous or isolated 'pillar'.

Both do so, however, based on a relatively reductive structuring principle. In the case of Lamorgese and Geneletti, the concept of *equity*, paradoxically transformed, into a 'superconcept' whose scope goes far beyond its own meaning and its operative potentiality. In the case of Eisenberg and Jabareen, the concept of *risk*, based on the conceptions of risk society in Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, authors on which Eisenberg and Jabareen expressly rely. To affirm that "Risk is the ontological foundation of the social sustainability framework" (Eisenberg and Jabareen, 2017, p. 12) seems to us to be a very limited and negatively-defined perspective, instead of considering that such an ontological foundation lies in the need for human development or flourishing which, as we have seen in the previous sections, is at the heart of the debate on social sustainability.

Also, in the case of Lamorgese and Geneletti, it is also important to note that the proposal is presented not in the context of a mere conceptual discussion on the social dimension of sustainability, but rather in the context of the discussion on sustainability assessment processes. Hence the setup around an extensive list of criteria.

**Table 5.2 – Proposals for thematic structuring of the concept of social sustainability**

Author	Proposal for structuring the concept of social sustainability
City of Vancouver (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Components of social sustainability:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>Basic needs</i> (such as housing and sufficient income, as necessary and preconditions for capacity building);</li> <li>* <i>Individual or human capacity</i> or opportunities for learning and self-development;</li> <li>* <i>Social or community capacity</i> for the development of community organizations, networks of relationships and development of interaction.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Guiding principles of social sustainability:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>Equity</i>;</li> <li>* <i>Social inclusion and interaction</i>;</li> <li>* <i>Security</i>;</li> <li>* <i>Adaptability</i>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Magis and Shinn (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Primary constituents of social sustainability:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>Individual and social human well-being</i> (satisfaction of basic needs; political, economic and social freedoms; healthy and creative life; permanent broadening of the range of choices; security; guarantee of respect for human rights);</li> <li>* <i>Equity</i> (inter and intra-generational; reduction of inequalities);</li> <li>* <i>Democratic Governance</i> (democracy and democratic government, participation and shared responsibility);</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Author	Proposal for structuring the concept of social sustainability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>Democratic civil society</i> (civic activism; participation in decision-making; democratic counterpower)</li> </ul>
Manzi et al (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoting neighbourhood well-being and ‘liveability’</li> <li>- Supporting resident participation and empowerment</li> <li>- Encouraging social cohesion and integration</li> <li>- Integrating core services such as housing, planning, education, transport and health</li> <li>- Facilitating partnership and collaboration in service provision</li> <li>- Ensuring safety, security and protection from environmental hazards</li> <li>- Promoting access to communications and information technology</li> <li>- Providing the conditions for equality of opportunity for all.</li> </ul>
Colantonio and Dixon (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guiding principles and general objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Intra and intergenerational equity;</li> <li>* Recognition and preservation of diversity;</li> <li>* Protection and promotion of health and safety;</li> <li>* Principles of uncertainty, precaution and subsidiarity.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Operational dimensions of social sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Housing, education, employment, health and safety, demography;</li> <li>* Social mixing and cohesion;</li> <li>* Empowerment and participation;</li> <li>* Identity/image/heritage;</li> <li>* Social capital;</li> <li>* Well-being.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Murphy (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Core elements of the social pillar of sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>Equity</i> (national, international and intergenerational; fair distribution of well-being and opportunities; reduction of vulnerabilities, promotion of adaptability factors);</li> <li>* <i>Awareness for sustainability</i> (promoting public awareness of sustainability issues; encouraging alternative consumption patterns; challenging the traditional growth paradigm and including non-material conceptions of happiness);</li> <li>* <i>Participation</i> (widening participation in decision-making processes, including to groups with less power);</li> <li>* <i>Social cohesion</i> (creating opportunities for the promotion of harmonious coexistence).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Lamorgese and Geneletti (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Four perspectives or dimensions of the concept of <i>equity</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>Equity from the perspective of opportunities</i> (quality and standard of living acceptable to all; equality of opportunity for all, particularly the most vulnerable). Criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a clean and healthy environment.</li> <li>• Ensure access to basic goods (e.g. water, decent housing, etc.) for all.</li> <li>• Access to transport, services and other facilities for all</li> <li>• Provide a range of community amenities and services available to all in the community.</li> <li>• Contribute to guarantee opportunities for women, and people in small and remote communities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Author	Proposal for structuring the concept of social sustainability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the concepts of community and collective values.</li> <li>• Promote social inclusion.</li> <li>• Make decisions that favour of achieving net gains that improve quality of life.</li> </ul> <p>* <i>Equity from the perspective of distributional fairness (fair and proportionate distribution of environmental goods and bads). Criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guarantee proportionate distribution of gains and losses.</li> <li>• Operate without ignoring the external impacts of decisions, from the neighbourhood scale to the global.</li> <li>• Guarantee an equal chance of being targeted for significant environmental change and a proportionate share of the costs and benefits of such change after it occurs.</li> <li>• Avoid inequities in the distribution of exposure to health risks, taking into account human exposure to harm and differential sensitivity of social groups.</li> <li>• Ensure social acceptability.</li> <li>• Avoid inequities in the impacts of environmental policies, and differences in regulatory enforcement.</li> <li>• Avoid inequities in people's ability to influence decisions affecting their environment.</li> <li>• Promote direct representation of the interests of disadvantaged groups.</li> <li>• Narrow the gap between the most deprived areas and the rest.</li> </ul> <p>* <i>Equity from the perspective of distributional fairness across generations. Criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take into account the maintenance of available capital of non-renewable resources in the long term.</li> <li>• Preserve the integrity of ecological systems and their life support functions.</li> <li>• Maintain and enhance the resilience of socio-ecological systems.</li> <li>• Assess environmental, social and economic effects and their duration.</li> <li>• Prioritize environmental protection and ecological integrity so that any change in the status quo results in environmental benefits.</li> <li>• Seriously consider the 'do-nothing' option where there too much scientific uncertainty about particular aspects of a proposal or where the negative consequences of the proposal outweigh the benefits.</li> <li>• Adopt measures that minimize energy and resource use, minimize emissions and production of waste, and maximize the re-use of materials that have been disposed of.</li> <li>• Adopt the precautionary principle to prevent any group, whether defined spatially, socially or over time, from assuming an unfair and unnecessary burden of environmental change.</li> <li>• Adopt a strong sustainability perspective, avoiding decisions that entail a decrease in the level of natural capital passed on to future generations.</li> <li>• Combine environmental, social and economic considerations in a more objective way.</li> </ul> <p>* <i>Fairness in the perspective of justice for an imperfect world (comparative approach and application of critical scrutiny in assessment to identify key synergies, conflicts and trade-offs). Criteria:</i></p>

Author	Proposal for structuring the concept of social sustainability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish thresholds that demarcate acceptable from unacceptable impacts.</li> <li>• Justify and account for trade-offs.</li> <li>• Undertake adaptation and mitigation measures.</li> <li>• Avoid 'cognitive dissonance' where there is a mismatch between beliefs and behaviour.</li> <li>• Build up community and regions 'sense of place' and heritage protection.</li> <li>• Increase trust in each other and a common sense of responsibility.</li> <li>• Build a more diverse economic base and manage the pace and scale of development.</li> <li>• Contribute to enhanced living conditions of future generations.</li> </ul>
Eisenberg and Jabareen (2017)	<p>- Concept of social sustainability and its functions and practices (urban environment):</p> <p>* <i>Safety</i> (Risk is the ontological foundation of the social sustainability framework. Safety and security for humans and non-humans is the fundamental requirement of sustainability and social sustainability). Main components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptation measures to deal with risk and uncertainties;</li> <li>• Urban vulnerability matrix: understanding the demographic and social dimensions of risk.</li> </ul> <p>* <i>Equity</i> (social, economic and environmental injustice poses risks to society as well as to the efforts of coping with climate change and uncertainties. More just policies and less inequality reduce the alienation of people from their living spaces, enhance their ability to cope with vulnerabilities, and foster the development of feasible environmental objectives). Main components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition, redistribution and participation.</li> </ul> <p>* <i>Eco-prosumption</i> (refers to the modes of production and acquisition of values, in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, and consists of society's responsibility to reduce future risks and help mitigate local and global efforts). Main components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating measures.</li> </ul> <p>* <i>Sustainable urban forms</i> (Physical urban form is crucial for achieving the sustainability, safety, and social agendas). Main components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compactness;</li> <li>• Mixed land uses</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Clean energy</li> <li>• Passive solar design</li> <li>• Greening</li> <li>• Sustainable transport</li> <li>• Renewal and utilization</li> </ul>

### ***Substantive and procedural issues***

The classifications presented above, despite their diversity of approaches and theoretical foundations (often only implicit) constitute contributions in the search for the structuring of the concept of social sustainability or the social dimension of sustainability.

However, they do not seem to be enough to bring order to the relative thematic 'chaos' and to clarify the fundamentals of selection and organization of themes.

From this perspective and analysing the concrete social issues that are considered in empirical studies and debates around the notion of social sustainability, Boström (2012) states that many of the problems and challenges faced by this problematics result from the insufficient attention given to the distinction between substantive and processual or procedural aspects. The substantive themes or aspects define *what* needs to be done, i.e. the objectives of social sustainability. Procedural issues define *how* to do what needs to be done and what means to use.

Although this distinction is present, or at least underlying, in some of the proposals previously analysed (City of Vancouver, 2005; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Lamorgese and Geneletti, 2015; Eisenberg and Jabareen, 2017), it is Boström who deliberately focuses the discussion on this aspect. The substantive and procedural breakdown of the topics proposed by Boström is shown in the table below.

**Table 5.3 – Substantive and procedural aspects of social sustainability**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Substantive aspects:</b> <b>What goals does social sustainability aim to achieve?</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Procedural aspects:</b> <b>How to achieve sustainable development?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic needs, such as food, housing, and income and extended needs, such as recreation and self-fulfilment.</li> <li>- Inter- and intra-generational justice, along gender, race, class and ethnicity dimensions, including a fair distribution of income and a fair distribution of environmental 'bads' and 'goods'.</li> <li>- Equality of rights, including human rights, land user and tenure rights, and indigenous peoples' rights.</li> <li>- Access to social infrastructure, mobility, local services, facilities, green areas, and so forth.</li> <li>- Employment and other work-related issues, facilitating for local small and medium enterprises.</li> <li>- Opportunities for learning and self-development.</li> <li>- Community capacity for the development of civil society and social capital.</li> <li>- Safety (e.g. economic, environmental).</li> <li>- Health effects among workers, consumers, and communities.</li> <li>- Social cohesion, inclusion and interaction.</li> <li>- Cultural diversity and traditions.</li> <li>- Sense of community attachment, belonging, and identity.</li> <li>- Social recognition.</li> <li>- Quality of housing and public realm.</li> <li>- Quality of life, happiness and well-being.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to information about risks and the sustainability project.</li> <li>- Access to participation and decision-making in different stages of the process and over time.</li> <li>- Proactive stakeholder communication and consultation throughout the process.</li> <li>- Empowerment for taking part of the process (e.g., awareness, education, networking, economic compensation).</li> <li>- Participation in the framing of issues, including defining criteria, scope and subjects of justice.</li> <li>- Social monitoring of the policy, planning and standard-setting process.</li> <li>- Accountable governance and management of the policy, planning and standard-setting process.</li> </ul>

Source: Boström (2012)

The distinction between substantive and procedural issues seems to be heuristic and operatively interesting. However, Boström's distribution proposal is not without a few problems. Are empowerment and participation, for example, merely instrumental aspects or are they not also sustainability goals? Are these issues, as well as social justice, equal rights, social cohesion, among others, and the satisfaction of extended needs themselves, ends in themselves or will they not have a 'procedural' character in relation to more substantive concepts such as *quality of life, well-being, happiness and flourishing*?

The distinction between substantive and procedural issues has, in fact, the merit of focusing the discussion on a point of axial articulation between several fundamental questions: i) 'What are (should be) our sustainability objectives?'; (ii) 'What conditions and actions are necessary to achieve them'?

The answer to these questions is, however, more complex than that provided by Boström. It requires a broadening of perspective and the formulation of other questions that precede them, namely:

- What needs must be met in order to avoid suffering and ensure human flourishing?
- Are these needs merely individual or are they also of a social nature?
- What kind of social structures, what forms of social organization, what processes of knowledge and agency are needed to achieve the satisfaction of these needs in a socially sustainable way?
- What kind of society-nature relationships need to be established in order to meet these needs in an environmentally sustainable way?

These questions are at the heart of the sustainability problematics, and it is not possible to answer them without overcoming some classic dichotomies such as individual and society, reason and values, society and nature, among others. This need to overcome or surpass dichotomous thinking has an ontological basis, it is not only epistemological in nature.

## 5.2 Social sustainability issues: individual, social and integrated perspectives

Returning to the themes of social sustainability, but bearing in mind the questions posed above, we can see that most of the themes are formulated from the perspective of the individual. Others are formulated from a social perspective, i.e. one of interaction and socially structured relationships. The link between the two dimensions is not always clearly established and is rarely articulated (Litig and Grießler 2005). However, some (few) of the social sustainability themes effectively imply a holistic and integrated perspective between individual and society, and even between society and nature.

The following table presents a breakdown of the themes identified throughout this text, without any concern for approval or critical appreciation of the value of each of them. Nor do we consider it relevant to discuss, at this point, whether the distribution presented is rigorous, whether there are not themes placed in the individual dimension that would fit in the social dimension and vice versa. In fact, there are repeated themes that have an individual and group or collective application, such as vulnerability, resilience, identity, empowerment and others. On the contrary, what is important to discuss is precisely the intimate relationship between individual and social aspects and the need to conceive them in an articulated or even integrated way.

It is precisely from this perspective that we consider the themes, or conglomerates of themes, whose treatment points in this direction: *well-being, quality of life, happiness, flourishing*. We believe that these themes have a structuring potential for the concept of social sustainability and that their 'exploration' in a dynamic and articulated perspective allows us to advance in the clarification and structuring of the concept.

The distribution presented in Table 5.4 is not an alternative proposal to the structuring proposals analysed above. It is a mere non-critical distribution of themes, notions or concepts. Like all distributions, it is fixist and tends to reify. It is, therefore, only a step or a portal to access another dimension of analysis, more holistic and necessarily dynamic and procedural.

**Table 5.4 – Redistribution of social sustainability themes**

<b>Social Sustainability Themes</b>	
<b>Individual perspective (basic and extended needs, rights)</b>	
Food	Mobility
Housing	Learning Opportunities
Employment/earnings	Opportunities for self-development
Health	Training
Education	Widening choices
Safety	Access to resources, information and technology
Water and sanitation	Creative life
Healthy environment	Recreation
Affection	Property
Sociability	Dignity
Meaningful Relationships	Participation
Identity	Empowerment
Vulnerability	Adaptability
Right to difference	Resilience
Recognition	
<b>Social perspective (social, economic and political structures, relationships and dynamics)</b>	
Social inclusion	Resilience
Social cohesion	Equity
Interaction	Equality
Networks of relationships	Justice
Social capital	Vulnerabilities
Partnerships	Democratic governance
Collective identities and values	Democratic civil society
Diversity	Empowering communities
Social vitality	Engagement and participation
Adaptability	Shared responsibility
<b>Global and articulated (relational) perspective of the individual and social dimensions</b>	
	Happiness
	Quality of life
	Well-being
	Living well
	Flourishing

## **6. Sustainability, development, well-being, flourishing**

The discussion developed in this text led us from the particular to the general, from a wide 'cloud' of themes to some themes considered structuring, such as well-being, living well and flourishing.

The next stage consists of the opposite movement: the critical exploration of these structuring themes, in order to advance in the structured integration of other themes and sub-themes, having as a horizon the operationalization of the concept of social sustainability.

At this point, we can see, therefore, that the contemporary problem of social sustainability and sustainability, in general, involves the intersection of two concerns: i) a concern with human well-being and flourishing that is millennial (in the Western tradition it goes back, at least, to the Greek philosophers, such as Plato and, above all, Aristotle); ii) a more recent concern with the *sustainability* of human actions.

Thinking about well-being and flourishing from a sustainability perspective only makes sense if the latter brings something new or different and positive, to the discussion, deliberation and practical actions, towards the achievement of well-being and flourishing. Of course, it is not appropriate for the present investigation to carry out an in-depth analysis of these two concerns. It is important, however, to consider them in some essential features that allow to guide and give a certain line of coherence to a proposal for the operationalization of the concept of social sustainability.

### **6.1 Sustainability and development**

It has become idle to draw attention to the contemporary universality and ubiquity of the terms *sustainability*<sup>2</sup> and *sustainable development*, as well as to the impossibility of any attempt at an exhaustive analysis of the subject, so extensive is the production on it.

It also seems to be relatively consensual to consider that different people and institutions tend to understand and structure the concept of sustainability differently (Bond and Morrison-Saunders, 2013).

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<sup>2</sup> The search for the term '*sustainability*' in one of the most used search engines on the internet, resulted in 849 million references, produced in 0.56 seconds.

Thus, the approach that is made below only focuses on certain lines of understanding of the concept, depending on the particularities and objectives of this research.

It is very common to find in the literature (including the Brundtland Report), as an implicit or explicit assumption, or as a given, the assertion that *sustainability* and *sustainable development* are synonyms or interchangeable concepts (WCED, 1987; Bond and Morrison-Saunders, 2013; Disterheft, et al., 2013).

On the contrary, and although highlighting the intrinsic link between *development and sustainability*, *this text intends to underline the difference and specific identity of each of the concepts, the only way to highlight the effective scope of their articulation.*

Identifying sustainability with sustainable development is conceptually reductive and can be ideologically mystifying, insofar as such a 'fusion' operation results in the 'evacuation' of important specificities, dynamics and 'energies' specific to each of the concepts.

Using astronomy, we can consider that sustainability and development form a *double system* of stars, rotating in space and time, depending on each other, intrinsically linked by their respective gravitational fields, but constituting autonomous entities.

It is therefore necessary to deconstruct the link between sustainability and development, in order to reconstruct it in another form.

When it is implied, affirmed, or taken for granted that 'development' means (or can only mean) economic growth, in the sense in which it has been considered for the last 200 years, that is, as a form of infinite reproduction of capital and concomitant permanent expansion of markets and the consumption of products, resources and energy, this is ideologically mystifying.

Indeed, while for some there are only two alternatives: capitalist development or sustainable capitalist development, for others, sustainable capitalist development is an oxymoron, that is, a basic contradiction between the terms and, therefore, for there to be sustainability another type of development is necessary.

"The objectives of economic and social development have to be defined in terms of sustainability," says the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987:41), clearly distinguishing "sustainability" from "economic development" and establishing an order of precedence of the former over the latter. To equate sustainability and sustainable development, in the

sense mentioned above, is also to evade this relationship of functional prevalence, in which the values and substantive rationality of the sustainability perspective condition and guide the designs of the instrumental rationality of "economic growth".

This reversal of prevalences is a key point for the assessment of sustainability.

Deconstructing the term sustainable development therefore implies deconstructing the concept of development, distinguishing between economic development and human development. Or reasoning in reverse order, asking what kind of *development* it is that 'deserves' to be *sustained* or cared for in a *sustainable* way. Or, again, to put directly the question: what kind of development makes possible human flourishing (of all humans)? Answering this question implies, in turn, clarifying what is meant by human flourishing and, at the same time, what is meant by social sustainability.

Before addressing the issue of flourishing, however, it is necessary to explore certain key aspects of the notion of sustainability.

## **6.2 Sustainability**

What is relevant to the debate on human development and flourishing?

Answering this question requires a prior operation of *de-reification* of the concept of sustainability.

Norbert Elias repeatedly insisted on the epistemological difficulties resulting from the reductive tendency inherent in the processes of abstraction and concept-construction and on the need to overcome these limitations. Human thought, in its quest to understand reality in its complexity and mutability, seeks to capture reality by fixing it in concepts, which tends to favour the reduction of processes and relations to static things, in a phenomenon that he called *processual reduction* (Elias, 2004, 2011). Processual reduction has, of course, its expression at the level of language, namely in the construction of abstract nouns which, not designating names of things like concrete nouns, but actions, qualities, states or notions, are nevertheless part of the general category of words that designate beings. The construction of abstract nouns from verbs (which indicate actions performed by, or between, certain subjects) particularly illustrates the process of transformation of actions and interactions into states, of dynamics into something static, objectified.

Returning to the discussion, the noun sustainability translates the quality of something that is sustainable. The adjective sustainable, which functionally indicates that state or quality, derives, in turn, from the verb to sustain, which linguistically translates the action of supporting, holding, maintaining, supporting, feeding, caring, helping to flourish, in space and time.

Sustainable is, therefore, the quality of any action, activity or process that supports, maintains, feeds, sustains, protects, cares for, and durably ensures a given entity(ies), structure(s) or process(es). Now, this type of action necessarily implies a special consideration for what is supported and maintained. In short, it implies recognition (in the sense of conferring on others a status of entity with rights), consideration, respect, possibly affection, for that *Other* (something or someone), for whom the responsibility of supporting is assumed.

Sustainability is not, therefore, a 'thing', but rather the procedural configuration of a certain type(s) of relationship(ies) based on a certain type of ethical values. Sustainability is not something static, but a social and socio-ecological relational process that is permanently updated, in space and time, in short cycles and long cycles, in socio-historical cycles and biophysical cycles, in contemporary generations and between generations. It is a living, relational and necessarily collectively constructed process, guided by a substantive rationality that has as its goals human well-being or flourishing, in a relationship of respect and balance with nature.

Sustainability must therefore be permanently understood and reconstructed in its adjectival form and, above all, in its verbal, i.e. active, form.

This perspective allows us to better identify the specific contribution of the notion of sustainability to the debate on development, namely its ethical, relational and procedural dimensions.

Christian Becker's (2012) perspective seems to us to be an interesting starting point to analyse these aspects.

From a philosophical perspective and considering the discussions raised by the theme in recent decades, Becker identifies three major components that configure the essential meaning of the modern concept of sustainability.

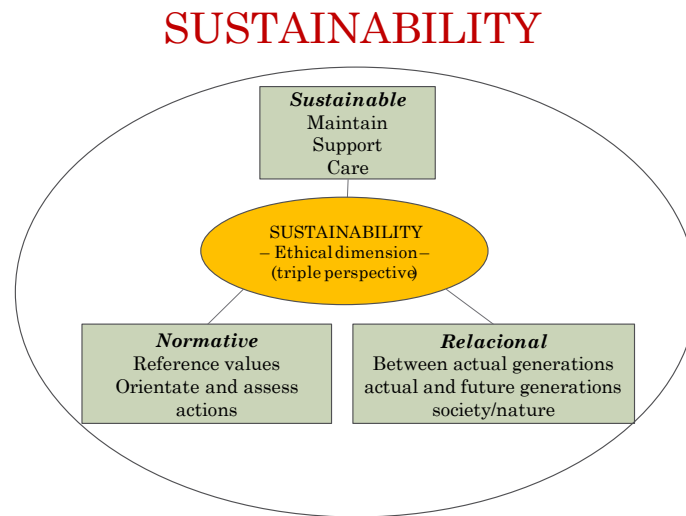
The first is the meaning closest to the etymological root of the term, the notion of **sustaining**, of caring, of the ability *to continue, to maintain* (in the sense of providing supplies) a certain entity, process or system. Becker says that this is the sense of sustainability to which science traditionally refers and points out that it can have two types of interpretation. It can be understood as the ability of a given entity, process, or system to maintain itself, or as the ability of human beings to maintain a certain entity, process, or system.

The notion of support, however, has as an underlying and inherent meaning of **orientation**, of a normative and evaluative nature. The perspective of sustainability implies a positive valuation of something to strive for, pursuing fundamental objectives whose achievement should guide human actions. In other words, not everything should be sustained and maintained (states of pain, subjugation, discrimination, violence, for example), but only that which 'deserves' to be sustained, the support of which constitutes a positive value according to certain principles and criteria of valorisation. We are, then, in the realm of values and not just of facts, which poses particular problems for normal science that traditionally separates facts from values. This normative dimension is, necessarily, a guide, but also an evaluator, in the sense of verifying whether, and to what extent, the actions are developed in the appropriate direction and with the intended positive effects.

Finally, Becker underlines the **relational meaning** of the concept of sustainability. The sustainability or unsustainability of human actions results from the type and quality of relationships between contemporary generations, between these and future generations, and between humans and nature. These three forms of relationship are interconnected and the perspective of sustainability must be verified in all of them, that is, it is necessary that the relations between contemporary generations are sustainable, that the relations between society and nature are sustainable, and that the relations with future generations are also sustainable, that is, that the legacy we leave them favours the possibilities of future relations between generations and between them and nature being sustainable.

Figure 6.1 graphically represents how this perspective is interpreted in this text.

Figure 6.1 – Ethical dimension of sustainability (based on Becker, 2012)



The figure can be read as follows: in order for a given entity, process or system to be maintained, altered or transformed, in a sustainable manner, it is necessary that the relationships established with that entity, process or system, and the relationships established within that entity, process or system, are sustainable, in the present and in the future, that is, from the perspective of human action, that are guided by, and evaluated by, sustainability principles and criteria.

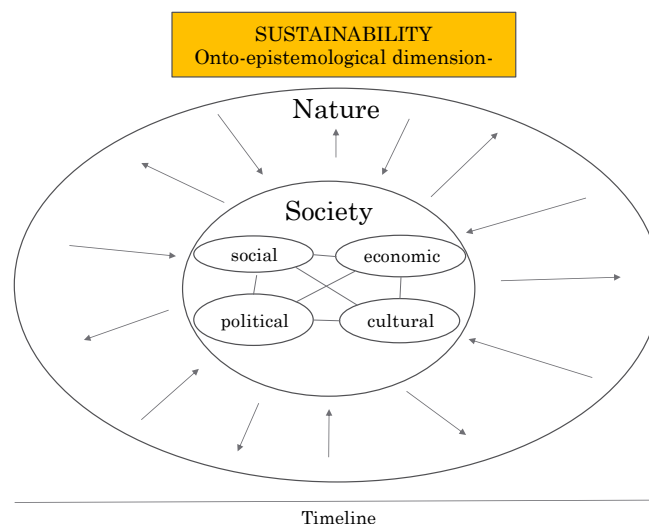
At this point, it becomes evident that one of the nodal issues of sustainability lies in the definition and content of the principles, objectives and criteria of sustainability, that is, in the construction and operationalization of value references that allow us to establish what is or is not sustainable and, as such, it is important or not to be maintained, sustained, and how we should act and relate to each other socially and with nature, also considering future generations.

Returning to the relational perspective of sustainability, it is important to note that it allows us to focus on another aspect that is not too much to highlight. Human actions are not merely casual or discrete or chaotic (even when they cause 'chaos') but result from structured relationships. Social relations and the relations between society and nature are dynamic and procedural, structured by certain factors of a social, economic, cultural, political and institutional nature. Thus, the sustainability or unsustainability of human actions is closely related to these modes of structuring.

It is from this perspective that Becker (2012) argues for the need to promote a double dynamic, the formation of "sustainable people" and the reconfiguration of social structures, at the societal and global levels, including the structures and processes of knowledge production, towards sustainability.

On the other hand, the relational perspective allows us to establish the bridge to an ontological and epistemological perspective of the concept of sustainability. Sustainability implies conceiving and understanding reality in its connections, interdeterminations, and dynamics of change and transformation, as a set of open systems and subsystems (Figure 6.2), an issue that we will not elaborate on in this section.

**Figure 6.2 – Onto-epistemological perspective of sustainability**



A de-reified, systemic, relational, dynamic and ethical perspective has therefore led us to a conception of sustainability as a *process of caring*. Before analysing in greater detail what forms, modes, dynamics and structures of care are necessary, it is important to reflect on what is important to sustain, support and care for, that is, well-being, human flourishing.

### 6.3 Social sustainability, flourishing, well-being, individual and society

#### 6.3.1 Human flourishing

The expression *human flourishing* is currently part of the discourses of various fields of thought and science, from philosophy to social sciences, including neuroscience (see, for example, Damasio, 2017).

The concept has been worked on, from a neo-Aristotelian perspective, by several currents, including critical realism (Sayer, 2011; Archer, 2017; Gorsky, 2017).

Although there are other possible translations for the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia*<sup>3</sup>, according to this current, the expression *human flourishing* expresses the Aristotelian concept more adequately than the terms well-being or happiness, mainly due to the connotations that the latter have acquired in modern times. While happiness suggests above all "positive emotional experiences" and well-being evokes a "passive state of mind", in Aristotle *eudaimonia* would mean more than pleasure, insofar as it also implies the actualization of specifically human capacities such as the use of reason and ethics, and it means more than well-being, insofar as *eudaimonia* is not a passive way to be and being. but it involves action, activity, physical, rational, and relational (Gorski, 2017).

But what does flourishing actually consist of? How to define the concept? Is it possible to operationalize it?

For Sayer, more than a question of possibility, it is a necessity and an inevitability, insofar as it is not possible to construct a critical perspective without assessing what is 'good' or what is 'bad', that is, without having some conception of what flourishing, well-being or malaise is<sup>4</sup>: "Critical social science needs to acknowledge its often hidden or repressed premise – which its evaluations of practices imply a conception of human flourishing" (Sayer, 2011, p. 245). For Sayer, this conception, of an evaluative, ethical nature, should not, therefore, be limited to philosophical, political or everyday discourses, but should be assumed by the social sciences themselves, otherwise they will not effectively understand their object of study. And to do so, it is necessary to overcome dichotomies such as facts/values, science/ethics, positive/normative.

Defining and operationalizing the concept of flourishing, however, poses significant problems and real difficulties. Establishing a certain conception of flourishing implies

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<sup>3</sup> The terms *eudemonia* and *eudemonismo* exist in the lexicon of Portuguese language. However, its application does not solve the semantic problem. António Caeiro, in his translation of the Nicomachean Ethics (Aristotle, 2012), chooses to translate *eudaimonia* as happiness.

<sup>4</sup> Sayer uses the terms 'well-being' and 'flourishing' in a similar way, attributing to 'well-being' the sense of 'flourishing', "with its connotations of activity, rather than 'happiness', which merely connotes a state of mind" (Sayer, 2011, p. 234).

discarding pure cultural relativism. But how can we do this without falling into a fixed conception of human nature, essentialism, ethnocentrism?

In other words, how can we construct a conception of flourishing that is sufficiently universal and has sufficient legitimacy to sustain processes and ways of evaluating what favours or contradicts human flourishing and, consequently, sustains and legitimises prescriptions on how we should act accordingly?

If there are aspects of the concept of flourishing that can indeed vary according to people and cultures, there are others "that are so evident that it would be absurd to deny them" (Sayer, 2011, p. 230), as is the case of Human Rights, so that one way to sustain such legitimacy would be to restrict ourselves only to those aspects that are evident or whose justification results from a broad social consensus. However, says Sayer, the discourse of Human Rights is insufficient to the extent that, however consensual it may be, it needs justification for its foundations and, on the other hand, because, as a characteristic expression of the liberal discourse of modernity, "it privileges the individual and neglects the relationality of social life". An individualistic conception of the good, based only on respect for individual autonomy, "implies an overly negative view of dependence on others, assumes that all individuals are competent adults and neglects our need of care, and ignores the importance to our well-being of forming friendly, loving, respectful relations and attachments" (id., p.233).

In summary, from the ontological point of view, *flourishing* is a process, of an eminently active nature (productive, creative) with a double and inseparable dimension: *individual* and *relational*; from the point of view of agency, the orientation of action and its evaluation, it is an eminently ethical process.

But, considering the individual and relational dimensions, what are the conditions, aspects and factors that constitute well-being, of human flourishing? What kind of legitimacy do they summon? Are there universal factors and values?

The following sections analyse some of the main perspectives on these issues, namely, the Human Rights, the Capability Approach, the particular perspectives of *buen vivir* and *ubuntu*, and a cross-cutting perspective that calls for the constitution of a Universal

Declaration of Well-Being. The concept of dignity and the place it occupies in the structuring of the notion of well-being are also analysed.

### **6.3.2 The Human Rights Perspective**

In a usual, though not consensual, presentation, several generations are usually referred to in the genealogy of human rights.

The first emerged at the end of the eighteenth century, in the context of the rise of the bourgeois class, the spread of the thought of the Enlightenment, and the bourgeois revolutions. Although there are earlier founding texts, notably in the United States and England, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 in France is a landmark moment in the affirmation of abstract human rights, covering individual freedoms and political freedoms (Gaillard, 2012).

A second generation emerges in the immediate aftermath of World War II, adding to individual freedoms and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights. Just three years after its founding, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). By transposing the concept of human rights to the supranational scale, a new era was beginning, with the UDHR as the cornerstone of a true international human rights law (Gaillard, 2012), although it was not until 1966 that the first binding legal texts were adopted.

The third generation of human rights emerged in the late 1970s, encompassing the so-called "rights of solidarity", which include, among others, the rights to peace, development, the environment and the right to use the common heritage of humanity (Gaillard, 2012).

Although the UDHR is not in itself a binding treaty, many of its provisions are considered to be customary international law (UN, 2000).

The binding body of legislation consists of a diverse set of treaties, including:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (1966);
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966);
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948);
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951);
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965);

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979);
- Convention against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984);
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990);
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006).

The defence of human rights is also enshrined in a wide range of declarations, recommendations, principles, codes of conduct and guidelines which, while not legally binding, have moral force and provide practical guidance for the conduct of States.

This is the case of the so-called 'third generation rights', which are still in the process of being affirmed in the international context. The *Right to Development* (Resolution 41/128, adopted at the GA of 9/12/1986) and the *Right to Peace* (Resolution 71/189, adopted at the GA of 19/12/2016) have already been the subject of Declarations adopted by Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. These are, however, non-binding instruments.

Although it is already enshrined in fundamental laws of more than 100 countries, including the Portuguese Constitution (Article 66 - Environment and Quality of Life, within the scope of social rights and duties), the *Right to a Healthy Environment* has not yet been the subject of a UN Resolution. In March 2012, the Human Rights Council established a mandate to study obligations related to the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and to promote good practices related to the integration of the human rights perspective into environmental policymaking. The first mandate, whose rapporteur was John Knox, resulted in a set of 16 structuring and guiding principles. In 2018, the Council extended the mandate, appointing David R. Boyd as Special Rapporteur.

Conventional human rights are universal legal guarantees to protect individuals and groups from actions that interfere with fundamental freedoms and human dignity by compelling governments to do certain things and preventing them from doing others (UN, 2000). Key features and principles of human rights include the following (UN, 2000; DIHR, 2020):

- Are internationally guaranteed;
- Are legally protected;
- Focus on the dignity of the human being;
- They are universal and inalienable (they apply to all human beings);
- They are interdependent and indivisible (they are not hierarchical, the implementation of each facilitates the implementation of the others and the deprivation of each affects all the others);
- They are equal and non-discriminatory (they are enjoyed by all, regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, ethnic origin, skin colour, religion, language or any other status).

For Maschi (2016), the fundamental values of human rights are *dignity, appreciation and respect* for all people, *the intrinsic value of each person*, the *duties of governments* in relation to the rights of their citizens, and the *duties of citizens* towards the rights of other citizens. In addition to the principles of universality, non-discrimination, indivisibility and interdependence, Maschi stresses the principle of *participation* in decisions that may infringe on the rights of individuals; the principle of the *responsibility* of governments in the creation of accountability mechanisms on the implementation and strengthening of human rights; and the principle of *transparency*, embodied in the obligation of governments to communicate to civil society all information and decision-making that may affect human rights.

The well-being perspective of human rights is therefore a perspective of *rights and freedoms*, and their guarantees.

*Rights:* Life; adequate food, housing and clothing; social security; health; education; fair and favourable working conditions; property; equal protection before the law; fair trial; nationality; seeking and obtaining asylum; voting and participation in government; participation in cultural life; development.

*Freedoms:* Association, expression, assembly and movement; thought, conscience and religion; against torture and cruel and inhuman treatment or punishment; against slavery and servitude; against arbitrary imprisonment; against discrimination; against arbitrary

interference with privacy, family, housing or correspondence; against genocide; against enforced disappearances.

The use of a human rights perspective to assess well-being has great appeal, not only because of its universality, but above all because of the high degree of legal, political and social legitimacy it enjoys.

Thus, any conception of well-being and the assessment of its achievement cannot fail to consider human rights in their various generations (Sayer, 2011, Kemp & Vanclay, 2013; Maschi, 2016; Smyth & Vanclay, 2017; Austin, 2020; DIHR, 2020).

The question arises, however, as to whether the human rights perspective is sufficient to consider human well-being and flourishing in the full breadth of its multiple dimensions.

As Austin (2020) points out, the matrix of human rights is liberalism, in the classical sense of the concept, and the central value of liberalism is individual freedoms.

Human rights emerge from the struggle to protect individuals from arbitrary power, particularly states; however, as a characteristic discourse of liberal modernity, it gives priority to the individual, neglecting the relationality of social life and the responsibilities of each towards others, so it is necessary to contextualize and complement them with a richer conception of what is necessary and required for human flourishing, challenging liberalism (Sayer, 2011).

But will not the problem of human rights and the UDHR itself open some door in this direction?

Paquerot (2012) draws attention to Article 28 of the UDHR, which is little referenced in the doctrine and not explicitly taken up in any of the conventions. Article 28 states that "Everyone is entitled to social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized." For Paquerot, the content of the article, although expressed in terms of rights, must first be read from the point of view of obligations and duties, an essential corollary of rights, since "(...) obliges every 'order-maker' to ensure that this order allows rights to become fully effective there" (idem, p. 135).

Now, considering that a certain social order and a certain international order imply a certain type of social relations and international relations, then, according to Article 28, the

realization of human rights depends on the configuration of social relations and international relations. It is therefore no longer just a question of individual rights, but of the adequacy of social structures. And the obligations of governments are not limited to ensuring individual rights, but also to ensuring that social structures are adequate for the realization of each and every human right, since they are indivisible and interdependent. According to Paquerot (idem, pp. 143-144) "The contradictions between the maintenance of a previously existing order that has been tried to be refounded since the end of the Second World War, but not transformed, and the will to establish a new order whose foundation would be the UDHR, are at the heart of the contradictions of the international system".

It is also from the perspective of obligations that Paquerot addresses the so-called third-generation rights. *Peace, the environment and development* are therefore not only rights but also obligations, insofar as they are necessary conditions for the realisation of all other rights. At the same time, in order to be implemented, they need an adequate social and international order, that is, adequate social structures.

At this point, we find ourselves with the thread of the problematics and contradictions of sustainable development and environmental and social sustainability, the Millennium Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals – 2030, as well as the need for 'sustainable social structures', issues already addressed elsewhere in this work, and to which we will return later.

### **6.3.3 The capability approach**

As mentioned in a previous section of this work, Amartya Sen has always rejected, within the scope of the capability approach, to present or develop a list of functionalities and *capabilities*, arguing that, since functionalities are things that people *value* to do or to be, their definition should be made by each person and not be pre-defined or, much less, imposed.

Without leaving a liberal perspective, Martha Nussbaum sought to go beyond the individualistic limitations of this position, defending the possibility and the need to establish a set of *essential capabilities, transcending individual valuations*, basing this possibility on the concept of *dignity*. Only in this way is it possible, for example, to consider

the capabilities of people who are not in a position to value them, as is the case with the attribution of the right to education to people with significant cognitive disabilities who may not value education as a need to be satisfied. From this perspective, Nussbaum argues that the focus of the capability approach is on "the protection of areas of freedom so fundamental that their removal makes life undeserving, from a perspective of human dignity", so the basic question that arises is to know "what is necessary for life to be worthy of human dignity" (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 31-32). Thus, according to Nussbaum, any "decent political order must ensure that all citizens have at least a minimum threshold of ten core capabilities." These capabilities therefore assume the status of *rights* (Robeyns, 2017). The ten capabilities are as follows:

1. *Life*. To be able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; Not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. *Bodily health*. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. *Bodily integrity*. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4. *Senses, imagination and thought*. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason – and to do these things in a "truly human" way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematics and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression, with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain.
5. *Emotions*. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)
6. *Practical reason*. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection on the planning of one's life. (This entails the protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)
7. *Affiliation*. (A) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in diverse forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.) (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.
8. *Other species*. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. *Play*. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. *Control over one's environment. (A) Political.* Being able to participate effectively in the political choices that govern one's life; having the right to political participation, protections of free speech and association. *(B) Material.* Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers. (Nussbaum, 2011, pp 33-34)<sup>5</sup>

Despite the status of *rights* that she attributes to it, Nussbaum considers this list to be open to change and deepening. However, the number of capabilities remains the same and their definition has remained unchanged since its introduction in *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Nussbaum, 2000).

In fact, as conditions for achieving well-being, or as aspirations and rights, the ten capabilities can be considered uncontroversial, with the exception, as Sayer (2011) rightly notes, of capability 10 (b), with regard to private property. Not so much private ownership of movable property or housing, for example, but ownership of land and ownership of means and factors of production<sup>6</sup>.

However, when we move from the perspective of the freedoms, aspirations and rights of individuals to the perspective of their practical realization, some problems begin to arise, not only with Nussbaum's list, but with the capabilities approach, in general.

Nussbaum's list is constructed from the liberal perspective of the autonomous individual and the freedom of individual choice, which characterizes the capabilities approach, rather than from the perspective of solidarity and the need for belonging (Dean, 2009).

The issue of equality/inequality is diminished, to the detriment of freedom of choice. If capabilities are considered as the freedom of access to things that are formally available, without regard to whether they are available to all, then they are reduced to equality of opportunities, which can be limited to an equality of opportunity to compete for certain positions in structures of inequality (Sayer, 2011).

As Dean points out, regarding the capability approach, in general:

Within the space of capabilities there are three major issues which the individual cannot readily see and which are seldom clearly discussed. First, and in any event, human beings

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<sup>5</sup> This list presents changes in some of the capabilities compared to the list presented in Nussbaum (2000, pp. 78-80), but they are not substantive changes.

<sup>6</sup> It is, to say the least, very debatable whether land ownership or the ownership of a factory, for example, is indispensable for the well-being of each of the eight billion inhabitants of the planet, in addition to being practically unfeasible, useless and even absurd.

cannot be free from their dependency upon other human beings. Second and third, under capitalist social relations of production, individuals can be free neither from hegemonic controls over their participation in public realm, nor from the direct or indirect consequences of the exploitation of human labor. Dean (2009, p.5).

In other words, as Sayer (2011) points out, one of the great limitations of *the capability approach* is that it is nothing more than a set of normative criteria that help to understand the extent to which certain basic constituents of well-being are present or absent in a given population, but say nothing about the causes and reasons that lead to these constituents of well-being being present or not.

In an article analysing Amartya Sen's *The Idea of Justice* (Sen, 2009), Deneulin states that

Assessing states of affairs in terms of individual freedoms and expecting that reason will lead to a better state is not enough. What is required is an analysis of the justice of the economic, social and political structures constitutive of a human life lived in common with fellow human beings and the environment. Deneulin (2010:17).

Austin (2020), as well as Dean (2009), Deneulin (undated) and Sayer (2011) draw attention, however, to the fact that the capabilities approach, in general, and Nussbaum, in particular, also follow the Aristotelian tradition that values the social being. In the case of the list of capabilities, capability 7 – *Affiliation* – illustrates this concern, so Nussbaum will go further than the simple individualist-liberal perspective.

However, even so, the social dimension of *Affiliation* is seen from the point of view of the individual and individual options.

Another question raised in relation to Nussbaum's list is whether these capabilities do not reflect only the values of modern Western societies and, consequently, whether it would be correct to evaluate non-Western societies on the basis of them (Sayer, 2011).

It is, therefore, time to seek to 'de-westernize' the gaze, briefly analysing the perspectives of *buen vivir* and *ubuntu*.

### **6.3.4 'De-Westernizing' the gaze: two perspectives of well-being: *Buen Vivir* and *Ubuntu***

#### **6.3.4.1 *Buen Vivir***

##### *Conceptions and paths of Buen Vivir*

*Buen Vivir* translates a plural body of ideas and social and political practices that have been emerging and developing in Latin America, namely in Ecuador and Bolivia. Based on the worldview of indigenous peoples, this movement has been built as a reaction and

alternative to traditional concepts of development (Gudynas, 2011), both in its aspect focused on continuous economic growth and in the instrumental conception of human relations and relations with nature, which is inherent to it.

*Buen Vivir* is the possible articulation, in the Castilian language, of a diverse set of Andean indigenous terms that, having much in common, are not entirely overlapping. Expressions such as 'sumak kawsay' (good living) in the Quechua language, 'suma qamaña' (to live well) in Aymara, or others such as ñandereko (harmonious life), teko kavi (good life), ivi maraei (land without evil) and qhapaj ñan (path or noble life), are currently translated into the Constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, as expressions of *Buen Vivir* (Gudynas, 2011).

Acosta (2010) defines *Buen Vivir* as a proposal under construction that, at the level of ideas, calls into question the Western concept of well-being and, in the field of struggles, confronts the coloniality of power. For Acosta, although the concept has deep roots in the indigenous world, it is also based on some universal philosophical principles, namely Aristotelian, Marxist, ecological, feminist, cooperativist, humanist.

Gudynas (2011) also underlines this construction of the notion of *Buen Vivir*, which does not result from a 'pure' recovery of indigenous knowledge and worldviews, but from a reconstruction of these worldviews and knowledge, by intellectuals of indigenous origin, as a response to the current problems that peoples face. But this reconstruction expresses precisely the actuality and the projection into the future of the notion of *Buen Vivir*, since it is not a question of "a return to the past, but rather the construction of a future that is distinct from that determined by traditional development".

The emergence of the concept and its expression in the Constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador is, of course, not separable from the historical context of neocolonial domination of these countries and of Latin America in general, and from the struggles that indigenous peoples have been waging for decades against the devastating effects on their ways of life caused by the 'extractivist' greed of international capitalism and its local 'representatives'. Struggles that have taken different forms over time, depending on the possibilities opened up by political contexts, from the organization in peasant federations, in the 1960s, to the constitution of indigenous social movements and their entry into the political scene and the electoral struggle, from the 1990s onwards.

Deneulin (2012) summarizes the central notions of the *Buen Vivir* concept in six dimensions:

- Non-linear conception of progress;
- Recognition of nature as a subject;
- Harmonious living with other human beings and nature;
- Inseparability of the material and spiritual dimensions of life;
- Contextuality;
- Utopia.

Some of these dimensions need to be analysed in more detail. First of all, the conception of nature as a subject.

In *Buen Vivir*, conceiving nature as a subject is more than de-objectifying it at the level of relations of instrumental appropriation, it is more than attributing rights to it in an interrelationship between equals, it is conceiving it as a living entity of which we are part, and in which we were created, it is understanding it *as Pachamama*, as motherland (Gudynas, 2011).

It is, therefore, a perspective that 'heals' the ontological cut introduced by Cartesian rationality, between the thinking being and the *res extensa*, between subject and an object made 'thing', manipulable, exploitable, in a relationship that is not subject to any kind of ethical supervision, since 'things' have no personality or rights.

This conception of nature introduces, from the outset, a rupture with the conceptions of development that are based on an anthropocentric vision, and on a vision of nature and ecosystems as 'natural capital' whose destiny is to be tamed, exploited and commodified (Acosta, 2010). To overcome this "(...) A profound divorce between the economy and nature, it is necessary to rescue the true dimensions of sustainability. It requires a new ethic in order to organize one's own life. (...) Reality shows us to the fullest extent that Nature has limits. And these limits, rapidly reached by anthropocentric lifestyles, particularly exacerbated by the need for capital accumulation, are increasingly evident and unsustainable." (Acosta, <sup>7</sup>2010, p.18).

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<sup>7</sup> Alberto Acosta was an active promoter of *Buen Vivir*, namely as president of the Constituent Assembly of Ecuador.

Consequently, what is at stake in *Buen Vivir* is an alternative concept of development, which does not focus on economic growth and the market, the obsession with consumption, the continuous reproduction of capital and the ultimate goal of profit, but on solidarity, the construction of a just, democratic, participatory and solidarity-based economic system. that eliminates poverty, promotes inclusion and equity, ensures that everyone has the right to a dignified life, a quality of life and well-being that is not only based on material goods and income, but also on affection, happiness, spirituality and respect for nature.

Now, to this type of development - which has as its objective the harmonious experience with other human beings and nature, and the inseparability of the material and spiritual dimensions of life - the conceptions of linear progress are alien, since it is a process in permanent construction and reproduction, which has to be carried out at every moment. It is a development that intrinsically rejects the cataloguing of human beings and peoples into 'developed' and 'underdeveloped', based on the criteria of the 'developed', that is, the accumulation of capital, consumerism, the exploitation of labor, human one-dimensionality, colonialism, the objectification and exploitation of nature.

It is a development that is intended to be built as an achievable utopia. "In the Constitution of Montecristi<sup>8</sup> (...) We find sketches of an unbuilt utopia. A utopia that implies the critique of reality (...) a collectively imagined, politically conquered and constructed alternative option, to be executed through democratic actions, at all times and in all circumstances." (Acosta, 2010, p. 31).

But this utopia has to be built on the diversity of utopias. It cannot be imposed through the hegemonization of a model, because peoples are diverse and the conceptions of *Buen Vivir* can differ according to their cultural, historical, social, political and ecological contextuality. The idea of 'sumak kawsay' cannot be transplanted to other countries in Latin America or the world (Gudynas, 2011).

Rejecting the dominant culture, utopias are built, however, on diversity and intercultural dialogue. "It is necessary for *Buen Vivir* to be built in a double process: on the one hand, the decolonization of knowledge in order to abandon Western superiority and, on the other

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<sup>8</sup> Ecuador's Constitution.

hand, to respect the diversity of other cultures, without the hierarchy of one over another." (Gudynas, 2011, p.12).

### *Buen Vivir and sustainability*

*Buen Vivir* is a mirror where we look at ourselves in the *Other*, a mirror with the exceptional characteristic of permanently reflecting the image of the *Other* that exists in us, in his/our intrinsic and ontological social-natural dimension, different from the caricature of the objectified, one-dimensional and subaltern other that capitalism/colonialism and its hegemonic strategy intended to affirm as 'universal'. But it is also a mirror that challenges us to cross 'to the other side' and to build, in the difficulty of permanent contradictions, a world of equity and socio-ecological justice.

In *Buen Vivir*'s idea we find a concept of sustainability that is extremely present. Sustainability, equity, equality, freedom, participation, solidarity, completeness, respect and communion with nature are synonymous.

But the rejection of the concept of 'development' based on economic growth oriented and submitted to the ultimate end of the infinite reproduction of capital, leads to the concomitant rejection of concepts, such as 'sustainable development' and 'green capitalism', which do not affect the processes of reproduction and revaluation of capital, and are based on environmental commercialism and excessive trust in science and technology (Acosta, 2010). Sustainability implies the transition from an anthropocentric conception to a position of "socio-biocentrism", so that, at most, "The much-vaunted concept of 'sustainable development' can only be accepted as a stage of transition to a paradigm distinct from the capitalist one, in which the dimensions of equity, freedom, equality, including, inherently, environmental sustainability, are intrinsic." (ibid., p. 34).

There is, therefore, in the conception of *Buen Vivir* a clear disconnect between sustainability and development that implies, at the same time, a disambiguation of the concept of sustainability, now placing it in a socio-ecological perspective.

Returning to the issues of development and justice, Deneulin (2012) states that *Buen Vivir*, in addition to some similarities, presents significant differences with the paradigm of *human development* and with Amartya Sen's *Idea of Justice*.

*Buen Vivir* does not look for new ways or indices to measure existing development, it demands development alternatives. Its central focus is not to achieve states or goals (such as those set by measures), but rather to change the distribution of power and the way the economy and society are structured. And when there are goals to be achieved, these are not set by 'donors' and equally for all countries, as is the case with the Millennium Development Goals, but are democratically defined by the people. The paradigm of human development is anthropocentric and based on an individualistic ethic, while *Buen Vivir* is biocentric and ethically relational (Deneulin, 2012).

Regarding Amartya Sen's *idea of justice*, Deneulin finds some areas of confluence with *Buen Vivir*. We would like to highlight two. Both approaches seek to shift political discourse from development to justice. On the other hand, the articulation between justice and well-being can also be framed in the articulation of justice with the ability to deliberate on what the good life is. However, there are also clear differences. One of them is that *Buen Vivir* includes nature as a subject of justice, while Sen's perspective remains strongly anthropocentric. Another fundamental difference lies in the fact that *Buen Vivir* is not limited to deliberating on what a good life is, but also how people should relate to each other and to nature. It advocates a structural change in the economic, political and social spheres, while Sen's *idea of justice* remains strongly committed to an individualistic ethic. For *Buen Vivir*, the quality of relationships (social, economic, political) is as important, if not more so, than individual fulfilment. (Deneulin, 2012).

In summary, among the main characteristics of *Buen Vivir*, its strong conception of *sustainability*, socio-ecological, based on a relational ethic encompassing society and nature, which calls for the construction of alternatives to the traditional development model centred on the commodification of nature, work and human relations, stand out.

For Austin (2020), *Buen Vivir* is an alternative ontology of being human, involving a conception of the good that is profoundly different from most Western values. The conception of the good is intrinsically relational and well-being is determined by the quality of interrelationships. Social relations, relationships with nature and relationships with a spiritual dimension form a totality. The present is deeply connected to the past (ancestors) and future generations. Well-being is not a result, but a way of living, in a non-linear time

cycle. A good life consists of coexisting on a continuum of relationships of deep communion with human beings, other living beings, and the natural environment.

#### **6.3.4.2 Ubuntu**

The term *ubuntu* encompasses a set of visions with different designations, languages, and traditions, but congregating around the same worldview, in which human beings are part of an interconnected whole, consisting of other human beings, the natural world, and the spiritual world (Austin, 2020).

There are, therefore, similarities with the conceptions of *buen vivir* mentioned above.

Considering the etymological structure, *ubuntu* means personhood or humanity, *being human* ("humanness") and, although it is usually used in the Nguni languages of South Africa, it has corresponding terms in several languages throughout sub-Saharan Africa (Hailey, 2008).

The term is considered either as a set of characteristics or behaviours (valuing others, kindness, compassion, among others) or as a broader paradigm or value system and is increasingly used as an umbrella term to characterize the norms and values inherent in many traditional African societies. As a worldview, the term tries to capture the essence of what it means to be human. (Hailey, 2008). According to this author, there is widespread agreement in the literature on *ubuntu* that it represents an alternative voice to Western philosophical and theological discourses, not relying on the dominant Cartesian epistemology that structures much of Western thought. If in the West one can say 'I think, therefore I am', in *ubuntu* one will say 'I am because I belong'. *Ubuntu* serves as a spiritual foundation in many African communities and cultures and is a multidimensional concept that represents core values of African ontology, such as respect for human beings, respect for human dignity and life, collective sharing, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence and communalism, also comprising a spiritual dimension.

While most of the literature on *ubuntu* and its contemporary practical application is neutral or shows its positive side, Hailey also references analyses that draw attention to its 'dark side' and some of the possible negative consequences of adopting and promoting *ubuntu's* values. Veneration for tradition, reverence for continuity, fear of change, and

discouragement of difference can shape forms of totalitarian communitarianism and oppressive and punitive conformity.

Hailey concludes that *ubuntu* constitutes a particular worldview, an *ethos*, a philosophy that feeds on crucial communal values and ideas, which seem to have a universal appeal and deeply touch peoples of all cultures. However, it is a set of values that cannot be imposed, but that has to be nurtured in an organic and evolutionary process.

### **6.3.5 The question of *dignity***

"(...) Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, preamble, 1st para.).

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1).

Dignity is at the heart of the notion of human rights and is often invoked at various levels, from philosophical discourses, constitutions, conventions, political agreements, claims and social movements, to the relationships of everyday life. However, it is an elusive and rarely defined term or concept (Sayer, 2011; Hicks, 2013).

Its popularity and universality suggest that the notion of dignity has a deep resonance in people, although the liberal and Western concept of dignity places the emphasis on the autonomy of the individual, whereas non-Western traditions tend to have a more relational notion of dignity (Sayer, 2011). In some Asian societies, "dignity is a collective status which individuals are entitled by virtue of their belonging to a community and assuming certain social roles" (Lee, 2008, p.15, cited in Sayer, 2011, p. 190).

Sayer (idem, p. 192) refers to the existence of a peculiar tension between two dominant uses of the notion of dignity. The first, considering dignity as something intrinsic to human beings and that everyone possesses, regardless of their situation and behaviour. This usage is present in the Declaration of Human Rights and, from a philosophical point of view, has its main expression in Kant. The second use, on the contrary, conceives of dignity as something fragile and precarious, as a precarious and vulnerable quality or condition, which depends on the way people act and how they are treated by others. In the first case,

dignity is associated with the autonomy of the individual and is considered as something almost empirical. In the second case it is associated with relationality and is considered as an ideal, as something that people should have. Dignity seems to hover, ambiguously, between these two uses.

Hicks (2013) developed a model of dignity that seeks to reconcile these two aspects. Referring to the philosophers of the Enlightenment, in particular Kant, the author considers dignity as an innate right and as an intrinsic value with which all human beings are imbued. This intrinsic value makes it a moral duty to respect the dignity of others, regardless of their circumstances, qualities or actions. When we fail to do so, we are not only disrespecting the dignity of others but violating our own dignity.

This conception poses a particular difficulty, considering that it is common for human beings to behave in ways that harm others, that is, they behave in an unrespectable way. To overcome this difficulty, Hicks draws "a distinction between the *person*, who deserves respect, and the *person's actions*, which may or may not be deserving of respect" since "The innate intrinsic importance and worth of individuals must be honoured, regardless of what they have done. But we are not obliged to respect them: they have to earn respect through their behaviour and actions" (Hicks, 2013, p. 25).

Hicks distinguishes, therefore, *dignity*, an innate right, and *respect*, something that is achieved as a result of effective behaviour, in the relational dimension. And this relational dimension assumes a central and vital importance for human beings, endowed with feelings and the capacity for empathy, "an innate predisposition to feel what others feel". "We are social beings who grow and thrive when their relationships remain intact; our survival is inextricably linked to the quality of our relationships and our growth and development take place in the context of those relationships" (Id, *ibid*, p.26).

However, in human relationality, *vulnerability* coexists permanently with the desire for dignity: "Because of the primacy of relationships, our susceptibility to others and to the world leaves us vulnerable to harm of all kinds and, ultimately, to the possibility of death. The sense of loss is at the heart of human vulnerability—loss of dignity, loss of connection to others, and loss of life itself" (Id., *ibid.*, pp. 27-28).

The *model of dignity*, which Hicks has been applying in conflict mediation processes, is developed from the perspective of social psychology, which is her area of expertise. The model requires everyone to recognise not only their dignity and the dignity of others, but also the fact that they can be a violator of dignity. The model requires each person to expand their self-view and egocentric point of view, in order to be able to take into account the perspective of others, both cognitively and in terms of empathy. For Hicks, understanding dignity provides a better quality of life because "People are tired of not feeling good about themselves, tired of maintaining relationships that don't work, and tired of leading lives without deep meaning and purpose. They want to become what they are capable of being" (id., *ibid.*, p.45).

In operationalizing his *model of dignity*, Hicks considers the concept of dignity as multidimensional and encompasses ten essential elements in the relationship with the other (id., *ibid.*, pp. 47-48):

- *Identity acceptance*
- *Inclusion*
- *Safety* [physical and psychological]
- *Acknowledgment*
- *Approval*
- *Impartiality*
- *Benefit of the Doubt* [Trust]
- *Comprehension*
- *Independence* [control of one's own life, hope]
- *Responsibility*.

Like Martha Nussbaum's list of capabilities, in which dignity is a central support, Hicks' model of dignity makes important contributions to the notion of well-being and flourishing, the demand for which is one of the central motivations of this work. However, some questions are raised. Is *dignity* the cornerstone of flourishing, just as others consider *equity* to be, to speak of just another of the most mentioned dimensions? And is a 'voluntarist' attitude of each and every one of us enough to achieve dignity, well-being and flourishing? Or is it necessary to consider social structures?

Sayer (2011) recalls that if dignity is a concept of modernity, a universal and egalitarian attribute, contrary to aristocratic conceptions that reserved the status of dignity for an elite (still present in the term 'dignitary'), inequalities continue to persist, namely at the level of class, race and gender, posing difficulties to the maintenance of dignity and the attribution of respect. For some it is more difficult to maintain dignity than for others. Inequalities are socially produced in two ways. One, at the level of identities, as is the case of sexism, racism, homophobia, among others. Secondly, it is structural to modern economies, both in terms of labour relations and in relation to internal hierarchies or inequalities in economic organisations. This second form of inequality can combine and reconfigure the first, but it can also exist and persist in the absence of the first.

"(...) Dignity and respect – central to the politics of recognition – are inevitably widely seen as confirmed or denied through the distribution of resources and opportunities; It's not just a matter of respectful ways of addressing people. Where inequalities are structural features of societies then people cannot stand in dignified relations to one another. The problems are likely to be worse where, as in capitalist societies, many relations between people are not only unequal but overwhelmingly instrumental" (Sayer, 2011, p.213, 214). "The moral problems of unequal dignity are primarily the product not of disrespect or undignified behaviour within free-floating, ephemeral, interpersonal social relations, but of social structures that make people's lives objectively unequal within their society." (id., ibid., p.215).

Sayer concludes that while dignity and respect are crucial for well-being, people need much more, such as contentment, love, and friendships.

### **6.3.6 Are there universal values?**

From the analyses carried out in the previous sections, several values and aspirations emerge recurrently. Are these universal values and aspirations common to all human beings?

In the context of a study carried out with the aim of identifying the core and universal dimensions of human well-being, Austin (2020) developed an extensive research, covering various political theories and philosophical perspectives on well-being (Aristotelianism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Hedonism, liberalism), throughout history, consulting current

fundamental laws (Constitutions and others) of a sample of countries from different continents (including those influenced by the conceptions of *buen vivir and ubuntu*), cultures and religious matrices, and comparing the responses obtained, on different continents, to the World Values Survey (WVS, 2020).

With this extensive and diverse approach, Austin aimed to overcome some recurring difficulties in the approach to well-being and other normative conceptions. On the one hand, to avoid the risk of projecting the values of Western modernity onto non-Western societies. On the other hand, to identify the existence of universal values, in a pragmatic way. Rather than starting from an abstract discussion about the existence or non-existence of a human nature, from which it would be difficult to get out, Austin starts from the hypothesis that if people from different latitudes, cultures, languages and worldviews share common values, and if these values coincide with values expressed in philosophical theories of well-being, over time, then, this constitutes evidence that not only are there good reasons to value these things, but also that it is *rational* to do so.

Austin here follows Amartya Sen's conception, according to which well-being consists of the *ability* that people have to live the lives that they value and that they have reason to value (Sen, 1999).

But it's not enough for people to value something for that thing to deserve to be valued. For this to happen, it is necessary that this valuation be ethically rational, oriented towards positive things. It is in this sense that, from a well-being perspective, it is not rational to value suffering, inequity, oppression, even if there are people who value them (Sayer, 2011).

This articulation between reason and values (again, the overcoming of the dichotomy) is, therefore, fundamental to socially legitimize the dimensions of well-being, as common goals to be achieved.

According to Austin, his research has led to the conclusion that from the diversity of theoretical perspectives, practical (political) perspectives, and the opinion expressed by people in the WVS, a set of "spheres of values" emerges that are common or, at least, have large areas of overlap.

The set of *spheres of values* identified by Austin finds some resonance in Martha Nussbaum's list of capabilities. In fact, Austin expressly mentions that the results of his research support the perspective of Martha Nussbaum, among others.

These spheres of values are as follows (Austin, 2020, p 103):

- **Sociality** (Harmonious, mutually respectful social relationships, including family, friends, communities, and the formal institutions of sociality)
- **Material security** (resources to meet the physical needs of decent nutrition, housing, clothing, etc.)
- **Safety and security**
- **Subjective well-being** (pleasure, happiness, life satisfaction, emotional well-being, self-respect)
- **Health** (physical and mental)
- **Freedom** (self-determination)
- **Work** with meaning
- **Rest and leisure**
- **Education**
- **Political participation**
- **Cultural participation**
- **Natural environment** (engagement with the natural world)
- **Integrity** (harmony between practical reason and practical action).

Austin considers that two of these spheres of values - *sociality* and *integrity* - deserve particular attention, insofar as they organize and structure all the others.

Sociality is of particular importance because of its intrinsic value (it is a value in itself), but also because of its instrumental value, because it is indispensable for the realization of all the other values that constitute a good human life. Without sociality it is not possible to take care of others, without sociability physical and mental health is jeopardized, social exclusion and alienation prevent well-being. In short, "a defining feature of being human is having relationships with others, and so being human well involves having good relationships with others" (...) "the fact and value of sociality in human life implies a conception of the person not as lone individual defined by independence and self-

sufficiency, but as an agent who is the product of a multi-layered system of interdependent social relationships, and is embedded in this social setting in such a way that her life and well-being depend on it" (Austin, 2020:104, 105).

As far as *integrity* is concerned, its particular importance lies in its centrality regarding the ability to deliberate on what is 'good' and, as such, to act on that deliberation. Following Aristotelian currents, namely Martha Nussbaum, Austin defines *integrity* as the "harmony between practical reason and practical action" and defines practical reason as "the reflective process of developing a conception of the good, and of establishing plans, projects, and commitments based on that conception" (Austin, 2020:105). The exercise of practical reason implies a wide range of resources, including involvement in the respective social configuration (social, political, cultural, material), if necessary in a critical way, and the ability to discuss what is 'good', for which education provides the tools. The second term of the integrity equation "is practical action in accordance with the conception of what is good, developed through practical reason" (id, *ibid*:106).

Austin stresses that the research carried out has shown that social relations are not only central constituent elements of well-being, but also a necessary condition for achieving it, because they are the foundation of human life and, therefore, of a *good* human life. In practice, this means that policies and policy, in order to promote well-being, must be underpinned by a social conception of the good, of what is good, and their focus must be on building an infrastructure of sociability that supports individual and collective well-being, at the level of the family, friendship circles, community relations and social and political institutions at the local level, national and international.

Austin forgets here, however, a fundamental dimension of sociability. Without sociability there is no social work, and without social work, configured in certain relations of production, there is no production of the means of human life and no production and reproduction of sociability. Social work is also structuring the relationship between society and nature. The 'forgetting' of this structuring dimension of human life and human relations is frequent, perhaps because it implies extending the demand for the *good human life* to this twofold, uncomfortable and even 'subversive' question: *What kind of relations of*

*production is necessary to materialize, in order to achieve a good human life for all, and a sustainable relationship with nature?*

Austin concludes that evidence of the existence of aspects of human life that are universally valued makes it possible to move toward a "Universal Declaration of Well-Being" (id., *ibid*:107).

Austin's research, whose main conclusions we have been analysing, makes it possible to make some important points regarding the issue of well-being, human flourishing, and social sustainability.

In the first place, the evidence of the existence, if not of universal values, at least of universally valued values, constituting and structuring human well-being, individual and social. If this universality is a fact, then the values in question are universally legitimized, also as objectives to be achieved and achieved by development policies and as criteria for evaluating those policies.

Secondly, but perhaps even more importantly, the evidence that well-being depends on social relations and their way of structuring. Without sociability there is no well-being, however, not all structures and forms of sociability promote well-being, and the opposite may be the case.

Like Austin, regarding well-being, Becker (2012), as analysed in a previous section of this work, also defends the need for sustainable social structures, that is, those that promote social and environmental sustainability. However, they do not say how this is done.

A third aspect that should be emphasised is the importance attached to the *integrity dimension*.

Integrity is a process, both individual and collective, in which each person develops the capacity to construct a set of ethical values and, above all, the ability to deliberate and act in accordance with these same values.

At the level of the individual, it is a continuous reflective and practical (relational) process, which may have advances and setbacks, but only ends with death. Here, too, social structures can promote, hinder or block this process.

Other dimensions are important, and even instrumental, for the construction of *integrity*, such as freedom, health, education, political participation and cultural participation, or

provide the basic substrate, such as the satisfaction of basic needs (material security) and work.

Although it is included in *sociability*, the dimension of *care* is not sufficiently explained by Austin. In fact, human societies are not only made up of adults, autonomous and reflective. Children and all those who, for whatever reason, have seen their reflective capacity and other fundamental abilities impeded or diminished, need support and care.

But it is not only these particular cases. All the humans need care, and care has a central place in sociability. As Sayer (2012:111) states, "Our nature as human beings consists in far more than living together and tend to develop division of labour. Not only in childhood but for many other parts of our lives, we need the care of others to survive illness, develop and flourish: care is essential for human life."

#### **6.4 Some additional reflections**

The review carried out in the previous sections has made it possible to collect important elements for the demand for well-being and human flourishing. It also made it possible to identify recurrent concerns, insufficiencies and absences.

One of the issues that seems to have become very evident is the need to overcome the individual/society dichotomy. There is no well-being and flourishing that are not necessarily felt and experienced at the individual level, just as there is no individual well-being or flourishing outside the structures, contexts and processes of socialization and sociability, their stimuli and their conditioning or blockages.

Important values and aspirations have been identified that seem to be endowed with universality, resonating deeply with the generality of human beings.

This is the case of material security for the satisfaction of basic needs, protection, health, education, rest and leisure, affection and care, but also of the various dimensions of dignity, meaningful work, political and cultural participation, emancipation, autonomy, and the development and realization of the potential of each one.

But it is also the case of valuing sociabilities both as a factor of well-being, in itself, and as a means to achieve and build well-being and flourishing.

In this regard, we cannot fail to underline this strange paradox: almost at the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, when we are close to 8 billion inhabitants of 'one

Earth', connected by the various globalisations, hit by pandemics, with a common future threatened by the climate crisis, it is still necessary to 'rediscover' and reaffirm the importance and structuring function of social relations and sociabilities, in contrast to individualistic conceptions of society, understood as an aggregate of atomized humans or, at most, as a dynamic of 'entrepreneurial' individualities. To what extent is this strange and persistent resistance to sociability, characteristic of modernity and pushed to the limit by neoliberalism, concomitant with the social and environmental unsustainability from which modernity suffers, aggravated by the late modernity in which we live?

However, even so, if the valuation of sociabilities seems to be universal, only a few draw attention to the need to consider the social structures that underlie them. If networks of social relations and sociabilities are indispensable for well-being and flourishing, it is no less true that the quality of relationships and sociabilities does not depend only on the fact that they exist, nor only on moral values, on individual will, on 'practical reason' and 'practical action'. This quality, i.e., whether networks of relationships and social relations are a factor of well-being or malaise, is also a result of social structures, namely by the way in which they structure the production and reproduction of inequalities, relations of domination and subordination, which influence, condition and, sometimes, determine the configuration of social relations and the nature of interactions.

It is also important to highlight another aspect that appears to be widely valued: the involvement with the natural world, that is, that social relations are inseparable from relationships with nature.

Finally, the aspects discussed above also raise other questions and concerns. If, according to Austin, these universal values persist over centuries and even millennia, and cross different cultures, then it is because they remain a longing, a goal to be achieved, at least for a great majority of human beings. Why does human well-being remain a utopia? Moreover, for what reasons, for a multitude of human beings, does well-being remain an absence, even when it comes to the satisfaction of the most basic needs?

## **7. Critical perspective on the issues of well-being, living well and flourishing**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In the previous sections, several literature reviews were carried out on the dimensions and themes of social sustainability and on various ways and perspectives of understanding the meaning of the notions of well-being, living well and human flourishing, notions that constitute, according to the point of view defended in this work, central elements for the configuration of the dimensions and defining elements of social sustainability and the criteria for evaluating its practical implementation.

This section re-examines several fundamental issues in a more systematic, focused and critical way, with the aim of contributing to the identification of the foundations and conditions for the possibility of realizing, effectively and practically, well-being, living well and flourishing.

The critical perspective is understood here as including:

- Valuing reflexivity;
- A critical stance on certain social practices and structures;
- A critique of certain positions and ideological justifications of these practices and structures.

In this chapter, the following aspects are addressed: i) the persistence of inequalities, development problems and environmental problems, as negative evidence and as impediments or obstacles to the achievement of well-being and flourishing; ii) ideological justifications of inequalities; iii) ideology and utopia and the aspirations and desires for the realization of well-being, as an achievable utopia; iv) ideology and utopia in the discourse on sustainability; v) practical consequences of the critical analysis carried out for the processes of assessment and deliberation on social sustainability of the planned actions.

### **7.2 The persistence and worsening of inequalities, development and environmental problems**

The 2018 *World Inequality Report (WIR)*, produced by the World Inequality Lab, shows that, in the last three decades, inequality within each country, between countries and between regions, has been accentuated in a significant, sometimes dramatic, and generalized way,

although with significant differences. The following are some of the indicators presented at WIR 2018:

- In 2016, the share of national income that fell to the richest 10% ranged from 37% (Europe) to 61% (Middle East);
- In the period 1980-2016:
  - The average income of the bottom 50% increased by 5% in the US-Canada, 26% in Europe, 107% in India, 417% in China and down -26% in Russia;
  - The median income of the richest 10% rose 123% in the US-Canada, 58% in Europe, 469% in India, 1,316% in China and 190% in Russia;
  - The income of the top 0.001% increased by 629% in the U.S.-Canada, 120% in Europe, 3,083% in India, 3,752% in China, and 25,269% in Russia.
- In the same period 1980-2016, the share of overall income growth captured by each of these groups was as follows:
  - The bottom 50% captured 2% in the U.S.-Canada, 14% in Europe, 11% in India, 13% in China and -24% in Russia;
  - The richest 10% captured 67% in the U.S.-Canada, 48% in Europe, 66% in India, 43% in China and 117% in Russia;
  - The richest 0.001% captured 4% in the U.S.-Canada, 1% in Europe, 3% in India, 2% in China and 10% in Russia.

These figures are eloquently illustrative of the enormous inequalities at the global level and the growing divergence between those with the lowest incomes and those with the highest incomes, a divergence that is dramatically accentuated in relation to the top of the pyramid.

Considering wealth and not income, it can be seen that concentration is even more pronounced. In China, Europe, and the U.S., the top 10 percent own more than 70 percent of the wealth, while the bottom 50 percent own 2 percent, and the bottom 40 percent own less than 30 percent.

On the other hand, there is also an increase in incomes at the bottom of the pyramid, sometimes very significant, as in China and India, with the exception of Russia, where there

has been an impoverishment of the poorest. However, this almost universal growth has been insufficient to lift hundreds of millions of people out of extreme poverty.

Where equality is actually found is in the pattern of inequalities. Although with significant differences, the pattern of inequalities is the same everywhere, whether it is the 'old' Western capitalist countries, the more or less emerging economies of the old third world, the 'new' market economies resulting from the fall of the Berlin Wall and the capitalist opening up of China. Globalized capitalism seems to have also globalized the patterns and tendencies of inequality, albeit at different rates.

Extending the time period to the beginning of the twentieth century (see also Piketty, 2019), it can be seen that inequalities clearly decreased in the 1940s, maintaining, although with some oscillations, from the immediate post-war period until the mid or late 1970s, and resuming an effective growth from then on.

The 2019 Human Development Report (HDR), which has as its central theme inequalities in human development in the 21st century, integrates (UNDP, 2019, ch. 3) and corroborates some of the data from the WIR. It does, however, broaden the analysis from a development perspective.

The HDR refers to the remarkable progress made in the first two decades of the 21st century in reducing extreme poverty, and to the positive developments in other indicators, such as the infant mortality rate and life expectancy at birth, but stresses that these positive developments are taking place in a context of increasing disparities and inequalities and that shortcomings in meeting basic needs such as food, employment, health and education remain unacceptably high and widespread. About 600 million people continue to live in extreme poverty and this number rises to 1.3 billion (about 17% of the world's population) if the Multidimensional Poverty Index is considered.

In this regard, the HDR recognizes that "The world is not on track to eradicate them [most extreme deprivations] by 2030, as called for in the Sustainable Development Goals" (UNDP, 2019, p.3).

On the other hand, while there is some convergence in meeting the most basic needs, a new generation of inequalities is rapidly emerging and deepening between countries, such as access to knowledge and technology.

Inequalities also remain persistent and systematic, around factors such as gender, ethnicity, language or caste or, in some cases, geographical location.

The HDR also draws attention to power relations and social and cultural norms that promote behaviours and perpetuate inequalities.

One of the novelties of HDR 2019 is the presentation of an index of social norms that seeks to translate the relationship between social beliefs and gender equality into multiple dimensions. The result of the application of this index shows that only 1 man in 10 and 3 women in 10 do not show some form of prejudice towards gender equality. And this prejudice increased between 2005 and 2014, both among men and women.

Another focus of the HDR is environmental problems, namely the climate crisis and its influence on inequalities.

According to the HDR, between 2030 and 2050, climate change is projected to cause an additional 250,000 deaths from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress, and by 2050 many hundreds of thousands more will suffer from excess heat. The incidences will be highest in tropical regions, where many of the developing countries and the poorest populations are located, with greater vulnerability and less capacity for adaptation and resilience.

The analysis of these two reports, albeit briefly, is sufficient to understand that well-being, well-being and flourishing are not only still a long way from being a reality, at the global level and in individual countries, especially for the most disadvantaged, but they are threatened by new problems and negative dynamics.

But how to get out of this situation? What can be done to solve the problem of inequality? While acknowledging, as mentioned above, that the world is not on the path necessary to solve the problems by 2030, as advocated in the SDGs, the HDR ends up proposing similar responses, albeit with some nuances and new hues. The emphatic commitment to economic growth and industrialization, expressed in the SDGs (UN, 2015),<sup>9</sup> is now giving way to technological development, increased productivity, equity and efficiency of markets, complemented by antitrust measures, inclusive access to productive capital, more

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<sup>9</sup> See the critical analysis of the SDGs carried out in chapter 2.

distributive fiscal policies, public social transfers and social protection, and democratic and inclusive governance.

It remains to be seen, on the one hand, whether this can be achieved in a general way (bearing in mind in particular that, as the HDR states, it is up to each society to define and adopt the necessary measures) and, on the other hand, whether it is sufficient to solve the problems by taking the perspective of putting people at the centre of decision-making and at the centre of development policies, as the HDR recommends.

In short, in coherence with other documents produced within the framework of the United Nations, for the HDR, inequalities and development and environmental problems do not result from the system, but from its excesses to which it is needed to put a brake, and its inefficiencies that need to be corrected.

It is therefore time to address in more detail how these issues arise at the level of ideological debate.

### **7.3 Inequalities and ideological justification**

Thomas Piketty develops in *Capital et Idéologie* (Piketty, 2019) an extensive and ambitious historical analysis of inequalities and their ideological justification, over time, from slave societies to contemporary "hypercapitalism".

Piketty begins by pointing out that every human society has to justify its inequalities as a way of legitimizing them. Thus, "Each epoch produces a set of contradictory discourses and ideologies aimed at legitimizing inequality, as it exists or should exist, and at describing the economic, social and political rules that allow the whole to be structured. From this confrontation, which is simultaneously intellectual, institutional, and political, one or more dominant narratives generally emerge on which the unequal regimes in question are based", narratives that, in contemporary societies, are the "proprietary, entrepreneurship, and meritocracy" narratives. (Id., *ibid.*, p.13).

Piketty assumes that he uses the notion of ideology in a "positive and constructive" way, that is, "as a set of ideas and discourses plausible *a priori* aimed at describing how society should be structured". To the extent that an ideology is a more or less coherent attempt to answer a set of very broad and complex questions related to the desirable or ideal

organization of society, "no ideology can ever gather the full and complete adhesion of all: ideological conflict and disagreement are inherent in ideology itself" (Id., *ibid.*, p.16).

By using the notion of ideology in a "positive and constructive" way, Piketty chooses not to use the notion of ideology critically, i.e., distinguishing between concealing or mystifying 'narratives' and emancipatory, confrontational 'narratives', but as a debate between equally plausible ideas.

Of course, inevitably, throughout the work, Piketty ends up, in some way and in certain circumstances, using the notion of ideology in a critical way, in relation to the dominant ideology, contrary to what he claims, so that the "positive and constructive" position he refers to is itself ideological, in coherence, moreover, with the 'positive' and 'constructive' position he has in relation to the capitalist system, generally.

#### **7.4 Critical perspective: ideology and utopia**

An in-depth discussion of the concept of utopia does not fit within the limits of the present work. It is important, however, to mention that the sense of *utopia* summoned in the present work is not that of an ideal society projected in a non-place and in an unfathomable future or, even less, and on the contrary, that of a radiant and Promethean future anchored in (omni)science and in the infinite capacity for technological manipulation of nature (see, critical analysis, in Soromenho-Marques, 2007, 2017), but rather in the sense attributed to it by Karl Mannheim, of an active and current search to concretize, materialize, desirable futures, in a horizon of possibilities, based on the objective conditions of the present, which implies a transformation of the existing order and state of affairs (Mannheim, 1936). It is in this sense that, in the present work, we talk about social and socio-environmental sustainability as a utopia.

According to Löwy (2016), it was Karl Mannheim who most pertinently formulated the distinction between ideology and utopia as two fundamental forms of the social imaginary. For Mannheim, while ideological systems of representation are oriented towards the stability and reproduction of the established order, utopian representations and aspirations are oriented towards the rupture of this same order.

The utopian will then be "The defender of a just and humane social order that does not yet exist anywhere (*u-topos*, in Greek), is the individual who dreams of an 'ideal city' situated in the future" (Löwy, 2016, p.24).

Mannheim's position, however, is, on the one hand, more complex than Löwy's definition suggests, and, on the other, more objectivist, not stopping at the 'dream', which is no small matter. For Mannheim "Only those orientations transcending reality will be referred as utopian which, when they pass over into conduct, tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time" (Mannheim, 1936, p. 173).

That is, although projected into the future, 'desiring' a non-existent order, utopian orientations tend to shake the existing order when they are transformed into conducts. This precision is of great importance, insofar as it situates utopias in the objective conditions of the present and gives them a place and a role in transformative practical action. Utopia is, then, something achievable. To consider utopia as something unrealizable is, precisely, an ideological position, insofar as it seeks to defend the stability or reproduction of the existing, affirming as unrealistic and unrealizable the hypothesis of its transformation or, at least, as dangerous and causing chaos.

For Mannheim, it is not enough for orientations to transcend reality to be utopian, it is necessary that they have a potential to transform the existing reality, that is, that they are achievable. It is in this sense that Mannheim considers that orientations that transcend reality but have no transformative potential are not utopian but ideological, insofar as they ultimately only contribute to maintaining the existing order.

But why do utopias have transformative potential and are they achievable? Because they emerge from the objective and historically determined conditions of a given epoch: "(...) The relationship between utopia and the existing order turns out to be 'dialectical' one. By this is meant that every age allows to arise (in differently located social groups) those ideas and values in which are contained in condensed form the unrealized and unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of each age. These intellectual elements then become the explosive material for bursting the limits of the existing order. The existing order gives birth to utopias which in turn break the bonds of the existing order, leaving it free to develop in the direction of the next order of existence. (idem, p. 179).

The dynamics of human societies therefore implies and entails this permanent dialectical duality between ideology and utopia. It is a dialectical conflict, of 'oppositional unity', which can take the form of distinct, conflicting manifestations, or take the form of distinct, contradictory aspects in the same manifestation.

This is the case with the concepts of *sustainable development* and *sustainability*, which contradictorily incorporate, as has already been mentioned above and will be developed later, ideological elements and utopian elements.

The outcome of this oppositional dynamic is not predetermined, it always remains open.

As Mannheim puts it:

The only form in which the future presents itself to us is that of possibility, while the imperative, the 'should', tells us which of these possibilities we should choose. [...] Of the two conflicting tendencies in the modern world – the utopian trends on the one hand, struggling against a complacent tendency to accept the present on the other hand – it is difficult to tell in advance which one will finally conquer, for the course of historical reality that will determine it still lies in the future. We could change the whole of society tomorrow if everybody could agree. The real obstacle is that every individual is bound into a system of established relationships which to a large extent hamper his will. But these 'established relationships' in the last analysis rest upon uncontrolled decisions of individuals. The task, therefore, is to remove that source of difficulty by unveiling the hidden motives behind the individual's decisions, thus putting him in a position real to choose. Then, and only then, will his decisions *really* lie with him. (Ibid., pp. 234-235).

In short, utopias are not only achievable, but the evolution of human societies depends on them:

[...] The complete disappearance of the utopian element of human thought and action [...] would bring about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing. We would be faced then with the greatest paradox imaginable, namely, that man, who as achieved the highest degree of rational mastery of existence, left without any ideals, becomes a mere creature of impulses. [...] When history is ceasing to be a blind fate, and is becoming more and more man's own creation, with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it. (Ibid., p. 236).

Utopias not only are not unrealistic illusions (according to Mannheim, these fall within the ideological field) but, on the contrary, they are, on the one hand, factors of unveiling and revelation and, on the other, factors of awareness and orientation of action, in the sense of concretizing, materializing, positive, progressive, emancipatory ideals.

The political sphere is, of course, the privileged field of *dialectics* (in the linguistic sense and in the philosophical sense) between ideology and utopia.

The dialectic between ideological and utopian elements is constant in the political discourse, and in the summoning of the values and objectives that motivate, guide, direct

and justify action, as previously exemplified in chapter 2, in which the discourse on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was analysed, a subject that we return to in the following section.

Of course, the political struggle is not limited to discourses, but is in fact played out in practical action, in which the conditioning imposed by the structures of power, and the dynamics of power, in their dialectic between 'external' (social) and 'internal' (habitus) structures, intervene, in a dynamic that tends, in 'normal' times, to support ideology and limit utopia, and to liberate utopia in times of crisis and/or rupture.

### 7.5 Ideology and utopia in the discourse on sustainability

As mentioned, chapter 2 sought to analyse the contradictions of the dominant discourse on sustainable development, taking as an example the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs that are currently the centre of concerns and guidelines for action in a sustainable development perspective.

The distinction that was made between explicit values and implicit values in the discourse of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, can now be updated as a distinction between utopia and ideology.

**Table 7.1 – 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: utopia and ideology**

Utopia and ideology in the discourse on sustainable development
<p><b>Utopian values (explicit in discourse):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elimination of poverty and universal satisfaction of basic needs (food, health, education, water, sanitation, energy);</li> <li>- Employment and decent work for all;</li> <li>- Gender equality and <i>women's</i> empowerment;</li> <li>- Freedom from fear and violence;</li> <li>- Physical, mental and social well-being;</li> <li>- Eliminate inequality within and between countries;</li> <li>- Respect for human rights, and the principles of human dignity, rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination;</li> <li>- Democracy, good governance and participatory decision-making;</li> <li>- Accountable and inclusive institutions;</li> <li>- Respect for racial, ethnic and cultural diversity;</li> <li>- Equal opportunities that allow for the full realisation of human potential;</li> <li>- Prosperity must be shared;</li> <li>- A fair, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world;</li> <li>- Protection and conservation of ecosystems, wildlife and other living species;</li> <li>- Respect nature, live in harmony with nature;</li> <li>- All countries should be able to enjoy sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth;</li> <li>- The international trading system should be universal, regulated, open, fair, non-discriminatory and multilateral;</li> </ul>

<b>Utopia and ideology in the discourse on sustainable development</b>
<p>- The development of knowledge, science and technology are key to sustaining economic growth and making production and consumption patterns sustainable.</p> <p><b>Ideological values (implicit or insufficiently explicit and substantiated):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The current economic system (capitalism) is not in dispute, in its essence and fundamentals, and is irreplaceable;</li> <li>- The current economic system is good and must be maintained and improved, for it alone can bring about well-being, development and progress;</li> <li>- The current economic system can be corrected to become socially and environmentally sustainable.</li> </ul> <p><i>Corollaries of ideological values:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic growth and industrialisation are essential to solve social and development problems as well as environmental problems.</li> <li>- Economic growth and industrialization can only be provided within the framework of the processes of production, reproduction and appropriation of the capitalist system.</li> <li>- Sustainable development is economic growth and industrialization purified of its environmentally and socially unsustainable practices.</li> <li>- This purification, in addition to the implementation of conservationist policies, is achieved through technological development and the modification and adoption of practices and behaviours, in terms of the management of natural resources, production, exchanges and consumption, in the sense of eco-efficiency and social justice.</li> </ul>

Recalling Fairclough and Fairclough (2012, pp. 176-177) and the distinction they make between (normative) reasons for action, which have to do with what agents "want to do" (their "real concerns"), and reasons for action that have to do with what actors are bound to do in the light of the moral and institutional orders in which they are embedded, utopian values function, above all, as motivators of action, and ideological values function, essentially, as a structural constraint of action.

The utopian values of the SDG discourse are utopian because they are universal aspirations of human societies and yet have not yet been satisfactorily achieved, even regarding the most basic needs.

And once again, we are faced with the paradox: the utopian values of the discourse on the SDGs enjoy a broad consensus and yet remain unrealized. They will not be achieved by 2030 and, at least in some dimensions, seem increasingly unachievable, as discussed in section 7.1.

Leading and delimiting the discussion to the theme of *social sustainability*, it is verified that: i) the values of social sustainability are utopian and, consequently, emancipatory, in potential and dynamic; ii) social sustainability is at the heart of socio-ecological sustainability and there is a dynamic of interdetermination between the two.

The utopian nature of the values of social sustainability is evident in the social dimensions of the SDGs, albeit incompletely, as indicated in the previous table, as well as in the whole broad conglomerate of values referenced in chapter 5 of this work, to which we will return later in chapter 8.

### **7.6 Practical consequences for the processes of assessment and deliberation on social sustainability**

If the values of social sustainability enjoy a broad base of support, how can the goals be achieved? How to act?

From the outset of this work, it is required that every action - every policy, every programme, every plan, every project - be challenged in order to obtain an answer to the following questions:

- Does it contribute to the achievement of social sustainability objectives? In what way? To what extent? Is such a contribution sufficient or should it be deepened and amplified?
- If it doesn't contribute, what is the reason or reasons for this to happen? What needs to be changed? What needs to be done?

This involves, of course, defining the social sustainability objectives and assessment criteria, as well as the configuration of the assessment processes. In other words, to define how the concept of social sustainability and the assessment of its practical and actual implementation *are structured*.

These aspects are analysed in the following section and in part III of this work, in which the configuration of the assessment process and its operationalization are developed.

## 8. Structuring the concept of social sustainability

### 8.1 (Re)situate the discussion

Due to the diversity and complexity of the aspects analysed in the previous chapters, it is important to take a step back and (re)define, synthetically, the terrain on which we are situated.

What level(s) do we place ourselves on when working on the concept of *social sustainability*?

- i) We are on the level of values.
- ii) We are situated on the plane of utopian values, that is, of the values that define desirable and possible futures, in the sense of human well-being, living well and flourishing.
- iii) We are situated at the level of reflexivity and ethical rationality that guides practice and is oriented towards change, that is, towards emancipatory transformation.
- iv) We are at the level of the transforming agency, through the assessment of the sustainability of the planned actions.
- v) We are situated, mostly, and in short, at the level of practical, ethical, substantive reason, not merely instrumental, which, however, in the same 'movement' of overcoming dualisms that is inherent to the whole theme of social and environmental sustainability, implies and cannot fail to integrate theoretical reason.

As Fairclough & Fairclough (2012, pp. 35-36) put it, "Practical reasoning is reasoning concerning what to do," while "theoretical (or epistemic) reasoning is reasoning concerning what is or is not true." "Theoretical or epistemic reasons are reasons for believing, while practical reasons are reasons for action." The exercise of theoretical reason and the exercise of practical reason are thus distinguished according to the purpose and, concomitantly, the conclusion they reach. In the case of practical reason, the conclusion is of a "normative" type, "about what we should do, or would be good to do (...), in light of our circumstances and our goals". In the case of theoretical reason, the conclusion is of a "descriptive" type and is "about what is (probably) true (...), in view of what we know".

The authors stress, however, that this distinction does not imply a dualistic separation between theoretical and practical reason, with the former typifying scientific reasoning, and the latter being reduced to practical knowledge and everyday decisions, alien to theory. Although scientists typically use theoretical reasoning, they are also constantly involved in practical reasoning, within the scope of scientific activity, namely, to solve practical problems related to and inherent to research. On the other hand, everyday practical reasoning often resorts to theory, even in the most trivial situations, such as deciding to leave the house with an umbrella depending on weather forecasts. In short, "both types of reasoning occur both in everyday contexts and in highly specialized professional contexts."

This perspective is indicative of the complexity of what is at stake when it comes to contexts of practical intervention, such as the one that defines the field of action of social (and environmental) sustainability and its assessment, which is the subject of this work. In these contexts, the use of theoretical reason (understanding, knowing) is only the first step towards the use of practical reason (deciding what to do, with consequences for people, the social and natural environment).

This complexity is increased to the extent that the concept of social sustainability is holistic, encompassing human life in all its breadth, including relationships with nature, social structures and processes, and the individual personality itself, in a permanent context of change, at various levels or scales, from the individual to the global.

This complexity is expressed by Roy Bhaskar in the concept of "four-planar and seven-scalar social being" (Bhaskar, 2010, pp 9-10). Four-planar insofar as "every social event occurs in at least four dimensions, that of material transactions with nature; that of social interactions between humans; that of the social structure proper; and that of the stratification of the embodied personality." Seven-scalar, insofar as systems of social relations and human agency materialize on seven levels: i) "sub-individual/psychological"; (ii) "individual or biographical"; iii) "micro-level", of relationships between persons/individuals; iv) "meso-level", of the "relations between functional roles"; (v) "macro-level" oriented to the understanding of the functioning of whole societies or their

regions; vi) "mega-level" means the level of whole traditions and civilizations; vii) "planetary (or cosmological)", concerning the planet or cosmos as a whole.

To these four planes and seven levels, Bhaskar adds the dimension of "discourse" as "both constitutive of and conditioned (or causally affected) by, and in turn conditioning (or causally affecting), the extra-discursive aspects of social life as unfolded over four-planar and seven-scalar social being."

It is important, therefore, to resume the treatment and understanding of the concept of social sustainability starting from the discourse to the reality that, simultaneously, structures the discourse and is its object, an object to be transformed.

## **8.2 Some rules for structuring the concept of social sustainability**

From all of the above, it follows that the construction of the concept of social sustainability (as indeed of any other concept) is, in itself, a social process and a result of that social process.

In Chapter 5 we started the specific treatment of the concept of social sustainability. After analysing the main themes and some proposals for structuring and operationalization, we identified a 'cloud' with more than 50 themes or sub-concepts that most frequently appear associated with the notion of social sustainability and the attempt to define it, and we started the path for the construction of an alternative proposal for structuring the concept, arranging, provisionally, the themes in three groups, depending on the focus, starting point or perspective, be the individual, social relations, or their relational and holistic articulation. Then, in Chapter 6, the next step was an attempt to de-reify the notion of sustainability, considering it not as a 'thing', but as an activity and a process. This movement of de-reification corresponded, at the level of language, to a passage from the noun *sustainability* to the verb *to sustain*, as an indispensable mediation to bring out 'that' which is the object, the opportunity, the objective of the action of sustaining, supporting, caring, and whose value is such that it defines it as deserving to be sustained, supported, cared for. And we concluded that, in the human and social sphere, this 'it' or 'this' that is important to 'sustain' is the *well-being, living well, the flourishing*, of individuals, of communities, of societies, of humanity.

*Well-being*, living well, *flourishing*, more than other terms or expressions, such as *happiness* or *quality of life*, were then considered the terms that express in the most syncretic, holistic, articulated and procedural way, the substance and objective of social sustainability or, better said, of the process of promoting and implementing socially sustainable actions, situations and structures.

The process of operationalization of the concept of social sustainability then involves the disaggregation, exploration and (re)construction of these terms, which constitute, therefore, the starting point and the end point of the demand for social sustainability.

There is no intention (useless, by the way) of building a closed circuit, but rather an open process, spiralling, to the extent that well-being, living well, flourishing, translate into a permanent process and, as such, always open to other/new forms, understandings, contributions, modes of intervention and actions.

We began, then, in chapter 6, this journey, starting with the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia* and passing through the perspective of Human Rights, the conceptions of the capability approach, and other more de-westernized perspectives such as the Latin American *buen vivir* and the African *ubuntu*, ending with the concept of *dignity* and in the question, posed by Austin (2020), of the possibility of existence of universal values, the foundations of a possible "Universal Declaration of Well-Being".

Chapter 6 concluded, however, with a series of concerns among which the question emerges: if these values, even if they are not universal, are at least persistent, over centuries and millennia, why do they remain unfulfilled aspirations, for the vast majority of humanity, even at the level of the most basic needs?

These concerns forced a new detour along the way to take a critical look at the issues of well-being, living well and flourishing (chapter 7), where we tried, in the first place, to illustrate the maintenance of deep inequalities in the present, as we approach the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Secondly, to clarify the function of utopia as a process of searching for and defining alternative, possible and achievable realities. Thirdly, to make it clear that, in order to achieve utopia, structural obstacles must be overcome. That is why it is not enough to map out desirable futures, it is necessary to act and change, in the present, social practices and transform social structures. This conviction that *in order*

*to achieve sustainable futures it is necessary to make changes in social structures* is one of the central axes of this work.

In this section, we seek to deepen the operationalization of social sustainability as a utopia, as a desirable and possible future, configuring what is intended to be achieved.

To this end, we have established an algorithm to guide us in structuring the concept of social sustainability.

The algorithm includes the following steps, developed in the following sections:

- 1) Starting from the relational whole to the particular: a) Starting from the most concrete concepts (holistic and procedural).
- 2) Starting from the relational whole to the particular: b) De-reify concepts, move from nouns to verbs, focus on relational dynamics.
- 3) Moving from relational processes to individuals. Actualize the reality of the particular (needs, capabilities, human rights).
- 4) Consider structural relationships, beyond behaviours and intentions.
- 5) Articulate structure, culture and agency.
- 6) Define the agency's guiding norms: Principles and objectives for socially sustainable action.

### **8.2.1 Starting from the relational whole to the particular: a) Starting from the most concrete concepts (holistic and procedural)**

In previous sections, we have identified the terms well-being, living well, flourishing, as *those that best express of the 'social that' (individual-collective) that is intended to be sustained* when talking about social sustainability, and we have considered them preferential to other general terms such as quality of life or happiness.

Despite their proximity, these three terms are not, however, used identically in the present work, being understood as emphasizing certain aspects and having increasing degrees of comprehensiveness, scale and totality, as shown in the following table. These are not different stages of the same process, but rather more or less substantive forms that this process can take. Either of these forms is the motivator of utopian action, but it is the *flourishing* that expresses the highest degree of utopia.

**Table 8.1 – The three forms and the utopian dimension of social sustainability**

The Three Forms and the Utopian Dimension of Social Sustainability				
<b>Social sustainability</b> understood as:	<b>Well-being</b>	I - Particular state, at a given moment (actual, receptive, passive)	Motivation for individual and collective action, desideratum, goal to achieve, overcoming absences.	<b>U T O P I A</b>
	<b>Living well</b>	II - Relational state, at a certain moment and at a certain time, articulating past, present and future (dynamic, but circular)		
	<b>Flourishing</b>	Active, permanent and endless (non-teleological, open to possibilities, spiralling) relational process of development, socially and environmentally sustainable, individual-collective (dialectical relationship), unequal and combined (at the level of the individual historical process and the collective historical process) that includes satisfaction and pleasure, excludes suffering, but not 'growing pains', activity, effort, commitment, open to change, but intrinsically integrating solidarity and care (for the Other).		

Social sustainability as **well-being** invokes a particular state of satisfaction (of desires, needs, aspirations), at a given moment, centred on the individual, even if at a supra-individual level. It evokes, however, as Gorsky (2017) puts it, "a passive physical state" or, if we wish, a state of plenitude at rest.

Social sustainability as **living well** is understood here in the sense of *Latin American buen vivir*, analysed in the previous section. The conception of the good is intrinsically relational and well-being is determined by the quality of interrelationships. Social relations, relationships with nature and relations with the spiritual dimension form a totality. The present is deeply connected to the past (ancestors) and future generations. Well-being is not a result, but a way of living, in a non-linear time cycle. A good life consists of coexisting on a continuum of relationships of deep communion with human beings, other living beings, and the natural environment. (Austin, 2020).

This conception, although very close to the notion of flourishing, being active because it is intrinsically relational, evokes, however, a state of stasis configured in a permanent and

eternal balance. The rupture with the linear development of 'developmentalism' translates into an alternative of ahistorical circularity, incompatible with the social (and natural) reality that is intrinsically procedural.

Social sustainability as *flourishing* expresses a sustainable (permanent and endless) process of development, individual and collective, that is unequal and combined – each individual is, existentially, at a certain point/moment/state (age, gender, ethnicity, region, country, geographical location and geopolitics) that is different from all others. The same with every group, class, society. Humanity is the whole, relational, unequal, in the process of equalization of the material conditions of existence, an equalization that, paradoxically, does not normalize, but is a condition, and promotes the liberation, the unfolding, and the differentiation of the potentialities and qualities of individual projects, because it is emancipating and de-alienating, in a context of relations of respect, communion and care among human beings, and respect and care for other living beings and the natural environment. Here, too, the rupture with the linear development of 'developmentalism' is assumed, however, instead of ahistorical circularity, it translates into a spiral, multidimensional, and socially and environmentally sustainable process.

In any of these forms, social sustainability is constituted as a *utopia*, as a motivation for action, as an aspiration, a desideratum, a (mobile) goal to be achieved.

We then return to flourishing as a starting point. As the highest level of social sustainability as a utopia, *flourishing* is thus our starting point for structuring the concept of social sustainability and will be the port of arrival.

It is important to remember, however, that although it is important to know where we want to go and where we want to arrive, the path and the journey are equally or even more important.

### **8.2.2 Moving from the relational whole to the particular: b) De-reify concepts, move from nouns to verbs, focus on relational dynamics**

De-reifying concepts, moving from nouns to verbs, is an operation in the domain of language necessary to reconnect with reality, from an ontological perspective and not just an epistemological one (Elias, 2004, 2011). Social reality is intrinsically relational and

procedural, that is, in permanent change, although, as a structured social reality, the type and scope of changes have different rhythms, times and possibilities.

Shifting the focus to relationality makes it possible to 'evidence evidences' hidden by the reification operated in language and concepts. It also makes it possible to unmask 'absences' (what is missing and we miss is real, because it exists in potentiality, as a possibility, and as such, it can become actual). Unhiding opens the way to de-alienation.

For example: there is no *social inclusion* without social relations that allow for *inclusion*, there is no *social cohesion* without relationships tending to *cohesion*, *cooperation* without *cooperating*, *empowerment* without *empowering*, *dignity* without *dignifying*, *equality* without *equalizing*.

On the other hand, if reality is relational and processual, this implies *human agency*, which, although structured, is not automaton, nor merely instinctive, unconscious/subconscious, determined by *habitus*, but implies reflexivity, purposes, goals, conscious action, interactions, and interventions (Archer 2013, Sayer 2011).

The focus on the relational dimension implies, on the other hand, 'evidencing the evidence' that social relations are not separable from their *value/valorisation*, and that this value/valorisation cannot be measured only quantitatively (number, level, structure of networks of relations), but also qualitatively, i.e., assessing whether such relations allow for *inclusion*, *cohesiveness*, *cooperation*, *empowerment*, *dignify*, *equalize*, *de-alienate*.

The expression of concepts in their verb forms, in the infinitive, allows, in short, to better capture their relational and active dimension, and their horizon of possibilities, possibilities that can materialize in various ways, expressed in the various tenses (present, future, conditional, imperative...).

We can then align, in its verbal form, the main sub-concepts, of a relational type, that make up the concept of social sustainability, as flourishing or the process of flourishing.

**Table 8.2 – Relational type subconcepts**

Relational type subconcepts	
Interact	Treat Fairly
Recognize (the <i>other</i> )	Treat with equity
Dignify, respect (the <i>other</i> )	Build identity(ies)
Cooperate	Empower
Solidarize	Participate, deliberate, decide
Share	Make responsible
Include	Free

Care De-vulnerabilize Cohesion	De-alienate Emancipate
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### **8.2.3 Moving from relational processes to individuals. Actualize the reality of the particular (needs, capabilities, human rights)**

It is from the relational dimension, and not its opposite, that the individual can best be valorised, showing that those who lead the relationships are the individuals, the people (and not disembodied entities such as 'populations') and that it is in the individuals that the quality of the relational structures in which they are inserted and the quality of the relationships in which they are involved and protagonists is expressed, at each moment.

Each individual is, existentially, at a certain point/moment/state (age, gender, ethnicity, country, geopolitical location, etc.) which, as a whole, is unique and different from all others. The same with every group, class, society. Humanity is the unequal whole, and social sustainability is a process of equalization of conditions of existence, an equalization that, paradoxically, does not normalize, but enhances the unfolding and differentiation of individual qualities and projects.

It is from the perspective of the particular, as an expression of the relational universal, that it is possible to express the *actual* needs of people, groups, communities, societies.

*Basic needs* (food, shelter, education, health, security, water and sanitation, a healthy environment), *capabilities* (in Martha Nussbaum's sense) and, in general, all *human rights*, are expressed at the level of people, individuals, their interests and motivations.

But considering these needs and their degree of satisfaction, capacities and rights, cannot be summed up or focused only on the individual. At every moment and in every circumstance, it is necessary to ask and verify not only whether relational structures allow, favor or hinder the satisfaction of needs, the exercise of rights and capacities, and flourishing, but also whether or not people, in certain contexts, in certain places, at certain times, in certain relationships, are in a process of flourishing, and to what extent. And, above all, if they are not, identify the reasons and causes.

In a profoundly unequal world such as ours, these concerns must be directed with greater priority to the most vulnerable.

#### **8.2.4 Consider structural relationships beyond behaviours and intentions**

The previous two steps of the algorithm imply, as it is understood, going beyond dichotomous thinking (individual/society, structure/agency, facts/values).

However, identifying the reasons that lead to or favour situations of social unsustainability also implies a 'regression' to structuring relations, to social structures.

Thus, considering (and valuing) the individual has as a counterpoint the need to go beyond the behaviours and intentions of individuals, reverting to the structures and to the way they determine or influence actions, with the objective of better understanding, on the one hand, the behaviours and intentions and, on the other hand, and concomitantly, identifying and configuring the *absences* and, consequently, the meaning of the agency, and the measures and actions necessary to mitigate, fill, and suppress these *absences*.

It is in this sense that Sayer (2012) develops his critical appraisal of the capability approach, noting that this perspective, while acknowledging that the realization of capabilities depends on complex social processes, is not concerned with the causal factors that lead to capabilities being present or absent in each given situation.

Sayer also criticizes the tendency, on the part of much of political philosophy, to abstract from social structures and relations of domination, and to organize thought around the reduction of reality to individuals, adults, with certain responsibilities, resources, tastes, preferences, and luck, in an apparently unstructured society. Sayer argues, therefore, that, in order to understand whether individuals have certain capabilities, it is not enough to take into account their personal capacities and competences, but also to verify the "external conditions" in which individuals find themselves, that is, the norms, institutions and social structures that configure the context and influence their ideas and actions. In this way, it would be possible to complement the capability approach, as a normative theory, with a perspective that integrates the understanding of the "axes of domination", such as *power* and *social class*, among others (such as *gender relations*, we add) and the understanding of the way in which inequalities, in fact, and in terms of access conditions, are structurally (re)produced.

According to the World Bank (WB, 2021), in 2020, 9.1% of the world's population (more than 700 million people) were below the extreme poverty line (\$1.9/day). About 25%

(almost 1.95 billion) were below the \$3.20 poverty line, and about 40% (more than 3.1 billion) were below the \$5.50 poverty line. Only 15% of these poor lived in high-income countries. These data, like others already dealt with in other sections, reveal a situation of deep inequalities and profound deficiencies in terms of basic needs, which is therefore very far from flourishing.

The understanding of this situation and the ways to overcome it is not only or mainly based on geography, personal characteristics, luck, individual skills, the spirit of initiative and the (so fashionable) entrepreneurship. It is necessary to ask about the structural causes. And to ask for structural causes is to investigate *social structures, institutions, rules, conventions, norms, values, customs, habituation processes (habitus structuring), and social practices* (Fleetwood, 2008).

How does this structural and procedural complex condition, influence, and determine well-being, living well, and flourishing?

The Critique of Marx (Marx, 1976, 1978, 1981; Ollman, 1976; Mandel, 1978; Bensaid, 2002; Harvey, 2011) to the capitalist mode of production remains, in many dimensions, unavoidably actual. The emergence of capital introduces an ontological mutation in socio-economic relations by establishing the primacy of the commodity. The logic of the production of use-values is subordinated to the logic of the production of exchange-values. The main purpose of economic relations becomes the reproduction of capital. At the end of the business cycle we do not find use-value, no quality, we find only abstract, 'anonymous' and quantitative value of money and capital. For capital, any use-value becomes legitimate and capable of legitimation, as long as it enables the reproduction of capital. Any means are good as long as they are submissible and efficient to ensure the final term, monetary and quantitative, of the equation.

This subordination of use values and the submission of moral values to the reproduction of capital necessarily imply transformations not only in economic relations, but in social relations in general, which tend to be reduced to instrumental, quantitative and monetary one-dimensionality.

But if capital, in the form of a commodity, has existed since antiquity, its social hegemony only becomes possible with the penetration into the sphere of production, which has taken

place in the last 250 years. It is from this point of view and from the enormous acceleration of its capacity for reproduction, made possible by the commodification of labour power and the increase in labour productivity in successive technological leaps, that capital (which is not a thing, but a process of social relations) dominates and reconfigures economic relations in the capitalist mode of production, and it penetrates its logic in all spheres of social relations where it structures its hegemony and makes its 'rationality' prevail. The metaphors, so popular, even in scientific circles, of 'natural capital', 'human capital', 'social capital', 'political capital', 'cultural capital', and even 'spiritual capital' are examples of this process, in which everything is valued, materially and ideologically, in terms of capital.

The cycle of reproduction of capital implies an expansive logic that is based on a double movement: the production of commodities, as a means of materialization, incorporation and appropriation of the value created by labour, and competition for markets, since without the consumption of commodities it is not possible to conserve the capital invested and transform surplus value into capital. Cyclical reproduction, on the other hand, requires a permanent expansion of markets and consumption, either by increasing the number of consumers (through geographical expansion and population growth) or by their consumption capacity, or by inducing and creating new needs. On the other hand, the pressure of competition implies a constant increase in labour productivity and the need to develop new products, which drives technological development and the necessary 'integration' of science and its submission to the efficiency and 'performativity' of technologization, as Lyotard (1984) points out.

Finally, this whole process can only be achieved through a constant and increasing consumption of material resources and energy, on the one hand, and an increasing production of emissions and waste, on the other.

This powerful process, which has transformed human history and the face of the earth in a very short space of time, contains, however, in itself, insurmountable contradictions that unleash forces that are less and less controllable, threatening, like *a juggernaut*<sup>10</sup>, to tear everything in its path, as Giddens (1992) points out.

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<sup>10</sup>English term originating in Hindu mythology (*Jaggannath*, one of the names of Krishna, whose image was carried through the streets in a huge car, difficult to control, under which believers threw themselves, being

It is a process that is based, paradoxically, on a rationality that is both narrow and unlimited. Narrow rationality, because it is based on the mere aggregation of the individual options and behaviours of economic agents whose global regulation is left to the 'invisible hand' of the market. The structural consequences of this uncontrolled aggregation are cyclical crises of overproduction, in which value destruction, unemployment, deprivation and hunger are caused by the overabundance of commodities... The rationality of the market is, after all, the ultimate irrationality.

It is also a narrow rationality because, as Max Weber (1990, 1997) has shown, it inverts means and ends. Production and accumulation cease to be means for satisfying human needs, and it is these that become means for the accumulation of capital.

The market does not satisfy needs, it satisfies demand, says Bensaid (2002). Instrumental and formal rationality subordinate substantive rationality. The appropriation of value prevails over values. Social rationality is subjected, and even reduced, to the narrowness of the rationality of capital.

Unlimited rationality, on the other hand, because, as Marx said, capital only recognizes capital itself as its limits. The ultimate goal of the reproduction of capital is an intrinsically unlimited eagerness, it is a perpetual opportunity, the logic of which is based on a conception of unlimited availability of matter and energy, of space and time, for their infinite reproduction. Everything is subject to this logic.

This inversion of means and ends and the assumption of the primacy of the commodity and the reproduction of capital as the ultimate end reconfigure all social relations and reduce the value of the human being to the dimension of *homo oeconomicus*, while at the same time provoking a profound and radical transformation in the relations of human beings with nature.

The alienation of producers in relation to the product (and purpose) of their work constitutes the simultaneously ontological and symbolic dimension of the process of alienation, loss and estrangement, as Erich Fromm (1956, 2010) points out, of human beings in relation to themselves, in relation to others, to nature and to the world. Human

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crushed by their wheels, without the drivers being able to avoid it). It has come to integrate the English language with the meaning of something large and powerful that destroys everything it encounters.

life as a social, economic, cultural, moral and affective totality is disintegrated in the tendency to reduce the human to the economic one-dimensionality of abstract value, materialized in money and affirmed in the material and symbolic manifestations of its possession, according to which everything else tends to lose meaning and be devalued. But the whole 'edifice' of modernity, this whole accelerated and unequal process, like any social process, cannot be maintained without constituting itself in forms of power and domination, and of legitimation.

On the other hand, as O'Connor (1998, p.124) states, "[Marx and Engels] underestimated the extent to which the historical development of capitalism as a mode of production has been based on the exhaustion of resources and degradation of nature.". Martinez-Alier (2002, p.31) points in the same direction: "Although Marx adopted the notion of 'metabolism' (*Stoffwechsel*) to describe human relations with Nature (...) Marxists did not take up the study of human ecology in terms of energy and material flows."

It is a fact that Marx dealt fundamentally with the social limits of the capitalist mode of production, the limits resulting from the contradiction between the relations of production and the productive forces, and did not consider the other limits, even though, unlike those who merely emphasize his Promethean facet, there are several developments in this direction in his work, namely with regard to material exchanges between society and the natural environment, to the "social metabolism", in the context of the analysis of the penetration of capital in agriculture (Marx, 1981, p. 949), but not with regard to energy flows. In this sense, his criticism is incomplete.

How to bridge this *gap*, how to articulate or complement Marx's critique and ecological critique?

O'Connor (1998), drawing on both Marx and Karl Polany, proposes that the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production be complemented by a second contradiction, between productive forces and "conditions of production", thus including both social relations and relations with nature.

Daniel Bensaid, summoning authors such as René Passet, Georgescu-Roegen and Joan Martinez-Alier, refocuses the discussion on the question of the *incommensurability* between economic rationality and ecological rationality: "(...) The sphere of the market

economy is not equivalent to the biosphere: it is only a small bubble whose partial rationality operates to the detriment of the whole" (Bensaid, 2002, p.345).

Referring to René Passet (1979), Bensaid argues that the problem cannot be solved by market reductionism, considering concrete reality and money flows as obeying the same logic and being interchangeable, and therefore it is enough to internalize the social costs of ecological degradation to restore the harmony of market regulation. Just as the reconciliation between the optimisation of the market and the reproduction of the natural environment cannot be made on the basis of a common monetary measure, neither can it be made by considering energy as the common denominator of all commodities, expressing any material value by the amount of energy it contains.

It is, therefore, a monetary incommensurability, but also a physical one, as Martinez-Alier says: "The essential point (...) is that incommensurability applies not only to money value but also to physical reductionism. Can 'biopiracy' be reduced to energy calculations?" (2002, p. 217).

As Passet says:

The economic sphere and the biosphere have never operated according to the same logic and, while this fact could be ignored as long as the first did not threaten the existence of the second, this is no longer the case today. Into natural rhythms occurring and harmonizing over millennia (and sometimes millions of years), economic management introduces the rupture of brief maximizations, a rupture whose effects will only be felt in generations to come. (Passet, 1979 *opud* Bensaid, 2002).

"Capital lives from day to day, on instant gratification, and is reckless of tomorrow" (Bensaid, 2002, p.344). "Long-range forecasting, an economy of non-renewable resources, the definition of a new mode of consumption – these involve an upheaval in the mode of production itself, and are incompatible with the dictatorship of short-term market criteria." (idem, p. 346).

The economy is a part of the totality of social relations and socio-ecological relations. Therefore, the totality cannot be reduced to the logic of one part, all the more so since this logic is one-dimensional and short-term. It is the economy that has to be integrated and relativized in the logics of the totality in which it is inserted.

Commodity commensurability is based on labour time and the short cycles of reproduction of capital. This narrow yardstick does not serve to measure or evaluate the multidimensionality of human life, much less the multidimensionality of the socio-ecological and biophysical totality.

The short-term, the navigation in sight of capital, even when 'endowed' with 'strategic thinking', is incompatible with the integration of the historical temporality of human cultures and with the long rhythms and cycles of nature.

The ecological critique complements the Marxist critique of capital, insofar as it shows that the limits of the productive forces are not only placed in the relations of production, but in the limits imposed by nature itself. As such, if the primacy of capital constitutes both a blind and potentially apocalyptic accelerator of the ecological crisis and a gigantic obstacle to the resolution of that crisis, the overcoming of the capitalist mode of production does not, by itself, solve all problems.

It is necessary to understand, as Bensaïd points out, that the potentially productive forces can be transformed, when considered in another temporal register, into destructive forces. The contradiction between productive forces and relations of production is shifted to the core of the productive forces and calls into question the notions of growth, development and progress.

It is necessary to find a commensurability, a mode of "translation" as Kuhn (1962) would say, between economy and ecology, between society and nature.

Allowing the gap of incommensurability to be dug only favours the laceration between anthropocentrism and biocentrism, and the risk of falling into a naturalistic and anti-humanist or even eco-fascist radicalism.

For Bensaïd, the "critique of political economy" and the "critique of political ecology" can constitute a fruitful relationship starting from different temporalities, a relationship that, in the absence of monetary commensurability, will have to be conceptualized and established on ethical, aesthetic, or simply political bases. A new form of moral or social economy is needed. "Social or moral, this economy cannot be measured in exclusively monetary or energy terms. It endeavours to hold the two ends of the chain through democratic choice" (Bensaïd, 2002, p. 354).

The search for alternative paths to well-being, living well and flourishing cannot, however, be limited to an abstract critique of capitalism. It has to avoid its reification, unilateral determinisms and address concrete reality, in its differentiations, and in its unequal and combined processuality.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Santos, 2018, p 187 et seq.) identifies three structural axes of domination in modernity: capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. Colonialism and patriarchy pre-exist capitalism, but capitalism profoundly reconfigures them by integrating them into its process of domination. Colonialism, in its broad sense, is defined by Santos as a modern Eurocentric mode of domination, based on "ontological deprivation" that is "the refusal to recognize the integral humanity of the other." Colonialism did not end with the end of historical colonialism, it only "changed its form", to the extent that "capitalism can only exercise its domination in conjunction with colonialism". Another Eurocentric mode of domination is patriarchy, which promotes the "devaluation of women's bodies, lives, and social work based on the devaluation of their social being." Capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy take different forms, in space and over time, in a process full of tensions, between modes of domination and within each of them.

David Harvey (2011, p. 139 et seq.) conceives of the "evolutionary trajectory of capitalism" as developing in seven distinct but dynamically interacting "spheres of activity":

- i) "Technologies and organizational forms";
- ii) "Social relations";
- iii) "Institutional and administrative arrangements";
- iv) "Production and work processes";
- v) "Relationships with nature";
- vi) "Reproduction of everyday life and species";
- vii) "Mental conceptions of the world."

According to Harvey, these spheres are interdependent "none dominates", but also "none is determined by all the others", "each sphere evolves by itself, but always in dynamic interaction with the others". "The complex flows of influence that move between spheres are always reshaping them all." These dynamics can be relatively harmonious or deeply tensional, and it is possible to understand crises, "in terms of tensions and antagonisms

that arise between the various spheres of activity". The circulation and accumulation of capital is not possible, according to Harvey, without "touching in one way or another each and every one of these spheres" and "when faced with barriers or limits within a sphere or between spheres, it is necessary to discover ways to circumvent or overcome these difficulties". "Each of the spheres is subject to perpetual renewal and transformation, both in interaction with the others and through an internal dynamic that is always creating novelty in human affairs. The relations between the spheres are not causal, but are dialectically interwoven through the circulation and accumulation of capital." (idem, *ibidem*).

Social processes are therefore neither linear, nor one-dimensional, nor deterministic, nor totally intentional, but neither are they chaotic, nor unstructured, nor devoid of intentionality and rationality.

All of the above is sufficient to illustrate the structural complex in which individuals and social groups move, behave, relate, act and develop.

Once this 'reversal' has been made, it is possible, and necessary, to return to individuals and groups, insofar as they are the ones who, as agents, reproduce and transform structures. It is therefore important to address the relationship between *social structures*, *culture* and *agency*.

### **8.2.5 Structure, culture and agency**

The concepts of structure and agency, and the relationship between them, constitute one of the classic problems of the social sciences and particularly of sociology and a source of diversified and divergent conceptions.

Porpora (1989, p. 195) identifies the following conceptions of *social structure*, defending conception 3 and criticizing the others:

1. *Patterns of aggregate behavior that are stable over time*
2. *Lawlike regularities that govern the behavior of social facts*
3. *Systems of human relations among social positions*
4. *Collective rules and resources that structure behavior*

According to Porpora, the first conception, which he identifies in authors such as George Homans and Randall Collins, "reduces structure to an epiphenomenon of human behaviour

and consequently ignores the independent causal forces inherent in structural systems" (idem, p.209).

For Porpora, the second conception, traditionally associated with Émile Durkheim and, more recently, with Structural Sociology, is "(...) untenable because there is no prospect of finding sufficiently strong regularities to play a role in the covering law model of explanation to which this conception is closely tied" (idem, ibidem). In addition, this model treats social facts as a completely autonomous domain in relation to the psychological level and "without knowing anything about that is going on at the level of the individual actor" (idem, p. 198).

The design of structure as *rules* and *resources* is associated with Anthony Giddens. Porpora considers that Giddens confuses "cultural structuring" with "social structuring", insofar as *rules* and *resources* belong to the sphere of culture, integrate the subjectivity of the actor, and not the sphere of the structure, ontologically independent of the actor "Giddens denies that social relationships themselves have any independent causal properties" (idem, p. 201). Now, while it is acceptable that culture also structures and shapes behaviour, this should not be confused with the more fundamental structuring of behaviour, by social structures, because social relations have objective causal powers that give them "analytical priority of those relationships vis-à-vis intersubjective rules, norms, ideologies, and symbolic orders" (idem, pp. 201-202).

Understanding social structures as *systems of human relations between social positions* is, therefore, the proposed alternative. According to Porpora, this conception fits into the Marxist tradition and the conceptions of the anti-positivist current of the philosophy of science, called realist or critical realism, led by Roy Bhaskar, among others.

From this perspective, the social structure is not conceived as something that operates above human actors, but rather as:

[...] a nexus of connections between them, causally affecting their actions and in turn causally affected by them. The causal effects of the structure on individuals are manifested in certain structured interests, resources, powers, constraints and predicaments that are built into each position by the web of relationships. These [*interests, resources, powers, constraints and predicaments*] comprise the material circumstances in which people must act and which motivate them to act in certain ways. As they do so, they alter the relationships that bind them in both intended e unintended ways. (Idem, p. 200).

The structural motivation of action does not, however, imply determinism, insofar as, although interests always represent presumed motivations for action, actors may not recognize their interests or even act contrary to their interests, even if they recognize them. In addition, even acting according to their interests, the actors always do it in a "creative way".

In short, for this conception,

[...] there is a dialectical causal path that leads from structure to interests to motives to action and finally back to structure. The structural relationships and the various, often conflicting interests they generate are both the material conditions motivating action and the intended and unintended consequences of such action. (Idem, ibidem).

Fleetwood (2007), in a line close to Porpora, introduces a mediation into this scheme, recovering something of Giddens' positions (*rules and resources*), although, unlike Giddens, maintaining the objectivist conception of social structures. From this perspective, social structures, defined as a "lattice-work of internal relations between entities" (idem, p. 259), have causal powers over agents and their practices, not directly, but in a mediated way, influencing and shaping the "institutions" that Fleetwood defines as the set of "rules, conventions, norms, values and customs", institutions that, in turn, cause the "emergence of a *habitus*", that is, in Bourdieu's sense, a system of acquired, lasting dispositions, the product of all biographical experience (explicit or implicit learning), which functions as a system of schemes that generate strategies and ways of being and acting (Bourdieu, 1984). Agency is thus defined indirectly as a function of social structures and directly as a function of the relationship between actors and institutions, through three "main habituation processes: (i) repetition, regularity, routinization and continuity; (ii) reinforcement or incentive and disincentive and (iii) intimacy, familiarity or close proximity". "*Habituation is the process that links institution and agency*" and "the habituation process is *largely unconscious*". (Idem, pp. 259-260).

In this context, how can we understand, then, the relationship between agency and structure, the action of agents on structures? In this relationship there is nothing similar to the habituation processes explained above. "Agents engage with structures by entering into particular relations – relations of class or gender for example". The relationship between agents and structures is conscious: "agents consciously take social structures into consideration when they reflexively deliberate upon some potential course of action". This

reflective deliberation is done through "*internal conversation*", a concept that Fleetwood takes from Margaret Archer. Through *internal conversation*,

[...] agents literally talk to themselves (and sometimes others) about their needs, concerns and the social structures that might constrain or enable them. They then formulate (fallible) courses of action, or agential projects, they think might result in their needs being met and their concerns addressed. This can be summed up by saying that *reflexive deliberation, via the internal conversation is the process that links social structure and agency*. (idem, p. 260).

There is, therefore, a relationship that goes from structure, to institutions, to *habitus*, and to practices, and a retroaction of practices on *habitus*, institutions, and structure. Fleetwood does not explain, however, how all this is processed.

From the perspective of analysing social change, in line with *Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach*, Porpora (2013) takes up and develops the issue of the relationship between structure and agency and the cultural mediation between them.

The definition of structure is specified, corresponding to "the human relations between actors – relations like power, competition, exploitation, and dependency" (idem, p. 27). This structure of relations, which, more precisely, are relations between social positions that the actors occupy, is "objective", "material", "extra-discursive". The structure should not be "conflated" with the cultural dimension which is subjective (and intersubjective), ideal and discursive (although it can be translated into material things). However, although structure and culture are distinct, the relations that constitute social structures can be ontologically objective, when the actors are not aware of the nature of these relations (which can happen in the case of relations of exploitation and dependence, for example), or subjective (and intersubjective) when the actors understand the nature and implications of these relations.

But it is not enough to distinguish between structure and culture, it is also necessary to distinguish between culture and agency. To a certain extent, "culture is what we collectively produce and agency what we individually do with it" (idem, *ibidem*). Language is an emergent cultural phenomenon (with its own specific characteristics), but it is each individual who speaks through a certain language, as a coherent subject and choosing what he wants to say. The importance of the distinction is to prevent the subject from "dissolving" into culture, from being reduced to "ephemeral subjectivity", and to show that "persons are more than just inert occupiers of subject positions, that they possess both

material interests and idealistic convictions and that they act more or less coherently out of both" (idem, p. 28).

What, then, are the place and possibilities of the agency? Porpora evokes Marx's well-known phrase in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, according to which "'men [and women] make their history but not under circumstances of their own making'." Although they are distinct, there is, however, a dialectical relationship between agency and structural and cultural circumstances. "The morphogenetic signifies the understanding that people always act out of structural and cultural circumstances, which their very actions then proceed to modify or sustain". There are, therefore, "dual sources of motivation [for action] i.e., both structural and cultural. Structural motivations derive from the interests built into social positions, and cultural motivations derive from people's value commitments and ultimate concerns". (Idem, ibidem).

While people may act based on their interests, they always do so "in a culturally informed manner". They start from structural and cultural circumstances and, in the course of action, alter or maintain those circumstances. They do not, however, do so in a deterministic way, but in a "creative" way, so agency cannot be understood based on nomothetic laws, as already mentioned above. The morphogenetic perspective thus dialectically articulates structure, culture and agency. To this triad, Porpora suggests adding 'things', both natural and humanly produced, because these things also play a role in social change.

This long incursion into the domains of structure and agency is relevant to the context of the present work, which deals, it should be remembered, with the assessment of the social sustainability of the planned actions (policies, programs, plans, projects). In the assessment processes we are, therefore, in the middle of the field of agency, in which cultural mediation plays a central role, both at the level of the values summoned and mobilized as references for assessment, and because of the importance of discursive mediation (oral and written). This agency, in addition, implies and integrates participatory and deliberative processes, implementation of actions and verification/correction of the results of these same actions.

The incursion made above is also important to understand that human actions, although structured, are not deterministic, one-dimensional, and one-directional, and that, even in

the context of a social system, such as the one in which we live, which tends to reduce human relations to a certain one-dimensionality, unidirectionality, and conformism, there is always a horizon and fields of possibilities, within structural and cultural circumstances, to alternative futures, because social processes are contradictory and dynamic, and utopian projects are intrinsically constitutive of social processes.

Capitalism should not, therefore, be reified or personified as a 'perverse actor', despite all the perversions it originates, but understood as a relational structure in which we all participate, although in very different social positions, contributing in some way to its reproduction, but in which we also have some power to change it, and which is effectively changed every day, as a result of human actions, intentional or unintended, in a process in which conservation and change are dialectically articulated, and in which the potential and factors of change (which exist in the processes of domination themselves) must be adequately valued and promoted, because "it is humans who make their own history", but utopia is only achievable starting from what exists.

In the words of Bhaskar (2010, p. 15), utopia, change, agency, is the "*absenting of absence*", that is, the "rectification of absence (omissions, incompleteness)", the "coming into being of new properties or entities and the passing away from being of previously existing ones". *Absenting of absence* "generates an axiology of freedom conceived as depending upon the absenting of constraints and unwanted and unneeded sources of determination". For Bhaskar, the concept of *absence* is central to the idea of contradiction, as ontological and not just epistemological.

Regarding the contribution of critical thinking to "change the world", Bhaskar states that:

The full development of the theory of explanatory critique understands it as involving a complex of explanatory critique, what I have called concrete utopianism and a theory of transition, in dialectical unity with an emancipatory axiology of transformative practice. In this ensemble, concrete utopianism plays a crucial role. It involves thinking how a situation or the world could be otherwise, with a change in the use of given set of resources or with a different way of acting subject to certain constraints. This mode of thinking forms the basis of an ethics oriented to change, in which we think of alternatives to what is actualized on the basis of given possibilities, possibilities that were actualized in one way, but could be (or might have been) redeployed or actualized in another way. [...]

Radical intellectuals need to show in detail how alternative futures can be coherently grounded in the deep structures of what already exists, of what people already know and have. Without this exercise, they will not be able to make out a persuasive case for change. With it, there may yet be a way in which, combining the realism (not, contra Gramsci, pessimism) of the intellect with optimism of the will, humanity can usher in that future of which the youthful Marx said,

'The world has long since dreamed of something of which it needs only to become conscious for it to possess it in reality'. Bhaskar (idem, pp. 22-23).

### **8.2.6 Define the agency's guiding norms: *principles and objectives* for socially sustainable action**

It is time, then, to take the last step of the algorithm, returning to the theme of social sustainability understood as the process of caring and human flourishing, starting from what exists, as Bhaskar says, and taking into account everything that has been said and written in the previous sections of this work.

In the assessment processes we are in the middle of the agency's field. The path taken so far has been an exercise in reflexivity in which we have sought to identify and rationalize, albeit in a limited way, what Porpora calls "structural and cultural circumstances" in which the utopian desideratum of social sustainability as flourishing must know how to situate itself and in which it has its starting point.

If we understand the assessment processes, in this case the assessment of social sustainability, as a critical form of agency, then we have to take a final step, which consists of configuring the guiding values of action, an action that is intended to have a transformative effect on cultural and structural circumstances and progress towards social sustainability as a *flourishing and care process*.

This last step focuses, then, on the *principles and objectives* that define *commitments to values*, principles and objectives *that guide action*, and that must underlie any development process and, concomitantly, the assessment of the social sustainability of that development and the actions that configure and materialize it.

The following table proposes a set of principles of social sustainability and related objectives that constitute the guiding matrix of the social sustainability assessment processes that will be addressed in Part III of this work.

From this matrix of sustainability principles and objectives, the criteria for evaluating the social sustainability of the planned actions will then be defined and operationalized.

As it could not be otherwise, the matrix of principles and objectives presented below, configures a proposal permanently open to evolution and transformation.

**Table 8.3 – Principles and objectives of social sustainability**

Principles of social sustainability	Social sustainability goals
Human flourishing is the structuring principle of human societies	Promoting human flourishing
Human flourishing is constructed as a social process, in a dialectical relationship between the individual and relational dimensions	To promote human flourishing, at the individual and relational level, collectively.
Flourishing is a process of recognition and dignification of the <i>Other</i>	<p>Promote the recognition of the other as <i>Other</i>, endowed with personality, dignity, identity and rights.</p> <p>Promote understanding and respect for identity(ies).</p> <p>Promote intercultural dialogue.</p> <p>Promote socio-culturally inclusive and responsible interrelationships.</p>
Flourishing is a relational process of <i>caring</i> .	<p>Identify vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Promote inclusions (affective, cognitive, physical, economic, social, cultural).</p>
<p>Flourishing entails:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The recognition, respect and exercise of <i>human rights</i>;</li> <li>- The satisfaction of basic needs</li> <li>- Development of <i>fundamental capabilities</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>Promote intercultural dialogue on conceptions of human dignity and human rights.</p> <p>Promote and ensure respect for and the exercise of human rights.</p> <p>Promote the satisfaction of basic needs</p> <p>Promote the development of fundamental <i>capabilities</i> (<i>Martha Nussbaum's capabilities</i>).</p>
Human flourishing implies the recognition that the production (relations) of material life (economy and technology) is a means to satisfy human needs, respecting the limits imposed by nature.	<p>To put people at the centre and as the ultimate goal of development processes.</p> <p>Promote the orientation of the economy towards solving the problems and needs of people and communities and not towards obtaining profit (decommodifying social relations).</p> <p>Respect the limits imposed by nature.</p>
<p>Communities, societies and the globalized world constitute configurations intrinsically structured by relations of interdependence and power.</p> <p>The world of modernity is structured by strongly asymmetrical power relations, relations of domination and exploitation (class, gender, age, ethnic-cultural, (neo)colonial).</p> <p>The process of flourishing requires the recognition/unveiling, identification and overcoming of relations of domination and exploitation.</p>	<p>Promote the appreciation of work.</p> <p>Promote and ensure respect for workers' rights and the strengthening of their representative organizations.</p> <p>Promote and ensure respect for women's rights and promote their empowerment.</p> <p>Promote and ensure respect for the rights of children and the elderly.</p> <p>Promote and ensure respect for the rights of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples.</p> <p>To promote and ensure respect for the rights of peoples to self-determination.</p> <p>Promote processes of participation, inclusive and effective expression, discussion and democratic deliberation in all spheres of social life.</p>

Principles of social sustainability	Social sustainability goals
<p>In a world where inequalities (of power, of empowerment, of resources and access to resources) are deep, and diversity (of gender, age, ethnic, cultural, geographic) must be valued, the flourishing process understands human development as unequal and combined. Each person, community, people, starts from a position that is unequal and different.</p> <p>Inequality must be overcome, difference must be valued.</p> <p>Equity is not mere equality of opportunity; it implies considering differences, inequalities and, particularly, vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>Ensure equity, not only as equal opportunities, but taking into account real inequalities and asymmetries, between social positions and between individuals.</p> <p>Promote the overcoming of inequalities and asymmetries.</p> <p>Promote the empowerment of individuals.</p> <p>Promote individual and social inclusion, based on respect and appreciation of diversity(ies) and difference(s)</p> <p>Compensate for vulnerabilities.</p>
<p>In a profoundly unequal world, human flourishing implies the transformation and graduation of networks of interdependence to an <i>emerging</i> level of community networks, organized, based on relationships of solidarity, mutual help, care, expression of cultural and social values, creativity, participation, democratic deliberation, and empowerment.</p>	<p>Promote the structuring of organized community networks, relationships of solidarity, mutual help, and care.</p> <p>Promote the dignity of the Other.</p> <p>Promote the empowerment of people and communities for democratic participation, discussion and deliberation, on community life and intervention in public life.</p> <p>Promote the expression of social and cultural values, the expression of identities.</p> <p>Promote the expression of minorities, give voice to vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Promote creativity.</p> <p>Promote community vitality.</p> <p>Promote shared accountability.</p>
<p>The process of human flourishing is built by human agency sustained by critical reflexivity, practical reason, and democratic deliberation.</p>	<p>Promote critical reflexivity, awareness, autonomy.</p> <p>Promote the construction of the ethical values of sustainability and promote the agency in accordance with these values.</p> <p>Promote critical assessment (preventive, ongoing and consecutive) of the impacts of human actions on people, communities and the biophysical environment.</p> <p>Promote democratic participation and deliberation in all spheres of society.</p>
<p>Social relations materialize in the territory. Human flourishing implies the recognition and respect for territorial identities, feelings of belonging, and the symbolic enhancement of the territory.</p>	<p>Promote respect for territorial identities, feelings of belonging and the symbolic and affective enhancement of the territory.</p> <p>Ensure the protection of customary rights over land.</p> <p>Ensure the protection of territories with cultural and spiritual value for communities.</p> <p>To value traditional knowledge about the territories to which they belong.</p> <p>Promote territorial cohesion, through participatory processes.</p>

Principles of social sustainability	Social sustainability goals
<p>Social relations are mediated by relations with nature and relations with nature are mediated by social relations.</p> <p>Social relations materialize in the uses and transformation of the territory.</p> <p>Human flourishing implies the understanding that the construction of socially sustainable relationships implies sustainable relationships with nature and a sustainable use of the territory.</p>	<p>To promote critical assessment (preventive, <i>ongoing</i> and consecutive) of the impacts of human actions on the biophysical environment.</p> <p>Preserve the integrity of ecological systems and their life-support functions and their resilience.</p> <p>Reduce the use of natural resources and energy, avoid or minimize the emission of pollutants and the production of waste.</p> <p>Promote and ensure a planned and sustainable use of the territory.</p> <p>Promote the protection of communities against natural hazards.</p> <p>Promote the development of adaptive capacity and resilience, based on the principles of social sustainability.</p>
<p>Human flourishing implies decolonized International Relations, based on solidarity, respect for human rights, mutual respect, reciprocity, justice, socio-environmental sustainability.</p>	<p>Promote peaceful international relations.</p> <p>Promote international relations based on solidarity, respect for human rights, mutual respect, reciprocity, justice.</p> <p>Promote policies, objectives and actions towards socio-environmental sustainability.</p>
<p>Human flourishing is a permanent movement to update utopia</p>	<p>Starting from reality (actual and potential) and, in each concrete context, establish a transition program between the actual and utopia.</p>

## **PART III – ASSESSING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**



## 9. Assess the social sustainability of planned actions

In Part I of this work we analysed, from a critical perspective, the notions of sustainable development and sustainability, in general, both in their dominant conceptions and in some alternative conceptions.

In Part II, without losing the general perspective of socio-environmental sustainability, we focused the analysis on the notion of social sustainability, the specific object of this work, seeking, on the one hand, to understand how it emerged within the scope of the problematics of sustainability and sustainable development and, on the other hand, how the themes it mobilizes also emerged within the scope of other fields, more or less close or confluent. Then, we started a quest in search of an understanding of the meaning of the notion of *social sustainability*. Several proposals for the definition and operationalization of the notion were analysed, as well as other proposals that, although not directly related to social sustainability, actually address its problematics. From the analyses and discussions developed, from a critical perspective, a proposal for the conception of *social sustainability as a relational process of human flourishing* and as *a process of caring* resulted, necessarily comprising an actual dimension and a utopian dimension. This proposal was configured in a set of *principles of social sustainability* and a set of *social sustainability objectives*, resulting from those principles. This set of principles and objectives, presented as an open proposal, seeks to integrate and express the articulation of the *individual* and *relational*, *structure* and *agency*, *objective* and *subjective* dimensions. This set of principles and objectives, of an ethical nature, constitutes, consequently, a matrix basis for the normative orientation of practical action and, concomitantly, a *reference of values* for the *assessment of the social sustainability of the planned actions*, the specific object of this work.

This assessment and its processuality are the subject of this Part III. Starting from that reference of values, and as already mentioned in previous sections, it is important that each planned action, each policy, each plan, each programme, each project, be questioned in order to obtain an answer to the following questions:

- Does it contribute to the achievement of social sustainability objectives? In what way? To what extent? Is such a contribution sufficient or should it be deepened and amplified?

- If it doesn't contribute, what is the reason or reasons for this to happen? What needs to be changed? What needs to be done?

This naturally implies operationalizing the principles and objectives of social sustainability in *assessment criteria*, and, as far as possible, in *indicators*. On the other hand, it is important to discuss and define the *configuration of the assessment processes, as social processes*.

This general perspective of environmental and social assessment based on sustainability principles and objectives is nothing new and is a common practice in institutionalised assessment processes, such as strategic environmental assessment, and is at the heart of the perspectives that have emerged in this first quarter of the 21st century and which advocate *sustainability assessment* as the third generation of assessment processes, succeeding the oldest and most consolidated *environmental and social impact assessment*, and the already institutionalized *strategic environmental assessment*.

This work is part of this general context of environmental and social assessments and, particularly, in the context of the emergence of *sustainability assessment*. The contribution it intends to make is mainly in terms of the content and objectives of the assessment of the social dimension of sustainability, integrating the sustainability principles and objectives indicated at the end of Part II.

To make this contribution concrete, various aspects and themes are dealt with in the following chapters and sections. Chapter 10 is dedicated to the identification of the context in which this work is inserted (within the scope of assessment), starting with a general perspective of the emergence of several generations of environmental and social assessment, followed by a more detailed analysis of the perspective of *sustainability assessment*, in which are addressed some of the main aspects, proposals, difficulties and problems faced by this latest generation of environmental and social assessment processes.

At the end of chapter 10 and still from a contextual perspective, additional considerations are developed on the assessment processes, namely on assessment and values, assessment as a social process and assessment as a methodology, aspects that are dealt with in a more operative way in chapter 11.

Chapter 11 proposes a contribution to the frameworks for assessing social sustainability and their operationalization. As a proposal, it is one of many other possible proposals and, as a contribution, it was built, to a large extent, integrating elements of other existing proposals, seeking to add something else, from a critical perspective of human flourishing. After reposing the starting questions that motivate the assessment of social sustainability and discussing the legitimacy of its application, it reflects on the more general configuration of the assessment processes, structured in two levels of analysis and action, interconnected but distinct, which reflect the dual nature of participatory assessment processes: that of an instrument of analysis and assessment, and that of social process.

The analysis then focuses on the aspects that constitute the main motivation of the present work: the analytical framework, the dimensions, sub-dimensions and criteria of social sustainability that guide the assessment, seeking to operationalize, at the level and scales of the assessment of the social sustainability of projects, the principles and objectives of sustainability identified and proposed in Part II. Part III concludes with a reference to other moments and aspects of the assessment process that were not the subject of further study, such as the issue of indicators, the analysis of cumulative effects and the monitoring of processes.

## **10. Emergence and development of environmental and social assessment processes**

### **10.1 Overview**

The environmental impact assessment processes, whose institutionalization began in the 1970s, would register their main normative change with the adoption, at international level, of sustainable development as a central objective, following the Brundtland Report in 1987 and the Rio Summit of 1992, which led to a reorientation of the assessment processes that began to consider sustainable development as their main objective (Cashmore and Kjørnø, 2013).

The Brundtland Report and its subsequent operationalization in Agenda 21, approved at the Rio Summit, introduced three major dimensions of orientation and structuring of assessment practices.

An onto-epistemological dimension, embodied in the metaphor of the three pillars of sustainability, considering the ecological, economic and social components as interconnected and interdeterminant. Among these interdeterminations, the limits placed on economic growth by biophysical systems are recognized, which result from the fact that the capacity of biophysical systems to absorb the effects of human actions is limited.

An ethical-normative (but also political) dimension, consigning a set of values that function, simultaneously as guiding principles for action and as objectives to be ensured: intra- and inter-generational equity, justice, participation, gender equality, common but differentiated responsibilities (Baker, 2006), but also, and more broadly, the satisfaction of human needs, in particular the essential needs of the poorest, which must be given priority (WCED, 1991).

These two dimensions, which structure the notion of 'sustainability', define the guiding parameters of the third, development: "socio-economic development objectives have to be defined in terms of sustainability" (WCED, 1991:54). In other words, economic development must be defined in such a way as to respect the limits placed by biophysical and ecological systems, and to provide for the satisfaction of human needs, ensuring equity, justice, participation, gender equality, differentiated responsibility.

It is, therefore, a framework of analysis and action that defends and advocates the conciliation between economic growth, environmental preservation and social justice, hence its wide popularity and acceptance. Problems arise when one seeks to operationalize this framework, explore and articulate the various dimensions, define concrete objectives, develop actions and evaluate results. Complexities, contradictions, insufficiencies and ambiguities emerge in all dimensions, opening up several lines of research, debate and fracture, in a progressive process of search for clarification.

The integration of the sustainability perspective in environmental assessment processes has brought a double tension to its interior. On the one hand, raising the bar of assessments by placing objectives of an ethical-normative nature as a target to be pursued. On the other hand, introducing uncertainties and a 'procedural tension' due to the diversity of perspectives, interpretations and re-elaborations of the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development, at each moment and over time. It is, however, a creative tension, driven by a progressive demand for clarification of concepts and operationalization of frameworks.

In the field of environmental assessments, this dynamic process has had an impact on the emergence and development of three generations of assessment frameworks, in which sustainability objectives occupy an increasing place and importance: the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Sustainability Assessment (SA).

The EIA, emerging in the 1970s in the USA, quickly spread its implementation and institutionalization, constituting today a consolidated instrument worldwide (in Portugal it is institutionalized in 1990). Mainly concerned with mitigating the environmental impacts of projects, EIA is a preventive instrument, but also a reactive one (Pope et al, 2004) and integrates the principles of sustainability more as a general reference than in an effective and operative way. This does not mean, however, that EIA practices cannot (and should) be improved by increasing sustainability vectors in the assessment process (Weaver et al., 2008).

SEA, dedicated to the strategic assessment of plans and programmes, and not projects, emerged in the 1990s and has also been the object of increasing institutionalisation (in

Portugal it is institutionalised in 2007). Analysing SEA practices, Pope et al (2004:599-600) distinguish between two ways of conducting an SEA: "*EIA-driven*" and "*objectives-led*". The first form follows the logic of the EIA, transposed to the assessment of the impacts of policies, plans and programs. The second form of SEA expressly and more proactively integrates sustainability objectives and criteria into its assessment processes.

SA is an emerging field that is still being defined and structured and has been asserting itself in the last decade and a half, under the name of *sustainability assessment* (Pope et al., 2004, 2005; Gibson, 2005, 2006; Bond et al., 2013; Pope et al. 2017), with some forms of institutionalization already taking place, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries (Canada, Australia, England). The emergence of SA is motivated by the realization that, in a context in which the trends of socio-ecological unsustainability of human action continue to worsen in a progressively shorter time horizon, making their reversal increasingly urgent, it is not enough to mitigate negative environmental effects, it is necessary to develop assessment and decision-making processes that ensure that the planned actions are effectively sustainable. Giving full precedence to the principles of sustainability and advocating net gains in any of the pillars of sustainability (ecological, economic and social), refusing *trade-offs* that imply significant losses in any of them, in SA, the assessment of sustainability is not only implicit, nor is it one dimension among others, but constitutes the heart of the assessment.

However, EIA, SEA and SA should not be considered as strictly alternative or successive forms or frameworks of assessment, because some of them have different scopes and objects, but rather as different and gradual ways of responding to the challenges of sustainability and incorporating sustainability principles into environmental and social assessment processes.

Finally, it is also important to mention that the forms of sustainability assessment are not limited to the environmental assessment processes. Many other forms have been developed in the business world, in international trade institutions, in urban development, in rural development, and in other contexts.

## 10.2 Sustainability assessment<sup>11</sup>

### 10.2.1 A field in structuring

Designated as the third generation of impact assessment (Sadler, 1999), Sustainability Assessment has emerged over the last 15-25 years as a stand-alone form of assessment.

If considered as "Any process that guides decision-making towards sustainability" (Bond and Morrison-Saunders, 2011), we are faced with a procedural instrument that has as its potential application horizon the universe of human decision-making, from policies, plans, programs, and projects, to the simple choices of daily life (Bond et al, 2012).

In other words, the scope of sustainability assessment would not only be transversal to the actions traditionally covered by the impact assessment, including the assessment of projects, but could also be applicable to all types of decision-making, whether in the context of national policies, international relations, economic and financial guidelines, business and organisational decisions, and even individual decisions.

Understood in this way, the processes of definition, operationalization and application of global and integrated references, capable of impregnating human actions and guiding all decisions towards sustainability are, after all, processes of progressive construction of utopia, in the sense in which this term is used in the present work.

Analysing the works of some of the authors who have focused the most on the problem of SA (Bond *et al.*, 2012, 2013; Gibson, 2005, 2006, 2013; Weaver et al, 2008; Pope et al, 2004; Bond and Morrison-Saunders, 2009; Therivel et al, 2009; Pope et al. 2017), we can extract a set of statements that allow us to summarize the evolution and timing of SA:

- In the last 15 years, interest in SA has increased significantly, translating into an exponential increase in publications on the subject and the number of references on the web.
- However, a universal consensus has not yet been reached on what SA is and how it should be implemented.
- The concept of sustainability is normative and cannot be defined in a single and categorical way, so defining what constitutes sustainability, in the context of a given

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<sup>11</sup> This analysis is extensively based on another work by the author of this doctoral thesis (Martins, 2014).

sustainability assessment process, has to be determined on a case-by-case basis (Bond et al, 2012).

- SA is at an early stage of development, in which practices are adapting to new situations and contexts and have not yet reached a level where methodologies have proven to work well (Bond et al, 2012).
- The cases of institutionalization of SA are still very limited (England, Western Australia, South Africa and Canada) and have several types of limitations. In some cases, they occur on a voluntary basis (Western Australia) or exist as processes whose formal name is not sustainability assessment (Canada, South Africa). In others, they vary widely from region to region and from project to project (Canada), or the institutional context and practices limit effective contributions to sustainability (England).
- Despite differences and divergences regarding the meaning and definition of 'sustainability' and 'sustainability assessment', there is an emerging consensus on what needs to be done to move in the desired direction (Gibson, 2005, 2006, 2013).

This set of statements is illustrative of the limitations and uncertainties, but also of the expectations, of a field in structuring, in which an interesting and stimulating effort of synthesis and consensus has been developed, well expressed in the collective work *Sustainability Assessment, Pluralism, Practice and Progress* (Bond et al., eds., 2013).

In this work, we seek to identify the structuring characteristics of Sustainability Assessment, which resulted from the developments, in theory and practice, that have occurred in recent years, as well as to identify the challenges and deal with the main obstacles that arise in the development of the field.

### **10.2.2 Assess impacts and assess sustainability. Differences in perspective, sustainability imperatives and objectives, and operational issues**

The need for Sustainability Assessment results from two central findings. First of all, the observation that, despite the progressive institutionalization of policies and processes of environmental assessment and management, the trends of socio-ecological unsustainability of human action continue to worsen, in a progressively shorter time horizon, making their reversal increasingly urgent; thus, for SA it is not enough to mitigate negative environmental effects, it is necessary to develop assessment and decision-making

processes that ensure that development actions are effectively sustainable. On the other hand, the realization that, in order to achieve effective advances towards sustainability, it is necessary to overcome ways of thinking and acting that have proven to be insufficient or inadequate, namely, to deal with complexity. Hence the need to consider the deep interconnections between ecological, social and economic factors, between the various spatial and temporal scales, the complexity of social processes, the determination of power relations and their rationalities, the specificity of contexts and the consequent plurality of interests, perspectives and forms of social construction of reality.

In this perspective, several authors propose a structure for the sustainability assessment process (Gibson, 2013, Bond *et al.*, 2013) which articulates a set of sustainability principles and imperatives with various effectiveness criteria, as indicated in the following tables.

**Table 10.1 – Sustainability imperatives**

Sustainability imperatives	Definition
Reversing unsustainability trends	SA aspires to reverse the prevailing trends towards growing unsustainability. To this end, it insists that all projects, plans, programmes and policies must make positive contributions to sustainability. Mitigating is not enough; it is necessary to reverse unsustainability.
Integration of factors affecting sustainability	The SA should ensure an integrated consideration of the factors and dimensions that affect the prospects for a desirable and sustainable future, and that are effectively interlinked.
Seeking mutual gains between the various dimensions	SA must be a vehicle to highlight the interdependence between ecology, economy and society, and to find ways to achieve simultaneous and synergistic gains in all three dimensions, in order to generate virtuous cycles that counteract the vicious cycles of unsustainability.
Minimize <i>trade-offs</i>	The SA should seek to minimize <i>trade-off</i> <sup>12</sup> situations. It is not a question of counterbalancing ecology, economy and society as competing priorities.
Respect the contexts in which SA is applied	The SA shall ensure in all cases that the general sustainability requirements are respected. But it must also, in each assessment process, respect the particularities of the context and specify the concrete criteria for assessments and decision-making, in the light of the aspirations and key issues, capacities and concerns of the people and places involved.
The assessment process should be open and broadly participatory	SA should be, as far as possible, an open and broadly participatory process. On the one hand, because it is not a mere technical exercise, but a question of public choices between options and objectives for a sustainable future. On the other hand, because the goal of sustainability goes beyond the capacities of governments and markets and requires the active involvement of citizens and civil society organizations.

Source: Gibson (2005, 2006, 2013); Bond *et al.* (2013)

<sup>12</sup> *Trade-off* does not have a satisfactory equivalent in Portuguese. It means putting two things in a situation of opposition, implying that the choice for one is always made to the detriment of the other.

It is not enough, however, to define sustainability imperatives, it is necessary to ensure their effective application, so the SA must implement a set of criteria that ensure the effectiveness of its practice.

**Table 10.2 –SA effectiveness criteria**

Effectiveness criteria	Definition
Procedural	It verifies the extent to which sustainability assessment processes are in line with institutionalised procedures and <i>standards</i> , both at the level of legislative and regulatory provisions and at the level of good practice.
Substantive	It verifies to what extent SA effectively contributes to changing processes, actions or results.
Transactive	It verifies to what extent (and by whom) the results of SA processes are considered to justify the time and costs involved.
Normative	It checks how and to what extent SA processes follow defined <i>sustainability imperatives</i> (see Table 10.1).
Pluralism	It checks the extent to which affected parties and stakeholders are involved in the assessment process and are satisfied with this process.
Knowledge / learning	It examines how, and to what extent, the SA process facilitates instrumental learning (which leads to policy changes in order to achieve objectives more efficiently) and conceptual learning (which leads to changes in beliefs and thus in the ways of designing policies and the means to deliver them) by those involved.

Source: Bond *et al.* (2012, 2013)

This set of imperatives and criteria, and their articulation, (re)poses a whole series of complicated questions and problems, whose in-depth treatment goes beyond the limits of this work. However, it is important to touch on some of the most essential issues, namely:

- Integrated approach;
- Management of *trade-offs*;
- The issue of pluralism.

(i) Integrated approach

The integrated and articulated approach between factors or dimensions translates into at least three strands, which are themselves interconnected:

- The integration/articulation between dimensions or 'pillars' (ecological, social, economic, and others that can be defined);
- The integration/articulation between spatial scales;
- The integration/articulation between time scales.

### *The Integration/articulation between dimensions or 'pillars'*

This is an old and recurring problem in the field of environmental problematics that remains open.

Among the models of representation of reality as a set of relatively differentiated, but interconnected and interdeterminant dynamic systems, the metaphor of the three pillars of sustainability (ecological, social and economic) became popular and became the most common form of representation, namely from the 1992 Rio conference, where the two 'pillars' of the Brundtland Report (environment and development) became three, by the unfolding of development in the economic and social dimensions.

This representation has been the subject of several variants, in which the metaphor of the pillars is replaced by the image consisting of circles, with the same or different dimension, which intersect, or concentric circles or overlapping oval shapes, with different dimensions. The discussion around the adequacy of these representations is inconclusive. Its functional usefulness is underlined, but its theoretical consistency is questioned (Litig and Grießler, 2005), namely in relation to the lack of basis for the definition of three pillars or circles and not four (including the institutional), five (including the cultural and institutional) or more (political, aesthetic, religious-spiritual).

In this regard, Pope *et al.* (2004) and Gibson (2005, 2012), among others, argue that the conception of sustainability based on the metaphor of pillars or the image of circles or ovals, whether two, three, five or more, helped to underline the fact that there are several factors that intersect and relate. However, such partitioning turns out to be a source of problems because it tends to emphasize potentially competing interests more than the interrelationships and interdependencies between dimensions, making integration tasks more difficult and promoting *trade-offs*. It is also harmful because it tends to perpetuate fragmentation between fields, disciplines and assessment perspectives, which is counterproductive. Once reality is integrated, the global systems that need to be sustained are not just ecosystems, they are socio-ecological systems. Sustainable development should aspire to preserve and consolidate socio-ecological systems, from the family level to the global levels, so that they are dynamic, adaptable, satisfactory, resilient and therefore durable.

Sustainability assessment should therefore move away from the pillar perspective and focus on problems and aspirations that transcend social/economic/ecological boundaries. In this sense, Pope *et al.* and Gibson advocate an alternative approach to the integration between dimensions in the assessment of sustainability, based on a set of established bottom-up sustainability principles, expressing the main concerns and objectives that emerged from the ecological, social and economic dimensions, and not *top-down*, from each of the dimensions.

Such criteria therefore seek to avoid potential fault lines between pillars or dimensions, starting from what must be achieved and the type of actions that must be developed in order to move consistently towards sustainability.

The general, integrated sustainability principles or criteria defined by Gibson (2005, 2006, 2013) are indicated in the following table.

**Table 10.3 – Integrated sustainability principles**

<b>Sustainability principles</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Socio-ecological system integrity	Build human-ecological relations that establish and maintain the long-term integrity of socio-biophysical systems and protect the irreplaceable life-support functions upon which human as well as ecological wellbeing depends.
Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity	Ensure that everyone and every community has enough for a decent life and opportunities to seek improvements in ways that do not compromise future generations' possibilities for sufficiency and opportunity.
Intragenerational equity	Ensure that sufficiency and effective choices for all are pursued in ways that reduce dangerous gaps in sufficiency and opportunity (and health, security, social recognition, political influence, etc.) between the rich and the poor.
Intergenerational equity	Favour present options and actions that are most likely to preserve or enhance the opportunities and capabilities of future generations to live sustainably.
Resource maintenance and efficiency	Provide a larger base for ensuring sustainable livelihoods for all while reducing threats to the long-term integrity of socio-ecological systems by reducing extractive damage, avoiding waste and cutting overall material and energy use per unit of benefit.
Socio-ecological civility and democratic governance	Build the capacity, motivation and habitual inclination of individuals, communities and other collective decision-making bodies to apply sustainability principles through more open and better informed deliberations, greater attention to foster reciprocal awareness and collective responsibility, and the more integrated use of administrative, market, customary, collective and personal decision-making practices.
Precaution and adaptation	Respect uncertainty, avoid even poorly understood risks of serious or irreversible damage to the foundations of sustainability, plan to learn, design for surprise and manage for adaptation.
Immediate and long term-integration	Attempt to meet all requirements for sustainability together as a set of interdependent factors, seeking mutually supportive benefits.

Source: Gibson (2005, 2006, 2013)

These principles define the general orientation of assessment. In the assessment of specific cases, it will be necessary to identify the interlinkages that occur and the potential chains of effects in the various dimensions, depending on each individual case and its context.

This is a problem that has not yet been object of consensus, as illustrated by the fact that, in the aforementioned synthesis work (Bond *et al.* eds., 2013), there are different conceptions, namely in Gibson (2013) and Stoegleher and Neugebauer (2013).

The approach analysed above circumvents the problem of fractionation, and contributes to some functional operability, but does not solve the fundamental problem that remains open.

An integrated approach also seems to us to imply a prior deconstruction of the metaphor of the three pillars (see the critical discussion on the subject in section 2.2.3 of this work), above all by de-reifying the economy as a 'pillar' or autonomous sphere, and by bringing it back to a particular form of social relations and relations between society and nature, that is, of *social relations of production of material life*. Put back in its 'place' in the historical form of social relations and the relationship between society and nature, its current configuration is no longer reified and considered as an eternal and 'natural' form, as natural as nature itself, but as a provisional and historically determined form.

In this sense, social sustainability (which includes the economy) is at the heart of socio-environmental sustainability.

On the other hand, the social dimensions considered in Table 10.3 ("existence of necessary conditions for subsistence and opportunities", "intragenerational equity", "intergenerational equity", and "socio-ecological civility and democratic governance") are very limited, in light of the principles and objectives of social sustainability, considered in Part II of this work.

#### *The integration/articulation between spatial scales*

Taking into account the issue of scales is essential for any assessment process and is crucial for SA.

The problem of scales has to do with the way in which interconnections and interactions are processed throughout the territory, that is, with the breadth covered by the processes

and their results. But this breadth is not limited to the notion of 'scale-size'. It also encompasses the notions of 'scale-level' and 'scale-relationship' (Howitt, 2013).

If what is at stake are complex and interactive socio-ecological systems, then the notion of scale is not limited only to ecological or sociological differences between spaces or landscapes, but above all to differences and variations at the level of ecosystems, and economic, social and political systems. In other words, the notion of scale is not strictly spatial, but integrates the notions of ecological, economic, political, social, and cultural scale, because all these dimensions are structured in terms of scale.

Nor is it just a quantitative notion, in the sense that situations on a global scale are larger than on a local scale, but qualitative, both in the sense that the results of interconnections and interactions take on new qualities and complexity, emerging at broader scales, and in the opposite direction in which there are specificities at smaller or localized scales. or even single factors that must be taken into account. It is also qualitative to the extent that, in the social dimension, there are cultural differences and differences in the construction, interpretation and valuation of reality.

Of course, it is not enough to take into account the different scales. It is essential to consider how interconnections and interdeterminations are processed between different scales, how processes at more global scales have repercussions locally, and how processes at more localized scales have repercussions at more global scales, considering the interconnection between spatial, social, and ecological scales.

In the context of the analysis of social systems, these issues have been expressed around notions such as the unintended results of action, or the relations between individual and society, local identities, among others.

Once again, it emerges from this discussion that it is not easy to face complexity, let alone operationalize ways to deal with it.

However, it is essential for the SA that these issues are raised and worked on in the assessment processes, even if the solutions found are not fully satisfactory or uncertain. These questions are not only, or primarily, of a technical or methodological nature, but also of a political and normative nature.

As Howitt (2013) points out, in the assessment of sustainability, both at the practice and regulatory level, it is necessary to define the nature and factors of change, at a whole series of spatial scales and social and ecological differences, so decision-making processes must take into account, in a transparent way, data that allow interconnections to be established at (and in) different scales, namely in terms of vulnerabilities, resilience, availability, accessibility, among other factors.

Dividing a project into two or three sections or two or three areas/parts, to circumvent regulatory and legal limits of institutionalized assessment processes, or to apparently reduce the magnitude of impacts is, for example, an attitude that is at the opposite of the sustainability perspective.

#### *The integration/articulation between time scales*

The issue of time scales is, as is well known, at the heart of the definition of sustainable development, particularly around references to the preservation of resources and intergenerational equity.

But, where and how to trace the time horizon of an assessment process?

The tendency to reduce time horizons is mainly based on the argument of great difficulty or impossibility of predicting the evolution of complex systems. If this predictability is difficult in biophysical systems, it becomes more complicated in socioeconomic and sociocultural systems. In this way, extending the time horizon only adds uncertainty, and consequently a greater consumption of time and resources, and may even jeopardize the project or action in question.

While acknowledging these difficulties, the SA particularly insists on the need to extend the assessment as far as possible on the time scale, as something fundamental to ensure the sustainability of human actions.

Assessment processes must therefore ensure a serious effort, even if merely qualitative, to project potential future configurations. This implies, on the one hand, articulation between temporal and spatial scales. And, on the other hand, considering that what is at stake are always processes, it is important to take into account the *past factor*, not only in the sense of learning from cases that have occurred, but also from the history of the processes themselves and the trends expressed therein.

Two needs are inherent and concomitant with this effort. The first is a serious analysis of cumulative effects. The second is the unavoidability of subsequent processes of permanent monitoring of actions.

Finally, the temporal dimension also summons the temporality of the action itself under assessment, for example, in the case of projects, its entire life cycle, from conception to deactivation. All moments of the life cycle should be subject to a continuous and coherent assessment process, that is, without continuity solutions, without fragmentation, methodological and evaluative incoherence, contrary to what usually happens with institutionalized environmental and social impact assessment processes.

## ii) Management of trade-offs

The second major issue that emerges with SA is the centrality of *trade-off management* (Gibson 2005, 2006, 2013, Bond *et al*, 2012).

For SA, sustainability principles and criteria must be considered as a whole, but each of them is crucial, so making progress towards sustainability requires that each and every one of them be respected.

That is, if the objective is to obtain gains in all 'pillars' or, at least, to ensure that there are no losses in any of them, then it is not allowed to counterbalance very positive effects in one of the dimensions with significant negative effects in another dimension.

But if there can be a conflict between the sustainability objectives themselves, namely between ecological objectives, on the one hand, and social and economic objectives on the other, and if it is practically impossible for any action not to have negative effects, how to proceed, how to define the limits of what is acceptable?

Firstly, by tackling these problems within the assessment process itself. *Trade-offs* have to do with choices. Traditional forms of assessment allow choices to be made by decision-makers, at the approval stage and sometimes in the secrecy of the offices.

In the assessment of sustainability, the choices must have as a horizon the optimization of the achievement of sustainable results. In this sense, rules must be defined that ensure the sustainability of the choices.

Gibson (2005, 2006) proposes the adoption of a set of basic rules for managing *trade-offs* (Table 10.4).

**Table 10.4 – Rules for the management of *trade-offs***

<b>Rules</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Maximum net gains	Any acceptable trade-off or set of trade-offs must deliver net progress towards meeting the requirements for sustainability; it must seek mutually reinforcing cumulative and lasting contributions and must favour achievements of the most positive feasible overall results, while avoiding significant adverse effects.
Burden of argument on trade-off proponent	Trade-off compromises that involve acceptance of adverse effects in sustainability-related areas are undesirable unless proven (or reasonably established) otherwise; the burden of justification falls on the proponent of the trade-off.
Avoidance of significant adverse effects	No trade-off that involves a significant adverse effect on any of sustainability requirement area can be justified unless the alternative is acceptance of a more significant adverse effect.
Protection of the future	No displacement of a significant adverse effect from the present to the future can be justified unless the alternative is displacement of an even more significant negative effect from the present to the future.
Explicit justification	All trade-offs must be accompanied by an explicit justification, based on openly identified, context specific priorities as well as sustainability decision criteria and the general trade-off rules.
Open process	Proposed compromises and trade-offs must be addressed and justified through processes that include effective and open stakeholder involvement. While the involvement of experts and the application of technical tools can be very helpful, the decisions to be made are essentially and unavoidably values-laden and a public role is crucial.

Source: Gibson (2005, 2006)

### iii) The question of pluralism

The notion of pluralism is central to the assessment of sustainability, as a processuality and as an expression of its essence. It is not only a matter of recognising their importance, but above all of their integration as an essential aspect of the practice(s).

Pluralism is about the different interpretations that exist on a number of key issues related to the results of sustainability assessment (Bond et al., 2013).

But talking about results implies talking about notions, conceptions and processes. It implies concomitantly talking about values, interests and power(s). In this way, the question of pluralism itself arises in a plurality of dimensions.

First of all, because the concept of sustainability is the object of a plurality of conceptions and definitions. This is a very broad notion, encompassing ecological, economic and social dimensions, where different individuals and groups have different conceptions of the relative importance of these dimensions and the issues that arise in them (Pope and Morrison-Saunders, 2013).

Subsequently, as this is a field still under construction, there are also different conceptions of what sustainability assessment is or should be as a tool to support decision-making.

But the issue of pluralism is of full importance in terms of the development of sustainability assessment practice. Assessing whether a given action is more or less sustainable implies that there is a definition of sustainability criteria that is consensual, taking into account the characteristics of the specific contexts and the diversity of worldviews, values and interests of the affected and interested parties.

In this way, the first concern and need is to enable all this diversity to emerge and have expression, taking into account the differences in economic, political, social and cultural capital, and the differentiations of power that result from it. It is well known how many so-called participatory processes end up being determined by those who have more power and exclude or diminish the participation and effective expression of those who have less economic, political, social or cultural capital, including the ability to express and communicate. Ensuring pluralism implies, therefore, open, broadly participatory processes, in which information flows are clear and effective, and communication flows are established in both directions. It implies, concomitantly, the need for and capacity for conflict management (O'Faircheallaigh and Howitt, 2013).

It is in participatory processes that the recognition of the other, as *Other*, endowed with rights and responsibilities, assumes its maximum expression. In these processes, technical communication or science-based information is not enough. It is necessary to take into account the different values involved, the different ways of constructing reality and the diversity of expectations that result from it.

But it is also necessary that participatory processes be configured in such a way as to have an effective influence on decision-making. Sustainability assessment aims for decision-making processes to result in sustainable solutions, on a basis of broad consensus, although not optimal or universal, and not for such processes to translate into a balance between winners and losers (O'Faircheallaigh and Howitt, 2013).

Finally, pluralism also has an important aspect of the knowledge and learning process, in a double dimension. On the one hand, in the sense that the involvement of the public contributes to the understanding of the specificities, needs and priorities inherent to each

context and, consequently, to the specification of the general sustainability criteria according to that context. On the other hand, from a broader and more constructive perspective, in the sense of a continuous and growing appropriation and absorption of the sustainability perspective by all those involved.

### **10.3 Some additional considerations on the assessment processes**

To complement the contextual analysis developed in this chapter, it is also important to preliminarily address three aspects: assessment and values, assessment as a social process and the confrontation with complexity, and assessment as a methodology.

#### **10.3.1 Evaluate, Evaluation, Values**

"Evaluation is the systematic assessment of an object's merit [intrinsic value], worth [extrinsic value], probity, feasibility, safety, significance and/or equity" (Stufflebeam and Corin, 2014:11-12).

"To evaluate is always to compare with a model – to measure – and implies an operative purpose that aims to correct or improve. The standard or model from which it is evaluated is, ultimately, a reference value that, in a planning situation, is generally fixed, from the diagnosis of the initial situation, in the objectives and goals set." (Guerra, 2000:185).

These references highlight some relevant aspects of the evaluation/assessment processes. To evaluate is to formulate a judgment about something, based on certain reference values. Evaluation is therefore something that is in the realm of values. However, evaluation is also a process of systematic determination (implying, therefore, a set of rationally established procedures) of the contexts, characteristics, actions and effects of the object (thing, action, process) of the evaluation.

#### **10.3.2 Assessment as a social process and complexity**

With reference to the field of environmental and social assessments, assessment is, therefore, a *process* in which facts that configure a given planned action (policy, plan, program, project) are determined (identified, analysed, characterized) in their respective context, which will be submitted to assessment, based on a reference of values, in order to guide (or provide guidance) for certain decision-making in relation to that planned action.

It is important to highlight some aspects of this process, which is unavoidably complex. From the outset, it is a social process, as it couldn't help being. In this process, the value references play a decisive role. The role of 'normal' science is at the level of fact-finding, but the attribution of values and decision-making are in the realms of ethics and politics. Assessment processes place other limitations on the action of 'normal' science. They require answers, sometimes urgent, with limited resources, space and time, sometimes with insufficient baseline data, in relation to facts that often require foresight, including situations of great uncertainty, and in relation to objects of analysis that have to be understood in a holistic and integrated perspective, at different spatial and temporal scales, and in contexts of complex causality.

The prominence of value references in assessment processes raises, in turn, several questions. What kind of values are included in the benchmark? Who defines these values? The promoters, the experts, the decision-makers, the affected public and the interested parties?

These questions directly introduce the problem of technocratic or participatory conceptions of assessments, and the rationalities that underlie them. Who participates? What is the scope and extent of this involvement? How to deal with the dimension of power relations and hegemony? How to ensure the effective expression of differences, diversity of values and interests? Is participation limited to the expression of opinions or does it intervene in the very construction of references of values, and even in the determination of the facts to be evaluated (local, traditional, common knowledge)? Does it cover determining solutions to identified problems? Does it extend to decision-making? Who decides? With what legitimacy?

### **10.3.3 Assessment as a methodology – preliminary approximation**

Based on the previous discussion, it is now important to direct attention to the challenges and tasks that we face if we intend to evaluate from a sustainability perspective.

From the outset, it is important to highlight a basic consequence of the normative component of sustainability. If sustainability has a positive value, if it is something for which we must strive, if it is a fundamental objective that must guide human actions, if the

meaning of *orientation* is at the heart of sustainability, then the promotion of sustainability and the assessment of sustainability are no more than two sides of the same coin.

Assessing the sustainability of a certain action, a certain project, for example, is not only verifying whether, and to what extent, the effects it produces contribute or not to the sustainability of the 'environment'. Much more than that, it is about verifying whether the project *promotes* sustainability (since sustainability is something we must strive for).

Now, for a given project to promote sustainability, it must be conceived, configured and implemented with this objective in mind. At the same time, sustainability assessment does not focus only on the final effects of a project, but focuses on the project itself, starts at the moment of conception and continues throughout the entire life cycle, as already mentioned. There are no continuity solutions between *ex-ante*, *on-going* and *ex-post* assessment. These are successive moments in a continuous process during which it is verified whether a certain project and the actions inherent to it are configured and developed appropriately, in order to achieve the sustainability objectives.

It is not just about identifying and mitigating or enhancing impacts whose significance (value) is determined at the end. It is about integrating sustainability objectives (values) *ab initio* into the design of the project and evaluating it accordingly. Hence, assessment must be present from the earliest stages of project design.

From a sustainability perspective, the merit or intrinsic value of a project lies not only in its ability and efficiency to carry out the functions for which it was technically designed (establishing and enabling communications, producing electricity, extracting natural resources or others), but also in the way it integrates and implements certain sustainability principles.

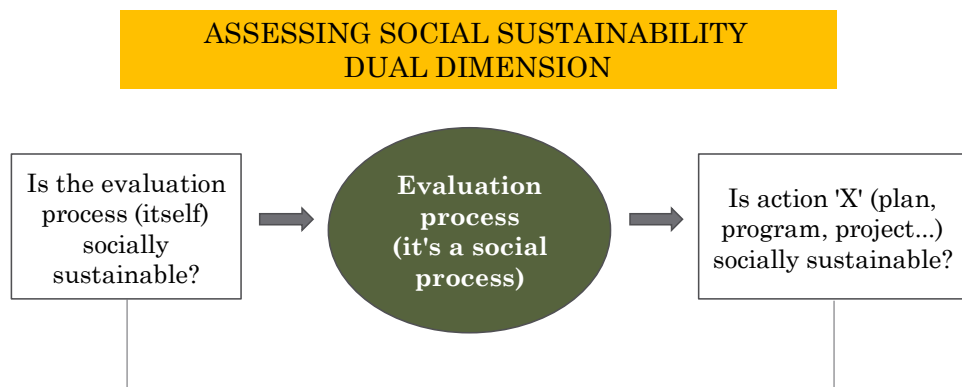
Before discussing the practical implications of this perspective, namely in terms of the operationalisation of assessment (aspects dealt with in the next chapter), it is important to draw attention to another implication of the sustainability perspective in assessments.

Any assessment, institutionalized or informal, constitutes a process, which takes place in a specific space and time. Being carried out by people in interaction, it is, of course, a social process, structured by certain rules, where different agents, interests, values, objectives, power and influence relations confront and articulate.

However, a sustainability assessment process, in addition to the objectives of an evaluative nature (verifying whether a given action is sustainable), cannot fail to constitute, in itself, a sustainable process. As it is a social process, it must then be a *socially sustainable process*, that is, it must be configured and carried out in accordance with the principles and objectives of sustainability.

This dual dimension of environmental and social assessments in general and social sustainability assessment in particular is represented in Figure 10.1.

**Figure 10.1 – Dual dimension of social sustainability assessment**



What does it mean to say that an assessment process must be socially sustainable? It means that it must be designed, developed and implemented based on certain principles of *social sustainability*. It should be participatory, fair, equitable, allow and reflect the expression of diverse interests, and take into account vulnerabilities, opinions and ways of thinking, throughout the assessment process.

It is now important to reflect on the practical consequences and ways of operationalizing sustainability assessment.

## 11. Contributions to a social sustainability assessment framework

### 11.1 Introduction

In this section, a framework for assessing social sustainability is presented and discussed, as a proposal for an analytical framework and methodological structure for analysis and intervention, oriented towards assessment.

As a proposal, it is assumed as one of many other possible ones and, as a contribution, it is built, to a large extent, by integrating elements of other existing proposals, seeking to add something more, in a perspective of human flourishing, as extensively discussed in parts I and II of this work.

After restate the starting questions that motivate the assessment of social sustainability and discussing the legitimacy of their application to any type of project, we begin by reflecting on the more general configuration of the assessment processes, structured in two levels of analysis and action, interconnected but distinct, which reflect the dual nature of participatory assessment processes: that of instrument of analysis and assessment, and that of social process.

At the first level, which has been called the *conceptual level*, there are analytical, scientific and technical requirements, but also of an ethical-normative type.

The second level, which is *emergent* in relation to the first, configures a social process of communication, discussion and deliberation, structured by interests, values and powers, to which are placed demands of representativeness, information/communication, expressiveness, commensurability between forms and ways of thinking and knowing, and democratic deliberation. This process is commonly referred to as public participation or involvement of affected and interested parties. In the present work, using the concept of *figurations* by Norbert Elias (Elias, 2011; Dunning and Hugues, 2013), it was preferred to be called *the configurational level*, in order to highlight the characteristics of a structured process, in which the interdependencies and interactions between people or groups, which result in the course of action, are governed by asymmetrical relations of power(s) (social, economic, cultural, political), in a flexible interweaving of tensions.

The identification and recognition of these asymmetries, their logics and the constraints they introduce into these processes is essential so that the interaction between people and groups is as balanced as possible and that consensus and agreements can result from it. Considering the complexity of the themes, the limits of a doctoral thesis and the specific objectives of the present work, the *configurational level* was not the object of deepening. The central theme of this chapter is, therefore, the *conceptual level*, that is, the level at which, in the position and perspective of the evaluator, the process of knowledge about the reality in which the project will be inserted and which will change is structured, the level at which are structured the assessment criteria that make it possible to determine the positive value, negative or neutral of the actions assessed, from a social sustainability perspective, the level at which actions are proposed and established to ensure and/or promote social sustainability. In short, the level at which the methodology for analysing and assessing the social sustainability of projects is configured and implemented, from the evaluator's perspective.

In this context, bearing in mind and integrating elements of the methodological processes of other forms of social and environmental assessment, such as environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, some considerations are made about the strategic perspective in sustainability assessment, some of the main differences between social sustainability assessment and social impact assessment are mentioned, the main moments of the methodological process are indicated, the issue of assessment throughout the life cycle of the projects is addressed.

As repeatedly mentioned, the object of institutionalised social sustainability assessment (and sustainability in general) is planned actions, whether public or private, whether they are policies, plans, programmes or projects.

For any of these types of action, it is possible to operationalize a framework for assessing social sustainability, but this operationalization has specific requirements for each of them, depending on the objectives and, above all, the scale of intervention, therefore, the scale of analysis.

Accordingly, the sustainability principles and objectives set out at the end of Part II, and the considerations and reflections made in sections 11.2 and 11.3 below, apply to policies,

plans, programmes or projects. However, the reflection on its operationalization, made in section 11.4 et seq., is directed only to projects, since, as mentioned, its application to policies, programmes and plans would have to be operationalized differently, depending on the scale and specific characteristics of these planning instruments.

The analysis then focuses on the aspects that constitute the main motivation of Part III of this work: the analytical framework, the dimensions, sub-dimensions and criteria of social sustainability that guide the assessment, seeking to operationalize, at the level and scales of the assessment of the social sustainability of projects, the principles and objectives of sustainability with which Part II was concluded.

The chapter concludes with a reference to other moments and aspects of the assessment process that are not subject to further study, such as the issue of indicators, the analysis of cumulative effects and the monitoring of processes.

### **11.2 Preliminary discussion: Restate the starting questions of social sustainability assessment and discuss its legitimacy**

As previously mentioned, the starting question or questions of social sustainability assessment of the planned actions translate into an interpellation of each planned action, of each policy, plan, programme, project, in order to obtain an answer to the following questions:

- Does the planned action under assessment contribute to the achievement of social sustainability objectives? In what way? To what extent? Is such a contribution sufficient or should it be deepened and amplified?
- If it doesn't contribute, what is the reason or reasons for this to happen? What needs to be changed? What needs to be done?

The legitimacy of these questions rests on the assumption that human well-being and flourishing is an ethical imperative of human societies, as discussed and established in previous sections, particularly in Part II.

It can be argued, however, that human well-being and flourishing are objectives that fit within the obligations and assumptions of intervention of public initiative actions, but not necessarily in private initiative actions, insofar as, in a market economy, private projects have as their main objective the reproduction of invested capital, the remuneration of

investors, shareholders and other holders of capital, without whom the economy would not function, there would be no investment, no creation of wealth and employment, in short, no economic growth and development. In other words, if human well-being and flourishing could or should be the purpose of projects of public interest and initiative, this design would not apply or, at most, would only apply in a secondary or limited way, to private initiative projects in which the logic and principle of remuneration of invested capital and its cyclical reproduction are prevailing.

We therefore find again the clash of rationalities that has been present throughout this work, between a substantive rationality that places human well-being at the centre of concerns and a formal rationality centred on the logic of the market.

This clash of rationalities which, as already analysed, is at the heart of the problem of sustainable development (and at the heart of the problem of Western modernity itself), could not fail to arise also at the level of sustainability assessment, whether it is a question of assessing social sustainability or, more broadly, assessing socio-environmental sustainability.

We are not going to take up this discussion again, but we are going to raise this issue again only to affirm the assumption that, if we accept the principle set out in the Brundtland Report, according to which "The goals of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries - developed or developing, market-oriented or centrally planned (...)" (WCED, 1987, p.41), then, the assessment of the social (and environmental) sustainability of projects is legitimate both at the level of public projects and private initiative projects, whether or not they are officially considered (by governments) to be of public interest.

The perspective of social sustainability understood as human flourishing, being emancipatory, presupposes the primacy of human well-being and not the primacy of the perspective of profit legitimized by the possession of capital (in its various forms).

From this perspective, no action or project with a public impact (on a larger or smaller scale), whether public or private, can exempt itself from an assessment of its social sustainability or, in other words, of its contribution to human well-being and flourishing.

It is important and fair, in fact, to underline that this theme of contributing to human well-being and social development has been integrated, albeit in a limited, contradictory way and, sometimes, only for image or marketing purposes, in the principles and practices of companies and business organizations, on a national and international scale, within the scope of policies and practices with various names, but more often called *Corporate Social Responsibility*, which aims at social responsibility not only internally (in relation to employees), but also externally both in the relationship with business partners and in relation to the communities in which they operate<sup>13</sup>. This is not, however, the subject of the present work.

Finally, it is also important to note that the international financial institutions themselves (see, for example, the signatory institutions of the *Equator Principles*) and the banks and international cooperation and development agencies (for example, the World Bank Group) advocate and require the assessment of the environmental and social sustainability of private projects financed by them.

### **11.3 General Configuration of the assessment framework**

#### **11.3.1 Initial Note**

As already mentioned, it is intended to contribute to the structuring of a social sustainability assessment framework that responds to various requirements and characteristics, agreed upon in the field of sustainability assessment (see chapter 10, see Bond et al, 2013):

- A framework applicable throughout the entire project life cycle;
- A structured and coherent procedural framework;
- A guiding and proactive framework and not just reactive;
- A framework that, although focused on assessment, also constitutes a process of learning and promoting social sustainability and sustainability in general;
- A participatory framework.

It is a very broad and complex set of topics that cannot be treated in its entirety and in depth in a single doctoral thesis.

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<sup>13</sup> The literature on this theme is growing and abundant. See, for example, Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2014, Chapter 10, for an overview of the topic.

Within the scope of the specific limits and objectives of this work, **the focus** is on issues related to the **definition and application, in the assessment, of the social sustainability criteria**, following the principles and objectives of social sustainability identified in Part II. However, and because this dimension cannot be properly understood in isolation from the others, a more general approach will also be made to other dimensions of the assessment process, in order to obtain an overall perspective.

### 11.3.2 Overview of assessment processes - levels of analysis and intervention

The configuration of any participatory assessment framework implies considering, from the outset, two levels of analysis and the respective integration problems (Figure 11.1).

These issues are common to assessment processes that imply the involvement of affected and interested parties and what is said below is only intended to formalise and outline some of the main issues involved, as they also apply to the assessment of social sustainability.

As already mentioned in chapter 10, a participatory assessment framework incorporates a double dimension:

- i) An assessment instrument and
- ii) A social process.

**Figure 11.1 – Levels of integration and analysis**

## Social sustainability assessment

- TWO LEVELS OF INTEGRATION
- DOUBLE LEVEL OF ANALYSIS



These two dimensions are inseparable but have qualitatively different requirements. As *an instrument of analysis and assessment*, it places demands for:

- a) Expert, analytical, scientific and technical type;
- b) Ethical-normative type.

As a *social process*, it places demands on:

- a) Consideration of the legal and regulatory frameworks applicable to the process;
- b) Representation and representativeness of the interested and affected parties;
- c) Identification and management of powers, subalternities and vulnerabilities;
- d) Communication and, consequently, translation and commensurability between knowledge and technical-scientific language and knowledge and common language;
- e) Confrontation of ideas, perspectives, interests;
- f) Democratic deliberation.

From the perspective of the evaluator or assessment team (whatever their position at the configurational level represented in Figure 11.3), this double dimension implies two levels of analysis and action, which we call *conceptual* and *configurational*, and which are discussed below.

#### **11.3.2.1 Conceptual level**

This level incorporates and seeks to articulate a scientific or technical-scientific dimension and an ethical and normative dimension.

The conceptual level is the level at which the process of knowledge about the reality in which the project will be inserted and which will change is structured. From this perspective, it is a level of action of a scientific or technical-scientific type, with the concomitant requirements of an expert nature. In the context of social sustainability assessment, this level can call upon expert knowledge from several (or all) disciplines of the social sciences and even from other disciplines.

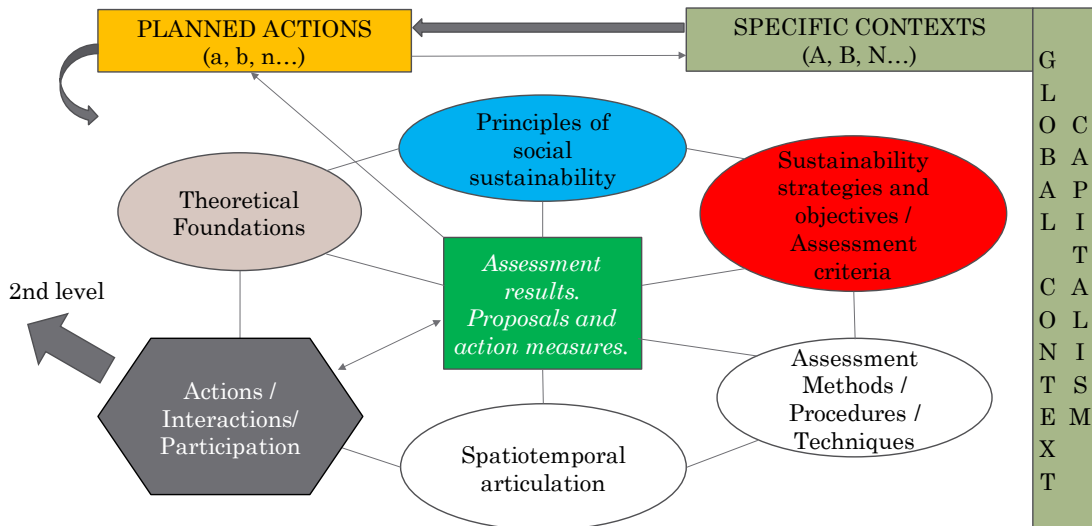
But this is also the level at which the assessment criteria are structured that make it possible to determine the positive, negative or neutral value of the evaluated actions, from a perspective of social sustainability. On this basis, the conceptual level is also ethical in nature.

Finally, depending on the results of the assessments, actions are proposed and established in order to ensure and/or promote social sustainability. From this perspective, the conceptual level is ethical-normative.

Figure 11.2 is an attempt to schematize the complexity involved at the conceptual level.

**Figure 11.2 – 1st Level of Assessment – Conceptual Level**

**Social Sustainability Assessment Framework (1st level)**



The figure should be read as follows: (i) Considering certain actions (a, b, n), to be evaluated (ii) in the respective global context (globalized capitalism) and (iii) in the respective specific contexts (geographical, political, social, cultural, institutional, legal), the assessment of the social sustainability of these actions is carried out based on (iv) principles, strategies, objectives and criteria of social sustainability, structured by theoretical foundations, (v) operationalized through assessment methods, procedures and techniques, (vi) considering the relevant spatio-temporal scales, and (vii) the involvement and interaction with the affected and interested parties, leading to (viii) certain assessment results and (ix) consequent proposals for action in order to ensure and/or promote the sustainability of the actions evaluated and their effects in the respective contexts.

This process is not, however, a closed loop with a single cycle. It is an iterative process either for internal reasons at the conceptual level (iteration as one of the means of dealing with complexity) or for 'external' reasons resulting from the interconnection with the configurational level. In other words, the assessment process itself, and the respective

results and proposals, have to be submitted to public discussion, involving interested parties and all those affected, and be consensual and validated there. Public discussion processes at the configurational level may result in new data, elements, information, demands, and proposals for action that act back on the conceptual level, requiring new iteration cycle(s) (see Figure 11.3).

#### **11.3.2.2 Configurational Level**

It is at the configurational level that assessment *emerges* as a social process in all its dimension, as a process of interaction, although limited in time, space and scope.

Before analysing this level in more detail, it is important to clarify the concepts of *level* and *configuration*, adopted here.

The concept of *level* is adapted from the philosophical current of critical realism. This current conceives of social reality and the world in general as ontologically stratified into levels or scales, in which each level is irreducible to the most basic level, insofar as it has *emergent properties* and *causal powers* that make it qualitatively distinct and irreducible to the level from which it emerges (Bhaskar, 2010; Sayer, 2010). It is in this sense that the powers or vulnerabilities of a community cannot be reduced to a mere sum of the powers and vulnerabilities of each of the individuals who constitute it.

In the case of participatory assessments, the configurational level, being plural, representative and intrinsically interactive, implies the confrontation between a potential plurality of worldviews, rationalities, knowledge systems, social positions, interests, values and truths (Elling, 2008), which make it qualitatively different and irreducible at the conceptual level, and with *causal powers* which may condition and/or lead to conclusions and decisions different from those defined at the conceptual level. Thus, for example, if at the conceptual level scientific or technical-scientific knowledge predominates, at the configurational level this type of knowledge has to confront and relate to common knowledge and common sense.

The concept of *configuration* is adapted from Norbert Elias' concept of *figurations*, understood as webs of functional interdependencies between people, governed by asymmetrical relations of power(s), in a flexible weaving of tensions, forming dynamic and

changeable patterns, whose course results from the actions of interdependent individuals (Elias, 2011; Dunning and Hugues, 2013).

Figure 11.3 seeks to outline the configurational level of the assessment processes.

This level is configured as a structured network of interactions and interdependencies between the various actors and agents interested in or affected by the actions whose sustainability is being assessed. The *configuration* is determined by the *contexts* (geographical, political, social, cultural, institutional, legal) in which it is structured.

The main actors and agents are the *promoter* of the action under assessment, the *evaluator* (or assessment team), the *public authority* that regulates and supervises the assessment process, and the *persons, groups, communities* affected by and/or interested in the action. Where the assessment process is not within the scope of legally institutionalised processes, the *public authority* is not included.

Among these agents and actors, and within each of them, there is a diversity of social positions and asymmetries of power (economic, political, social, cultural) that condition and determine: a) the type of interaction that is established, b) the course of the process and c) the results/decisions that are reached (Guerra, 2006). The identification and recognition of these asymmetries, their logics and the constraints they introduce into these processes is essential so that the interaction between people and groups is as balanced as possible and that consensus and agreements can result from it.

In this interaction, different conceptions of the world, values, rationalities are faced and, as previously mentioned, different ways of understanding and developing assessment at the conceptual level are faced.

The fact that there is an actor or agent with the pre-defined and official role of evaluator not only does not prevent, but does not exempt, the other actors and agents from developing and applying, in whole or in part, their own frameworks, principles, methods, forms and assessment criteria, which may result in different and even opposing conclusions and proposals for action.

In other words, each of the actors or agents makes or can make, to a greater or lesser extent, with greater or lesser expertise and depth, with a greater or lesser volume of resources, its own assessment of the actions of the project in question.

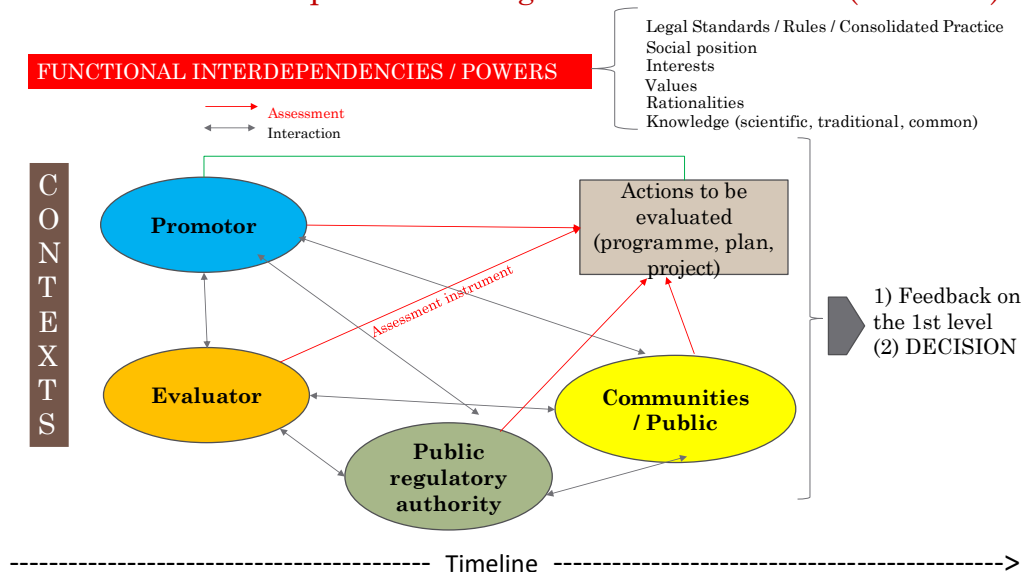
The result is a 'confrontation of truths', although always marked by power relations, which can result in total or partial consensus, or disagreement, divergence, and contestation (social, political).

This 'confrontation' is more productive when there is a consensus on assessment methodologies among the various actors, which is not easy to achieve. At the very least, it is important that the various methodologies can be commensurable.

The result of this 'confrontation' can give rise to feedback on the conceptual level, leading to new cycles of assessment that, in turn, feed back into new cycles of deliberation at the configurational level, until the process is closed with the final decision on the action under assessment, by those who have the legal legitimacy to do so, usually the regulatory public authority and the political power that supervises it, in cases where the assessments fall within legally institutionalized and regulated processes. Both formalised processes and assessment processes of a less formal nature (from the point of view of legal requirements and regulations) can (and often are) concluded with agreements between the promoter and the affected or interested persons and communities. Agreement forms like the *Social License to Operate* and the *Impact and Benefits Agreements*, currently with increasing application in terms of the social impact assessment of projects, are an expression of these situations (Vanclay et al, 2015, Jijelava, 2019, Cascadden et al, 2021), although with limitations (Cameron and Levitan, 2014).

**Figure 11.3 – 2nd Assessment Level – Configurational Level**

**Assessment/ social process/ configurational framework (2nd level)**



There is, therefore, an iterative articulation between the conceptual level and the configurational level, and iterations, ideally, should only end after a consensus has been reached, since the final result of the assessment, in terms of decision-making, is always played at the configurational level, with the last word (decision) being the responsibility of the entity or entities that have the power and legitimacy to decide.

If the decision-making power is generally enshrined in the legislative and regulatory body applicable to the process and, ultimately, generally belongs to the political power, the legitimacy of the decision does not result only from the formal legitimacy inherent to the representativeness of the decision-making entity (elected government, for example) (Elling, 2008). Legitimacy is also played out at the discursive level, in the aforementioned confrontation of truths, in the argumentation presented by the various parties, and it is played out in the legitimacy and credibility of the knowledge produced to support the reasons adduced in the discourse, whether this knowledge is of a technical-scientific nature, or of a traditional nature or based on common sense.

Following Boaventura Sousa Santos (2018, 2020), we can say that what is at stake is also a confrontation between epistemologies and their respective political, social and cultural legitimacy.

Institutionalized public consultation processes are part of this general typification. This is the case, as an example among others, of the Environmental Impact Assessment which, in Portugal, is regulated by Decree-Law No. 151-B/2013, in its current version. However, as with the EIA process in Portugal, institutionalised public consultation processes are generally a legal-regulatory moment in the much broader process of involving interested and affected parties, and are generally very limited, especially in terms of time, but also in the extent of participation, procedural content and interaction between the parties.

What matters most is not the formal structure. From a social sustainability perspective, what is at stake is to ensure that these processes are socially sustainable and take place as such, and to identify and apply the requirements that they must meet for this to happen. In this global context, the physical and discursive representativeness of those who have less power, the vulnerable and the subaltern is of particular and crucial importance.

On the other hand, the construction of consensus implies the creation and timely implementation (as soon as possible and always before the conflicting positions become radicalized or extreme) of conditions of interaction and constructive dialogue between the parties involved that allow the identification and management of differences and conflicts, the identification and discussion of alternatives and the promotion of common solutions, even if partial (Vasconcelos et al, 2012).

Another crucial aspect, in a context always marked by power asymmetries (political, social and cultural), is the conditions, capacity and possibility of those affected, especially the most vulnerable, to influence decision-making (Pope and Morrison-Saunders, 2013; O'Faircheallaigh and Howitt, 2013).

In the following table, we indicate some of the main principles and requirements, based on the abundant literature currently available on the processes of *involvement of affected and interested parties*, a designation that, although limited, better expresses what is at stake than expressions such as *public consultation* or *public participation*.

The main principles, currently widely consensual, are presented, including integrating the best assessment practices of United Nations agencies, as well as international financial institutions for multilateral cooperation and development, such as the World Bank and the European Investment Bank, among others.

As with other principles, guidelines, safeguards and other normative documents, the main problem lies in their effective implementation, which generally falls far short of what the principles and requirements establish.

**Table 11.1 – Involvement of interested and affected parties**

Dimensions	Principles and requirements for socially sustainable involvement of interested and affected parties
Times and moments	Interested and affected parties' engagement should be carried out throughout the entire project lifecycle, from design to decommissioning (EIB, 2020; WB, 2017; Vanclay et al, 2015; ADB, 2012a).
Provision of information	Promoters must make available to interested and affected parties all relevant information about the projects, in a timely, transparent, accessible and understandable manner (WB, 2017; Vanclay et al, 2015; ADB, 2012a; IFC, 2007; André et al, 2006; O'Faircheallaigh and Howitt, 2013).
Participation, representativeness, vulnerabilities and subalternities	The participation and representation (and representativeness) of all those potentially affected must be ensured, in particular the most vulnerable, marginalized, with less power and/or capacity for expression and vindication (EIB, 2020; WB, 2017; Vanclay et al, 2015; ADB, 2012a; IFC, 2007; André et al, 2006; O'Faircheallaigh and Howitt, 2013).

Dimensions	Principles and requirements for socially sustainable involvement of interested and affected parties
Freedom and ability to express and communicate	The involvement of stakeholders and affected parties must be carried out without manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination or intimidation. Conditions must be created for the expression of all points of view, including those with less capacity for expression (EIB, 2020; WB, 2017; Vanclay et al, 2015; ADB, 2012a; IFC, 2007; André et al, 2006).
Cultural context	Interested and affected parties should be involved in a culturally appropriate manner, taking into account historical, cultural, political and social contexts (EIB, 2020; WB, 2017; Vanclay et al, 2015; ADB, 2012a; IFC, 2007; André et al, 2006; O'Faircheallaigh and Howitt, 2013).
Decision making	The involvement of interested and affected parties must include the power to influence decision-making (EIB, 2020; WB, 2017; Vanclay et al, 2015; ADB, 2012a; IFC, 2007; André et al, 2006; O'Faircheallaigh and Howitt, 2013).

## 11.4 Operationalization of the assessment framework

### 11.4.1 Delimitation of the scope of the analysis: project level and conceptual level

#### Project level

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, in this section the present work focuses only on the project level, whether it can be materialized in the construction of a certain infrastructure (e.g., airports, roads, power lines), in the exploitation of a certain resource (e.g., mining), in the construction of a certain production or marketing unit (e.g., factories, commercial areas) and other types of projects that imply intervention in the territory, or is a project of an 'immaterial' nature (e.g., education, poverty reduction, domestic violence prevention projects).

In addition to the need for object delimitation, this option is related to the fact that the author of this work develops most of his activity at the level of project assessment, but also, and above all, because it is at the project level that the actions translate and materialize in effects on people, groups and communities, and can promote change, at an individual and societal level. A project can result from a certain policy, be delimited by a certain planning exercise, and configured by a certain program. However, it is only at the level of the project and its implementation that the effects actually materialize, and change happens.

The question of the relationship between assessment at the project level and assessment at the level of policies, plans and programmes is of great importance, but it is not the object of the present work.

### Conceptual level

Considering the limits of a doctoral thesis, and the specific objectives of this work, within the scope of the definition and operationalization of the concept of social sustainability, the focus of the analysis is what was called the *conceptual level*, from the perspective of the evaluator, and the operationalization at the level of sustainability criteria.

In this way, what has been called the *configurational level* will not be developed beyond the general aspects already analysed above, despite its central importance in the assessment processes.

This section is, therefore, dedicated to the operationalization of what has been called *the conceptual level* of assessment, that is, the level at which the process of knowledge about the reality in which the project will be inserted and which will change is structured; the level at which are structured the assessment criteria that make it possible to determine the positive, negative or neutral value of the actions assessed, from a social sustainability perspective; the level at which, depending on the results of the assessments, actions are proposed and defined to ensure and/or promote social sustainability.

The theoretical foundations and ethical principles (principles of social sustainability) were developed in Parts I and II of this work.

It is time, therefore, to move towards operationalizing the principles of social sustainability in social sustainability criteria and to address the issue of indicators, as well as to configure the assessment methodology.

The following subsections address the following aspects:

- i) Description of the general methodology of the assessment process;
- ii) Application of assessment throughout the life cycle of projects;
- iii) Analytical structure and dimensions of analysis of the social reality in which the projects are inserted;
- iv) Definition of social sustainability criteria that allow the assessment, and discussion on the issue of indicators to be operationalized.

## **11.4.2 The methodological process**

### **11.4.2.1 Introduction**

The methodological process is outlined in Figure 11.2, presented above in section 11.3.1.1. In this section the process is explained for the case of social sustainability assessment at project level.

The methodological process is largely based on the consolidated methodologies for assessing the social impacts of projects, but also integrates some elements of the strategic environmental assessment methodology, generally applied to policies, plans and programmes.

The strategic perspective can be considered as the intersection area of the application of elements of these methodologies.

These issues are addressed in the following subsections. First, it is discussed how the strategic perspective is integrated into the assessment framework.

Secondly, the difference between social sustainability assessment and social impact assessment is discussed.

The general structure of the assessment methodology and the phases it involves is presented below.

A third point addresses issues related to the life cycle of projects and the assessment of sustainability throughout that cycle.

The fourth and fifth points constitute the central part of this chapter and are dedicated to the structuring of the analytical framework, the disaggregation of the sustainability dimensions, and the operationalization of the assessment considering sustainability objectives and criteria. In a final point, a succinct approach is made to the issue of indicators and assessment scales.

### **11.4.2.2 Some considerations on the strategic perspective in sustainability assessment**

The strategic perspective is one of the central elements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of policies, plans and programmes. As already mentioned in section 10.1 of this work, the practice of SEA is not, however, uniform, distinguishing two main trends, one that follows the more reactive logic of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) methodology, another that expressly and proactively integrates sustainability objectives

and criteria and assumes SEA as an instrument of change, towards achieving more sustainable patterns of behaviour and development (Pope et al, 2004; Partidário, 2015). The strategic perspective is particularly valued in this second trend, as it translates and expresses the commitment of the SEA to the promotion of sustainability objectives (Partidário, 2012, 2015, 2020). For Partidário, "While EIA focuses on assessing the effects of development on the environment, SEA focuses on the effects of the environment on development. This means that strategically the environment helps to establish conditions for development, and the SEA must analyse whether these conditions are being considered in the development processes" (Partidário, 2012:20). To this end, in the SEA process, "**pathways to sustainability**, and **guidelines** that support this path, must be created. Paths to sustainability is the term used to express the **strategic options** for development, which help us to go from where we are to where we want to go, our vision of the future" (idem, p. 33). However, Partidário seems to reserve this strategic perspective only for the formulation of long-term policies and objectives, distinguishing between "plans and programmes with a strategic nature" (those that, among other things, are determined by the vision of a desirable future and have long-term strategic objectives consistent with that vision) and "plans and programmes without a strategic nature" (those that have immediate objectives, and are motivated by actions that intend to solve immediate concrete problems) (idem, p. 9). The cut seems to be even more pronounced regarding projects, when the author defends the need to change from an operational decision-making culture, characteristic of the project level, to a prospective decision-making culture (Partidário, 2015).

It is true that the strategic perspective when applied to broader scales, such as policies and plans, implies a breadth of action and intervention (geographical and temporal), which is not comparable to the scale of the project, even when it comes to large-scale projects. However, the pursuit of achieving sustainability objectives is a central component of the strategic perspective that, as such, can and should be present both at the level of policies and plans and at the project level. The point that is intended to be made here, therefore, is that it is not only possible to think about projects strategically, from the perspective of sustainability objectives, but that this is necessary if we want to effectively implement

sustainability policies, as stated by Gibson (2005, 2006, 2012). In other words, the scale of the project implies operability, but this operability must be guided and measured by sustainability criteria and objectives.

If a gap is created between decision-making at the level of strategic sustainable planning and decision-making at the level of project planning, considered only from an operational perspective, then sustainability objectives may never be achieved or, at least, not be fully achieved, because it is at the project level that everything materializes in people, in the territory and in the environment. Sustainable policies and planning can contribute to, but do not ensure, sustainable projects on their own. For projects to be sustainable, they have to be designed and executed from a sustainability perspective. And this perspective has a strategic component, as it discusses and operationalizes, at the project level, the phases and actions of the project and their materialization in the territory and the environment, the vision and objectives of sustainability.

Long-term strategies cannot be implemented without their unfolding into medium and short-term strategies, and their materialization in the actions of the present. Strategy is not 'synonymous' with long-term, it is synonymous with desirable goals and general guidelines to achieve them. The possible ways to achieve them are in the realm of tactics. The scope of the strategic perspective thus depends on the geographical scale and the time scale of the action we are considering. Remaining in the field of military terminology, one can speak of a strategy for war, but also of a strategy for a battle. Moving from military terminology to sports terminology, we can talk about a strategy for a cycling race by stages, but also a strategy for each stage. In a football match, the strategy has a maximum time scale of 90 or 120 minutes, which can be implemented through one or more tactical systems. And there is nothing to prevent the strategy from being changed, if necessary, in the course of the 90 or 120 minutes.

On the time scale of policies, strategic sustainability objectives are long-term. In the time scale of the projects, the strategic sustainability objectives are medium and, above all, short-term. As Gibson (2005:60) states, "The concept of sustainability is in all its formulations concerned about long as well as short-term well-being".

The sustainability perspective at project level is thus not only a way to seek to ensure sustainable results, but it is also a way to ensure continuity and some coherence between the assessment of policies, plans and programmes and the assessment of projects.

#### **11.4.2.3 Social impact assessment or social sustainability assessment?**

From the discussion developed in the previous section, it is clear that, at the project scale, social and environmental assessment has to deal with two logics: a logic of sustainability and a logic of operationality.

The operational logic translates into the development and implementation of the project, considering its specific objectives (building and maintaining a road, for example). As previously discussed in this work, the EIA follows this logic and intervenes in a preventive way, but also reactively, assessing the project according to its potential effects on the environment (including the social dimension), advocating, above all, the definition and application of measures to mitigate negative impacts, which can translate (and often do) into changes in design of the project. Due to the growing concern about sustainability issues and sustainability objectives, the EIA has also been progressively considering positive impacts and their maximization. However, this dimension remains to be sufficiently developed, and positive impacts are often taken for granted, or as a 'bonus' of the project, which, as such, is enough to mention and not need to analyse. Positive impact analysis is also often used to value the project, and to sustain its importance and necessity, in order to influence decision-making, in which case positive impact analysis is further developed. However, even if the assessment of positive impacts is in-depth, it is still a reactive assessment.

The assessment of social impacts, whether carried out within EIA processes or autonomously, largely follows the preventive/reactive methodological logic of EIA and reproduces many of its limitations, from the perspective of achieving desirable sustainable futures. When it emphasises the need to maximise positive impacts, social impact assessment makes some contributions to promoting sustainability, but this does not ensure that sustainability objectives are achieved and, as a reactive practice for projects, many aspects of promoting sustainability are left out, due to their limited scope, in relation to broader social sustainability issues (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Aucamp et al, 2011).

The assessment of social sustainability encompasses the analysis of impacts, insofar as, for any project to become operational, that is, to function and have use value, it must necessarily have effects, positive or negative, on the social environment in which it is inserted and over which it has influence.

But this impact analysis is guided and framed in a social sustainability analysis that analyses the project from the perspective of its contributions to the promotion of sustainability, based on sustainability criteria.

The focus of sustainability assessment, whether social, environmental or social and environmental, is the promotion of sustainability, as analysed in chapter 10.

If the focus is on promoting sustainability, then another key difference with impact assessment is that all projects are likely to be assessed and not just those that, due to their size, location (e.g. in a sensitive area) or characteristics, are likely to have significant negative impacts.

When the focus of the assessment is on negative impacts and their mitigation, as is the case in Environmental Impact Assessment processes, then projects that appear, after initial examination, not to exceed certain thresholds of size, area or location, among other aspects, are excluded from the assessment.

When the focus is on promoting sustainability, then any project, regardless of its characteristics, size and location, must be assessed in terms of how and to what extent it contributes to sustainability. And this assessment can be done either in a context regulated by legislation, or it can be done as a requirement of good practices, within the organization promoting the project. It is in this sense that some authors distinguish between *external sustainability assessment* (legally required and regulated) and *internal sustainability assessment* (Pope and Morrison-Saunders, 2013).

It is a proactive analysis that challenges and interacts with the project from its conception to its total deactivation (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Aucamp et al, 2011). Of course, if a project has negative impacts, these have to be analysed and mitigated but based on social sustainability criteria. On the other hand, positive effects are not analysed in terms of impact, but in terms of promoting sustainability, from the design stage.

Reflecting on their practice in the field of *Social Impact Assessment (SIA)*, Aucamp *et al* (2011:10) conclude that going beyond the traditional practice of SIA towards social sustainability is achievable and should be an objective of every SIA process.

It is important to note that the theoretical and methodological developments operated in the last decade and the best practices of SIA have been seeking to maximize the contribution of SIA from a perspective of social sustainability, although still within the perspective of impact assessment (Esteves and Vanclay, 2009; Vanclay and Esteves, 2011 and 2011a; ADB, 2012; Vanclay *et al*, 2015; Vanclay, 2020).

#### **11.4.2.4 Structure of the assessment process**

The overall structure of the social sustainability assessment process follows the analytical framework as shown in Figure 11.2 (see section 11.3.1.1), which incorporates elements of the methodological processes of impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, some of which have long been consolidated, others that have emerged more recently.

As mentioned in Section 11.3.1.1, the assessment process can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Considering certain actions (a, b, n), to be assessed
- (ii) in its global context (globalized capitalism) and
- (iii) in the respective specific contexts (geographical, political, social, cultural, institutional, legal), the assessment of the social sustainability of such actions is carried out on the basis of
- (iv) principles, strategies, objectives and criteria of social sustainability, structured by theoretical foundations,
- (v) operationalized through assessment methods, procedures and techniques, (vi) considering the relevant spatio-temporal scales, and
- vii) the involvement and interaction with interested and affected parties and, leading to
- (viii) certain assessment results and the
- (ix) consequent proposals for action in order to ensure and/or promote the sustainability of the actions assessed and their effects in the respective contexts.

The first characteristic to be underlined is the fact that it is not a unidirectional sequential process, nor a closed-loop process, but rather an iterative process, that is, a process that develops in a spiral, as it progresses and the information is integrated and processed, although within its specific timeframe (pre-established deadline for the execution of the assessment and for the decision to be taken on the project or on the specific stage it is at in its life cycle).

As also mentioned, it is an iterative process both as a way of dealing with complexity and because the assessment process itself, and the respective results and proposals, have to incorporate the involvement of interested parties and those affected.

This involvement is the second characteristic to be underlined and should not be confused with the involvement resulting from legally institutionalised processes of public participation or stakeholder participation, although it should be linked to it.

The assessment of social sustainability, like the assessment of social impacts, implies the understanding, analysis and diagnosis of the social reality being evaluated. This understanding cannot be built solely on the basis of contextual analyses and using statistical data and other types of secondary information. It has to be built on the basis of primary information and data, with people, groups and communities. This involvement should not, however, be unilateral, that is, serve only to collect information, but bilateral, providing information about the project, and promoting a basis for communication and discussion about it, and its objectives and potential effects.

This process of involvement constitutes an axis of articulation between the *conceptual level* and what was previously called the *configurational level*, but the latter is much broader, insofar as it encompasses the deliberative and decision-making processes themselves.

Assessment processes follow a series of methodological steps that are not merely sequential, but include feedback and iteration movements.

Taking Environmental Impact Assessment processes as an example, these typically include the following steps that the authors consider applicable to sustainability assessment (Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2014:69):

- *Screening of projects or actions to be evaluated*, at which time the need to carry out the assessment of the project and the level at which it is done is confirmed.

- *Scoping* of the assessment, which defines the key issues to be included in the assessment, as well as the relevant scales of analysis.
- *Impact analysis*, in which the significance of the impacts is assessed, and mitigation measures are defined, in the case of negative impacts, or potentiation, in the case of positive impacts.
- *Decision-making*, in which the conditions for approval, or not, of the project under assessment are defined, depending on the losses and gains.
- *Monitoring* of impacts and *evaluation* of results.

In the following table, the main moments of the methodological process of social sustainability assessment are presented and analysed in more detail.

As already mentioned, the structure presented is not unilinear, but includes moments of feedback and iteration, and results from an adaptation and re-elaboration of elements of existing analysis and assessment structures in other assessment frameworks (Gibson, 2004, 2005; Esteves and Vanclay, 2009; Vanclay et al, 2015; Partidário, 2012; WB, 2017).

Although it shares most of the steps presented above, it integrates other moments necessary for the application of a perspective of assessment and promotion of social sustainability. The moment of selection of actions (*scanning*) is not included, as already explained, since, from a perspective of promoting social sustainability, all projects are susceptible to assessment.

**Table 11.2 – Moments in the methodological process of assessing the social sustainability of projects**

MOMENTS	ACTIONS
<b>There is feedback between moments, that is, the relationship between moments and their actions is <i>necessarily</i> iterative and not merely sequential</b>	
<b>Analyse and understand the project</b>	Understand the objectives, functionality, and all the main features of the project. To know project's location/locations.
<b>Determine the project's area of intervention and influence</b>	Determine and delimit the area(s), geographic and social, of intervention and influence of the project. That is, the territorial and social space (including the economic, political and cultural) in which the effects of the project are felt or may be felt.
<b>Analyse and understand contexts</b>	Define the geographic and geopolitical scales of context (the place, the region, the country, the political system, the insertion in the division of labour and the global economy, and in the system of international relations).

MOMENTS	ACTIONS
<b>There is feedback between moments, that is, the relationship between moments and their actions is necessarily iterative and not merely sequential</b>	
	<p>Determine the spatial (place) and temporal scales (historical factors and trends) relevant for the analysis and assessment, depending on the objectives and the area of influence of the project.</p> <p>Identify the main environmental, territorial, social and cultural characteristics, considering the scales mentioned.</p> <p>Identify and analyse the applicable or relevant legislative and regulatory corpus for the assessment of the social sustainability of the project.</p>
<b>Involve those affected and interested</b>	<p>Identify the affected and/or interested parties in the project (people, communities, institutions, economic agents, civil society organizations).</p> <p>Establish a communication strategy; identify and operationalize the means and communication processes to be implemented.</p> <p>Define, consensualize and implement the moments and forms of involvement and participation throughout the assessment process and considering the various moments of the methodological process.</p>
<b>Analyse and understand the area of intervention and influence of the project</b>	<p>Understand the main geographical and environmental characteristics.</p> <p>Characterize the main environmental and natural resources, relatable to the project.</p> <p>Characterize the structure of the settlement and the socio-territorial dynamics.</p> <p>Identify the characteristics of housing, infrastructure networks, equipment and social services.</p> <p>Characterize the sociodemographic structure and dynamics.</p> <p>Characterize the ways of life and the production of livelihoods.</p> <p>Analyse social structures, social stratification, networks of relations, relations of domination, dependence and subordination.</p> <p>Characterize the situations, states and factors of social vulnerability, and the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion.</p> <p>Understand the main sociocultural characteristics and dynamics.</p> <p>Characterize the main forms of intervention and participation in public life.</p>
<b>Identify and diagnose the main needs and needs in terms of human well-being and flourishing</b>	<p>Basic needs (housing, health, education).</p> <p>Vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Work and production of livelihoods.</p> <p>Access to culture.</p> <p>Opportunities for leisure and recreation.</p> <p>Personal development.</p> <p>Freedom of expression and intervention.</p> <p>Respect for human rights.</p> <p>Relations of domination, exploitation, subordination.</p> <p>Dynamics and paths of empowerment and emancipation.</p>
<b>Identify the dimensions, means and ways in which the project can contribute positively to promoting human well-being and flourishing in its area of influence</b>	<p>To verify how the expressed sustainability objectives of the project can be effectively ensured, enhanced and maximized.</p> <p>To identify what potential exists in the project, the activation and actualization of which can contribute to respond and meet the needs and promote well-being and human flourishing, in the various dimensions of social sustainability.</p>
<b>To define, for the project, the strategy, the objectives and the social sustainability actions to be implemented</b>	<p>Set priorities.</p> <p>Define the forms, means and actions to be implemented.</p> <p>Allocate technical, human and financial resources.</p>

MOMENTS	ACTIONS
<b>There is feedback between moments, that is, the relationship between moments and their actions is necessarily iterative and not merely sequential</b>	
<b>Define the social sustainability criteria to evaluate the project</b>	Establish sustainability criteria and indicators to measure and assess the project's performance in terms of achieving social sustainability objectives.
<b>Identify and assess the risks and potential negative effects of the project</b>	Identify and assess risks and potential negative effects, considering the various dimensions of social sustainability.
<b>Define risk prevention and negative effects mitigation measures</b>	Define risk prevention and negative effects mitigation measures.
<b>Analyse and discuss the trade-offs and decide on the feasibility of the project</b>	Analyse the balance between the project's contributions to the promotion of social sustainability and the opposite or negative effects. Decide whether the level of adverse or negative effects is acceptable, depending on the preventive or mitigating measures defined and their effectiveness. The participation of those affected is fundamental and necessary for this decision-making.
<b>Identify and analyse the interaction, potential synergies and cumulativeness of risks and effects of the project with other existing or foreseeable projects</b>	Identify other projects, existing or planned, with intervention and effects in the area of intervention influence of the project. To analyse potential synergies towards the promotion of human well-being and flourishing. Define actions that take advantage of and enhance these synergies. Identify potential risks and cumulative negative effects between projects. Define measures to prevent and mitigate cumulative effects.
<b>Monitor and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of sustainability actions and proposed measures</b>	To follow up and monitor actions to promote human flourishing, assess their efficiency and effectiveness, verify whether it is necessary to promote changes, improvements, or implement new actions. Identify the occurrence of new lacks and needs and verify the possibility of responding to them. To follow up and monitor actions to prevent or mitigate negative effects, evaluate their efficiency and effectiveness, verify whether it is necessary to promote changes, improvements, or implement new actions. Identify the occurrence of risks and effects not previously foreseen and define new measures.

#### 11.4.2.5 Project Assessment and Life Cycle

The notion of *the project life cycle* has become ubiquitous in the theory and practice of project management, focusing on the definition of the process, the progression, rhythm, dynamics and limits of the project and, at the same time, shaping the discipline itself and the way of thinking about projects and organizing work. The life cycle represents the path from the origin to the completion of a project and allows managers to control and direct activities in an orderly, methodical and responsive manner. Dividing the life cycle into

phases, grouping sequences and types of directly related activities, facilitates their visibility, control and execution. (Dalcher, 2019).

Concomitantly with the great diversity of typology and objectives of the projects, there are numerous configurations of the life cycles and their phases and subphases. Although the life cycles of projects can be summed up in four major moments (conception; analysis/planning/design; execution/implementation; and completion/closure), their characterization, even if in very general terms, requires a greater disaggregation of the respective phasing. The following table presents two of the possible representations of the life cycles of two different types of projects: i) social intervention projects and ii) engineering projects that involve construction operations. It should be noted, however, that development projects often include both types of projects.

**Table 11.3 – Phases of the project life cycle**

Social intervention projects		Engineering projects	
Phases	Definition	Phases	Definition
1. Identification of problems and diagnosis	Identification, location and delimitation of the problem on which it is intended to intervene. Identify needs, establish priorities.	1. Conception	Generation of an idea for a new project and elaboration of an initial proposal for design and location
2. Definition of objectives and strategies	Definition of purposes, objectives, work strategies and intervention	2. Feasibility study	Evaluation of the feasibility of the project and optimization of the solution to be developed in the project
3. Planning and programming of activities	Preparation of programs and projects. Identification of activities and schedule. Definition of human, technical and financial resources.	3. Development and planning	Development of the <i>project design</i> until its final configuration. Planning and preparation of requirements for the construction phase.
4. Application / Implementation	Development, monitoring and control of the project.	4. Construction	Pre-construction, construction and/or assembly operations of the project.
5. Assessment of results	Verification and assessment of the results obtained.	5. Operation / Operation	Testing and full operation of the project.
Adapted from Guerra (2000), Serrano (2008)		6. Deactivation	Termination and Deactivation.

Adapted from Labuschagne and Brent (2005), Vanclay et al (2017)

The development of the projects is much more complex than the schematization presented above<sup>14</sup>. However, it does not fall within in the scope of this work to detail these aspects. The purpose of the general life cycle analysis is, fundamentally, to underline that the assessment of social sustainability must be present, in an integrated and coherent way, at all stages of the life cycle.

In each of the phases, the guiding questions previously presented in this work must be asked and answered:

- Does the planned action under assessment contribute to the achievement of social sustainability objectives, *contribute to the well-being and human flourishing of individuals and communities*? In what way? To what extent? Is such a contribution sufficient or should it be deepened and amplified?
- If it doesn't contribute, what is the reason or reasons for this to happen? What needs to be changed? What needs to be done?

It is only possible to optimize projects, from a social sustainability perspective, if these concerns are present from the design of the projects and are operationalized throughout the life cycle. This perspective has long been integrated into the best practices of social impact assessment (see, for example, IGCP, 1994).

The integration of environmental and social assessment processes and elements throughout the life cycle of projects has been, in fact, widespread, albeit in a very diverse and uneven way, in the development of government policies, in the practice of business organizations, development agencies and international financial institutions, in the attempt to align their processes with the principles of sustainable development (Labushchagne and Brent, 2005 and 2006; Dreyer et al, 2006; Dalal-Clayton and Sadler, 2014).

The conception of social sustainability as a process of human flourishing, adopted in the present work, could not, for a majority of reasons, fail to be part of this trend, even if adopting a critical perspective.

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<sup>14</sup> Considering, for example, the Development and Planning phase, Ordinance No. 701-H/2008, which establishes instructions for the preparation of public works projects in Portugal, considers the following phases: Base Program, Preliminary Study, Preliminary Project, Execution Project, Technical Assistance.

It is legitimate, however, to inquire whether all projects must meet the same requirements for promoting human flourishing or whether the scope and dimension of these requirements depend on the specific typology, characteristics and objectives of each project.

In practical terms, and taking into account the two types of projects whose life cycle has been analysed above, if it may be evident that social intervention projects, by definition, are required to promote human flourishing, one could ask: i) Should engineering projects be required to do the same? (ii) Is a project whose specific objective is the construction of a road or a power line required to go beyond that objective and to integrate, in its objectives, procedures and implementation, factors and actions to promote human flourishing that go beyond the social benefits resulting from the proper and safe functionality of the road or power line? iii) Since resources, namely financial resources, are always limited, may not placing these requirements jeopardize the viability of the project itself, increasing costs and, in the case of private initiative projects, reducing or cancelling its profitability?

The answer to the first two questions can only be in the affirmative, but, considering the third, it must be based on the principle of proportionality. In other words, while in a social intervention project the requirements of promoting human flourishing are inherent, in an engineering project this promotion must be incorporated, as a full objective and not as a minor or occasional objective, but to the extent of the possibilities allowed by the project configuration. This necessarily implies that the design and feasibility analysis phases of the project incorporate, from the outset, social sustainability concerns, so that they can be considered and budgeted, in their proportionality. As Dalcher (2019) points out, the initial stages of a project are a key moment for the definition and configuration of a project and the perspective of life cycles must take due account of the importance and impacts of initial decisions.

As previously discussed, no project, whether public or private, can evade its social (and environmental) responsibility and ignore the context in which it is inserted and the repercussions it has on the environment, the territory, communities and people.

The concept of the life cycle of projects cannot, therefore, be limited to a merely instrumental rationality, translated into a prescriptive and universally valid model (Dalcher, 2019).

From this perspective, it is the project management itself that is confronted with new challenges and research directions, in the sense of adopting new models and theories that recognize the complexity of projects and their management, as well as the environment in which they are developed, that conceives projects not as instrumental processes, but as social processes, with a broader, more comprehensive, multidisciplinary scope, with multiple purposes, not always predefined, but permeable, contestable and open to renegotiation, and involving professionals who not only have technical training, but also practice reflexivity (idem, ibidem).

#### **11.4.2.6 Analytical structure and dimensions of analysis of social reality**

Once the fundamental steps of the general methodological process of assessment have been analysed and the question of their application to the project life cycle has been discussed, two central aspects of the so-called conceptual level are analysed: the framework for analysing the dimensions of social sustainability and the explanation, disaggregation and proposal for operationalisation of these dimensions and sub-dimensions and their conversion into *sustainability criteria*.

##### **11.4.2.6.1. Analytical framework**

Any framework of social assessment of a project necessarily implies the analysis and knowledge of the social reality in which the project will be inserted and that it will modify. The assessment framework, as happens with any social research, must therefore resort to an analytical framework that allows it to investigate, characterize and sufficiently understand the levels, structures, dynamics and factors of the social reality that are relevant according to the characteristics of the project, the territory and the social reality of the intervention area and the potential influence of the project.

This analytical structure consists of the abstraction of reality into certain dimensions and categories that function as so many points of entry and access to reality. This operation of abstraction has consequences that must be taken into account, the main one of which is

the potential reification that results from the transformation of a complex and multi-scalar procedural reality, into a set of relatively static and autonomous dimensions.

This operation starts, explicitly or implicitly, from a certain ontological conception of reality, and consequent epistemological perspective.

Now, as previously mentioned, in any assessment process with public participation, different visions of the world and different epistemologies are potentially in confront. The confrontation between epistemologies, as Santos (Santos, 2019) points out, can not only lead to incommensurabilities between forms of knowledge, interpretation, and valorisation of reality, but also the predominance of dominant epistemology and the subordination of non-dominant epistemologies.

In an assessment process that is intended to be socially sustainable, this incommensurability has to be overcome. It is therefore necessary to set up and use an analytical framework that is understandable to developers, technicians, policy makers, and ordinary people in local communities, whatever the social and political context and where on the planet the project under assessment is to be implemented.

It is in this sense that Smyth and Vanclay (2017) propose, in the field of social impact assessments, a "conceptual but practical social framework to support the assessment, planning and management of the social impacts of projects".

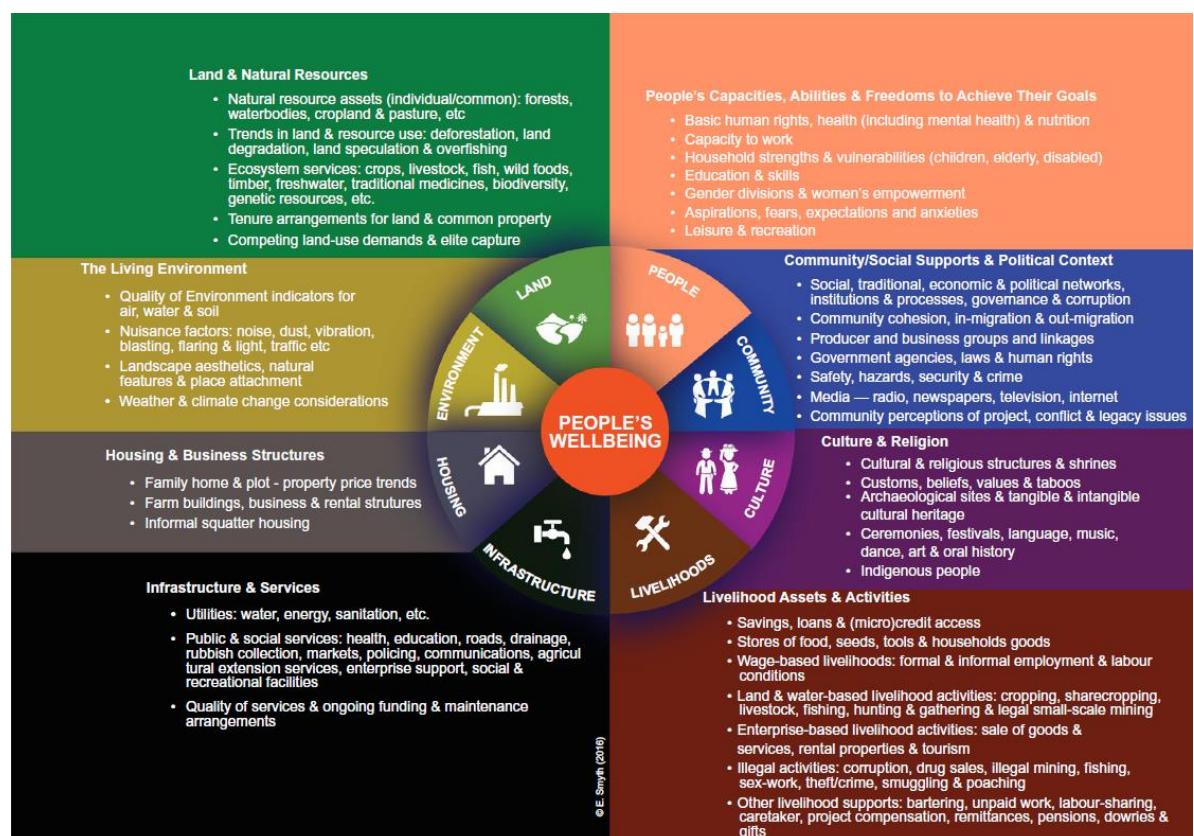
This analytical framework, represented in Figure 11.4, includes 8 dimensions and a few dozen sub-dimensions, in addition to a visual configuration that seeks to facilitate its understanding and application in participatory processes, and was built based on criteria such as:

- The inclusion of ideas and elements from other frameworks and perspectives, including *Amartya Sen's* capability approach;
- Compatibility with the human rights approach;
- Alignment with the main international standards and best practices;
- Contribution to achieving desirable social objectives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Be practical and participatory.

Within the scope of the assessment of social sustainability, several other models or analytical frameworks are available, some of which have already been mentioned and analysed in chapters 4 and 5 of this work, such as the SSAF of Colantonio and Dixon (2011), for sustainability in urban environments, that of Lamorguese and Geneletti (2015) or that of Eisenberg and Jabareen (2017), among many others.

The framework of analysis presented below is a proposal, in which contributions from several of these frameworks were integrated, mainly from the framework of Smyth and Vanclay.

**Figure 11.4 – Smyth and Vanclay's analytical framework for the assessment of the social impact of projects**



Source: Smyth and Vanclay (2017)

As mentioned above, in addition to other contributions, the analytical framework proposed in this work adopts and integrates part of the contributions of the interesting framework of Smyth and Vanclay, namely, the centrality of human well-being, the importance of the capability approach (although more in Marta Nussbaum's version than in Amartya Sen's

version), the human rights perspective, the reference to international standards and best practices, and the participatory and practical perspective.

One of the main differences with the framework of Smyth and Vanclay and others mentioned above lies, however, in the scope of the critical perspective and of the social sustainability concept that, in the present work, intends, and seeks, to go further, with regard to the objectives of promoting human flourishing, at the individual and at the relational, collective, level.

We recall that, in Part II of this work, the demand for the meaning and sense of the concept of social sustainability led us to the conception of social sustainability as *a process of human flourishing* and as *a process of caring*. As a process of human flourishing, it implies the promotion of well-being, the flourishing and differentiation of human potentialities and capabilities, the overcoming of subalternities, the emancipation of people and communities, in a relational and non-individualistic process. As a process of caring, because human flourishing implies an intrinsic consideration of vulnerabilities and is not separable from relationships of respect, dignity, communion and care among human beings.

The critical perspective is assumed as a critical position on certain social structures and practices, namely those configured by capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy (Santos, 2018).

In this general context, the economy is not understood as a 'pillar' or autonomous sphere, but as a particular form of social relations and relations between society and nature, that is, of *social relations of production of material life*. In this way, the economy is put back in its 'place' as a historical form of social relations, and its actual configuration cannot be reified and considered as an eternal and 'natural' form, as natural as nature itself.

In this sense, social sustainability is at the heart of socio-environmental sustainability.

The critical perspective implies, therefore, particular attention to the analysis of social and cultural structures and the causal powers, negative or positive, that they exert on human flourishing, as an emancipatory process and a process of caring.

Finally, it should be noted that this perspective is necessarily systemic.

The consequences of this perspective for the assessment of sustainability are therefore as follows:

- a) The centrality of the critical analysis of social and cultural structures and their modes, dynamics and factors of unsustainability (vulnerability, oppression, subalternization, exploitation, alienation);
- b) The focus on situations of vulnerability and processes of vulnerability, and the centrality of valuing relationships of care, dignity, solidarity and all the positive dimensions of networks of social relations (and criticism of negative dimensions);
- c) The centrality of valuing the dimensions of justice, equity and equality;
- d) The centrality of valuing the dynamics of capacitation, *empowerment*, emancipation;
- e) The centrality of respect for nature.

Figure 11.5 presents the overall configuration of the analytical structure and Table 11.4 presents the dimensions of analysis, disaggregated into several subdimensions of operationalization.

The primary unit of analysis is individuals, since, as Smyth and Vanclay (2017) point out, there are significant inequalities within the family, communities and other spheres, units of analysis that, therefore, cannot be taken as homogeneous.

However, it is essential to highlight that it is not a question of isolated and abstract individuals, but of people in their relational configurations, processes, times and ways of life, sociocultural and territorial contexts, and social structures.

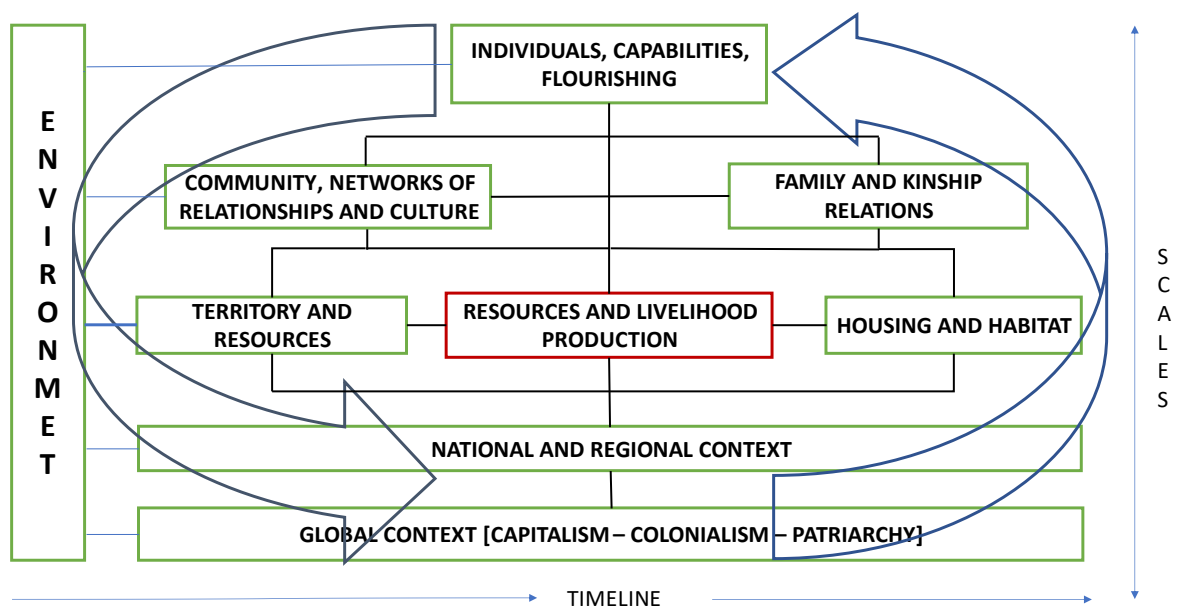
Figure 11.5 seeks to translate the general configuration of the systemic perspective adopted. The analysis of individuals and social relations, in the various dimensions, must consider, as far as possible, the determinations and interdeterminations, resulting from the global context, structured by capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy and respective structures of power and domination, and the transversal way in which they are translated, expressed and reproduced at the national, regional and local scales, as well as the limits placed by the natural environment that are also placed in a transversal way.

At the centre of the system is human labour (Litig and Griebler, 2005) and, more broadly, the social relations of production of material life (Marx, 1976, 1978, 1981, 1982).

It is also important to take into account that the partition of reality into dimensions is an abstraction exercise and that, therefore, in reality, dimensions are, ontologically, in a relationship of articulation and interdetermination.

For flourishing processes to occur in the individual dimension, it is necessary that these processes correspond and be supported in the other dimensions and, in turn, have repercussions on them, in a permanent, iterative and evolutionary movement, on the spatial scales and on the temporal scale.

**Figure 11.5 – Analytical structure**



In the following table, the dimensions of analysis are disaggregated into sub-dimensions that allow subsequent operationalization, both with regard to the characterization and diagnosis of the existing situation and ongoing processes in the project's area of influence, and to assess the sustainability of the projects, based on the respective criteria.

The dimensions and sub-dimensions presented are factors of research and analysis, they are not yet objectives and sustainability criteria, although these are implicit.

Considering each of the dimensions and the set of those that are relevant for the assessment of the project, it is about:

- a) To investigate and ascertain which structural aspects, factors and dynamics of social reality contribute or may contribute to human flourishing or, on the contrary, hinder it, prevent it or exert a negative effect, contrary to flourishing;

- b) Based on the previous analysis, make a diagnosis of the situation and identify needs, in terms of social sustainability / flourishing.
- c) To verify and evaluate how the project can contribute positively to the satisfaction of needs and promotion of flourishing and, on the other hand, what negative effects it will have or may have on its area of intervention and influence.
- d) Depending on a), b) and c), define the sustainability objectives that the project must incorporate and implement and the sustainability criteria to monitor and assess whether it has achieved them.

Depending on the concrete configuration of the projects and the specific contexts in which they are inserted, the dimensions and sub-dimensions presented are open, in a double sense:

- a) Dimensions and sub-dimensions may be supplemented by others;
- b) Not all dimensions will have to be analysed, but only those that are relevant, depending on each specific case and its context.

They are also open from an ethical and normative perspective, therefore, 'political'. In other words, when we select dimensions and sub-dimensions for analysis and assessment, we are not only doing so from a technical-scientific perspective, depending on the type of project and the needs of the context, we are also selecting them according to our ethical convictions and our objectives of intervention and transformation, towards sustainability. There is no technical-scientific 'screen' behind which we can 'hide' these options and exempt us from taking them! Therefore, it is necessary to affirm and assume them, both by clarifying the perspective that informs and shapes the assessment and by justifying the options taken and the reasons underlying the choices and omissions.

**Table 11.4 – Social sustainability: dimensions and sub-dimensions of analysis**

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions
<b>Individuals, capabilities and flourishing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decent housing</li> <li>- Physical and mental health</li> <li>- Vulnerabilities and states of disability or disability</li> <li>- States of human rights violations, risk, oppression, violence, discrimination, exploitation, subordination, repression, fear and anxiety</li> <li>- Decent work and livelihood production</li> <li>- Access to quality education, at the various levels of education</li> <li>- Access to vocational training</li> </ul>

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Freedom of affirmation and expression of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic and religious identities</li> <li>- Freedom of movement and means of mobility</li> <li>- Access to culture, enjoyment and cultural expression</li> <li>- Opportunities to exercise, express and develop creative powers</li> <li>- Opportunities to develop and exercise a critical spirit, build a vision of the world and define an ethical orientation of respect for others, dignity and solidarity</li> <li>- Freedom and opportunities to participate in community and public life, freedom of association and intervention</li> <li>- Dignification of the Other and connection to others, relationships of support and care</li> <li>- Leisure and recreational opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Family and family relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nuclear family (composition, age structure, kinship, vulnerabilities)</li> <li>- Kinship relationships (extended family) and family obligations</li> <li>- Marriage, dowry, and family and interfamily strategies</li> <li>- Relations of power, domination, subalternization and dependence</li> </ul>
<b>Housing and habitat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- House (type, building quality, water, sanitation, electricity, outdoor areas)</li> <li>- Complementary activity spaces (sales, small shops and kiosks, backyard/vegetable garden)</li> <li>- Type of ownership of land and structures and buildings (ownership, lease, informal occupation)</li> <li>- Housing availability, quality and price level</li> <li>- Environment (air quality, water quality, noise and vibrations, traffic, soil contamination, exposure to hazardous wastes, erosion, flood and other natural hazards, climate and vulnerability to climate change, landscape)</li> </ul>
<b>Territory and resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current and traditional relationship with the space; attachment to the place; sacred places with symbolic value).</li> <li>- Natural and anthropized resources (soils, forests, water bodies, natural pastures, non-wood forest products and wild fruits, medicinal plants, wood and firewood) and pressures on resources (land degradation, deforestation, real estate speculation, appropriation of community spaces, capture by elites)</li> <li>- Territorial cohesion, marginalized or discriminated territories</li> </ul>
<b>Resources and forms of livelihood production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Salary (formal and informal employment; salary levels; professional and wage discrimination, gender, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation); working conditions, hygiene and safety; child labour.</li> <li>- Ways of life based on land cultivation (type of land tenure and usufruct, buildings, constructions and structures, sharing, cultivation and plantations, animal husbandry, self-consumption and production for the market).</li> <li>- Hunting, fishing, beekeeping, collection of non-wood forest products.</li> <li>- Small-scale mining and prospecting.</li> <li>- Artisanal production.</li> <li>- Access to microcredit.</li> <li>- Degree and type of insertion in the market economy.</li> <li>- Business activity (industry, commerce, services, tourism).</li> <li>- Illegal activities: corruption; drug trafficking; illegal hunting, fishing, and logging; sex work; contraband; robbery/crime.</li> <li>- Other forms of livelihood support: exchange of products; exchange of work for products; provision of care and assistance; compensation; remittances from emigrants; pensions; dowries; gifts.</li> </ul>
<b>Community, infrastructure, resources,</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structures and relations of power, domination, dependence and subalternization</li> <li>- Political and administrative organization, participatory structures</li> <li>- Community leaders (type, form, legitimation, functions, powers, obligations)</li> <li>- Social inequalities and vulnerabilities</li> </ul>

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions
<b>socio-cultural relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic infrastructure (water, sanitation and drainage, electricity, waste collection, road access, transport, telecommunications)</li> <li>- Equipment (education, health, culture, religion, leisure spaces, commercial spaces), quality and quantity</li> <li>- Decentralised public services (agricultural extension, employment, social support, justice, public security), quality and quantity</li> <li>- Community lands and community natural resources</li> <li>- Commercial and product supply spaces</li> <li>- Structures and spaces of sociability</li> <li>- Cooperation and mutual aid networks</li> <li>- Discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, caste, religion or nationality</li> <li>- Crime and Community Security</li> <li>- Emigration and immigration flows</li> <li>- Social cohesion, social inclusion and exclusion</li> <li>- Social vitality</li> <li>- Culture, religion and identities (cultural and religious structures; customs, beliefs, values, taboos; traditional and local knowledge; tangible and intangible cultural heritage, sanctuaries, ceremonies, festivals, music, dance, art, languages and dialects, oral tradition)</li> <li>- Trade union organizations</li> <li>- Non-Governmental Organizations, associations</li> <li>- Social media</li> <li>- Indigenous peoples</li> </ul>
<b>National and regional context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Legislative <i>corpus</i> relevant for the assessment</li> <li>- Political system</li> <li>- Political-administrative organization</li> <li>- Local and regional authorities</li> <li>- Main features of the economic structure</li> <li>- Diversification, regional development and territorial cohesion</li> <li>- Policies, programmes and plans relevant to the assessment</li> <li>- Social and cultural diversity, including <i>indigenous peoples</i> (see United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)</li> <li>- Social inequalities and poverty levels</li> <li>- Migratory flows</li> </ul>
<b>Global context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insertion in the system of international relations and geopolitical spheres of influence</li> <li>- Membership of international organizations</li> <li>- Adherence to Treaties and Conventions</li> <li>- Insertion in the world division of labour, presence of multinationals</li> <li>- Human development index and other indices</li> <li>- Presence and activity of international development support organizations</li> </ul>

Sources: Partial Adaptations of Labuschagne and Brent, 2006; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Nussbaum (2011); Lamogerse and Geneletti, 2015; Smyth and Vanclay (2017).

The explanation, disaggregation and proposal for the operationalization of these dimensions and sub-dimensions and their conversion into *sustainability criteria* is carried out in the following subsection.

#### **11.4.2.6.2. Dimensions, sub-dimensions and sustainability criteria**

In this section, the issue of sustainability dimensions and sub-dimensions, defined in Table 11.4 of the previous section, is resumed in the context of the discussion on the configuration of the analytical structure of the assessment framework, seeking to advance in its disaggregation and operationalization, through general sustainability criteria.

It is also important to remember that these dimensions and sub-dimensions seek to achieve the general principles and objectives of sustainability presented in Table 8.3 of section 8.2. It is intended that there is, in this way, a relationship of coherence and a sequential relationship, of progressive concretion, between the contents of Table 8.3, Table 11.4, and Table 11.5, which is presented below.

As already mentioned, the content of each of these tables and their set constitute an open proposal that, moreover, does not make sense to close because:

- a) Each concrete situation has specificities that cannot be exhaustively foreseen or predicted.
- b) Because it is only a gateway or a stimulatory scheme for analytical and evaluative capacity and not a checklist of uncritical and automatic application. On the contrary, the questions posed are instruments for understanding reality, they are also ways of questioning ourselves in the face of that reality and depending on the intervention situation in which we find ourselves.

Table 11.5 is part of the general methodological process outlined previously in Table 11.2.

It therefore assumes that some steps have already been taken previously, namely:

- Analysis and understanding of the project;
- Determination and delimitation of the area of intervention and influence of the project;
- Analysis and initial understanding of relevant contextual factors (local, regional, national, international).

The content of Table 11.5 therefore focuses on the central moments of the assessment process, namely the following:

- Dimensions and sub-dimensions/themes of sustainability (guided by principles of social sustainability) to be considered and analysed;

- Characterization of the existing situation and dynamics, in the area in which the project will intervene and influence, within the scope of the sub-dimensions considered to be applicable and pertinent in the contexts and concrete situations;
- Diagnosis of needs from a perspective of social sustainability, that is, of human well-being and flourishing, and of social sustainability objectives;
- Identification of the social sustainability objectives that are relatable to the project, depending on its characteristics, its location and areas of intervention and influence.
- Assessment of the configuration, performance and effects of the project, based on social sustainability criteria that reflect the social sustainability objectives identified following the diagnosis carried out, and that the project, depending on its characteristics, already incorporates or can and/or should incorporate.
- Assessment of the project's actual or potential negative effects on the dimensions of social sustainability, causing losses or risks of unsustainability, and definition of measures and actions aimed at avoiding, reducing or compensating for these negative effects and risks.

In addition to what is expressed in the table, the implementation of the assessment implies a disaggregation of the sustainability criteria and their operationalization through qualitative and/or quantitative indicators, depending on the characteristics of each specific project and each concrete reality. The results of the assessment must be translated into an assessment scale. These aspects are analysed in the following section (11.4.2.6.3).

The sub-dimensions and categories of analysis included in the table have a wide spectrum, so that they can be applied anywhere, although it is not intended to be exhaustive, but only to typify.

It is also important to remember that the structure and content of Table 11.5 are configured for the function of the evaluator, in the context of what was previously called the *conceptual level*, which is the objective of this section of this work.

This structure can, and should, be adapted to serve as an instrument within what has been called *the configurational level*, that is, in a participatory context of interaction between promoter, evaluator, decision-maker, and people and communities affected or interested in the project.

It is also important to underline that the structure of the framework is designed for a phase in which the project has already been subject to a first configuration but may still be subject to changes before being implemented, since this is the type of situation that most frequently presents itself to assessment, in the current practice of project assessment. However, the structure must also be adapted to each of the phases of the project life cycle, as analysed in the previous section of this work.

It is particularly important to apply it at the design stage of the project in order to integrate sustainability objectives as objectives to be achieved by the project from the outset. At this stage, depending on the sustainability diagnosis carried out, it is possible to define which sustainability objectives can be integrated into the overall configuration and planning of the project, throughout its life cycle.

For the reading, comprehension and possible use of the content of Table 11.5, it is also important to pay attention or insist again on the following aspects:

- a) The framework is not intended to be, is not, and cannot be, exhaustive, insofar as it is not possible, in the abstract, to anticipate all the situations, dimensions and problems that arise in each dimension of sustainability, in each concrete assessment and in each specific case.
- b) Thus, it is not a checklist, nor should it be used as such. In fact, the checklists themselves do not dispense reflection and critical application. It is, therefore, and fundamentally, a framework that is intended to stimulate reflection and guide the analysis of characterization, diagnosis and assessment, which will have to be developed and operationalized according to the realities and specificities of each concrete case.
- c) The proposed dimensions of analysis (*Individuals, capacities and flourishing; Family and kinship relations; Housing and habitat; Territory and resources; Resources and production of livelihoods; Community, infrastructures, resources, socio-cultural relations*) and their respective sub-dimensions, are paths, perspectives, 'lenses', 'access doors', of an epistemological nature, diverse but complementary, for the knowledge of a concrete reality that is ontologically complex and in which these dimensions are articulated in an interconnected way, at multiple levels and scales.

d) Not all sub-dimensions (and in some cases the dimensions themselves) will have to be analysed, but only those that are applicable and relevant, depending on each specific case and its context. It is unlikely that a project, even with a large size and area of influence, will call for the analysis of all the sub-dimensions of sustainability. This does not mean that the selection of the sub-dimensions to be analysed is the result of the 'taste' or arbitrariness of each evaluator or assessment team. Just as it is not a checklist, it is not a menu either. The evaluator must, therefore, explain the reasons that justify the choices and omissions. Giving an easy-to-understand example, an analysis and assessment of social sustainability related to the indigenous peoples sub-dimension (taking the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reference), only makes sense if in the area of intervention and/or influence of the project there are, permanently, seasonally, or temporarily, indigenous peoples or, if they are not present, if they maintain affective, symbolic, and spiritual connections with this territory.

**Table 11.5 – Dimensions of analysis and criteria of social sustainability**

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
<b>Individuals, Capabilities and Flourishing</b>	Decent housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rights and ownership of land, buildings and constructions.</li> <li>- Quality of housing.</li> <li>- Housing price.</li> <li>- Quality of the environment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the current situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do the people in the project's area of influence have decent housing?</li> <li>- What are the gaps and shortcomings that exist?</li> <li>- How is housing situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</li> <li>- What are the causes of these gaps and deficiencies?</li> <li>- What are the obstacles and limitations to overcoming?</li> <li>- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to improving access to and enjoyment of decent housing?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to this improvement.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to this improvement. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to that improvement.</p>
	Physical and mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- States and health levels</li> <li>-Nutrition</li> <li>- Morbidities history</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the current situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do people in the project's area of influence enjoy adequate conditions for good physical and mental health?</li> <li>- What are the physical and mental health states?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to the improvement of physical and mental health conditions and states?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to this improvement.</p>

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		- Ability to access health systems and services	<p>- How have health conditions and states evolved over time?</p> <p>- What are the gaps and shortcomings that exist?</p> <p>- How is health situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</p> <p>- What are the causes of these gaps and deficiencies?</p> <p>- What are the obstacles and limitations to overcoming?</p> <p>- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation?</p> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>2) No:</b></p> <p>a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p> <p>b) <u>It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to this improvement.</p> <p>c) <u>Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to that improvement.</p>
	Vulnerabilities and states of disability	- Factors of personal vulnerability: age, gender, states of disability, need for care, migration situations, poverty, exclusion, discrimination, dependence,	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <p>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), are the people in the project's area of influence in a situation of vulnerability and/or risk?</p> <p>- How is their situation of vulnerability and/or risk articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</p> <p>- What are the underlying causes of situations of vulnerability and risk?</p> <p>- What are the obstacles and limitations to overcoming?</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to overcoming or improving states of vulnerability and risk?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to this improvement.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b></p> <p>a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p> <p>b) <u>It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u></p>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
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		oppression, violence, exploitation, crime. - Risk factors and external vulnerability: environmental risks, situations of disrespect for human rights, social conflict, insecurity, repression, migration, discrimination, exclusion, poverty, gender-based violence, working conditions.	- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to this improvement. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to that improvement.
	Decent work and livelihood production	- Formal and informal modes of production of means of life. - Sectors and branches of activity.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), are the people in the project's area of influence in a position to produce their livelihoods in a dignified way? - What are the gaps and shortcomings that exist?	<b>Does the project contribute to the improvement of the conditions for the production of livelihoods for a dignified life?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to this improvement.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employment / unemployment.</li> <li>- Job opportunities, working conditions.</li> <li>- Income and standard of living.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</li> <li>- What are the causes of these gaps and deficiencies?</li> <li>- What are the obstacles and limitations to overcoming?</li> <li>- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>2) No:</b></p> <p>a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p> <p>b) <u>It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to this improvement.</p> <p>c) <u>Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to that improvement.</p>
	Access to quality education, at the various levels of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Literacy levels.</li> <li>- Levels of schooling.</li> <li>- Ability to access education systems.</li> <li>- Situations of gender, ethnic, economic, sexual orientation, physical or intellectual disability discrimination.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do people in the project's area of influence have access to quality education?</li> <li>- What are the gaps and shortcomings that exist?</li> <li>- How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</li> <li>- What are the causes of these gaps and deficiencies?</li> <li>- What are the obstacles and limitations to overcoming?</li> <li>- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to improving access to universal and quality education?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to this improvement.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b></p> <p>a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p> <p>b) <u>It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to this improvement.</p>

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Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
		- Quality of equipment. - Quality of teaching.	Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to that improvement.
	Access to vocational training	- Levels of technical and professional training. - Ability to access training systems. - Situations of gender, ethnic, economic, sexual orientation, physical or intellectual disability discrimination. - Quality of equipment. - Quality of technical and professional training.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do people in the project's area of influence have access to quality professional training? - What are the gaps and shortcomings that exist? - How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale? - What are the causes of these gaps and deficiencies? - What are the obstacles and limitations to overcoming? - What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<b>Does the project contribute to improving access to quality vocational training? Does the project contribute to the existence of support and job opportunities after training?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to this improvement. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to this improvement. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to that improvement.

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		- Support and job opportunities after training.		
	Freedom of expression and affirmation of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, cultural and religious identities	- Contexts: political regime, legislative body, human rights, ethnic and religious composition. - People in the project's area of influence: Freedom of affirmation and expression, social acceptance and inclusion or discrimination, repression, and exclusion	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do people in the project's area of influence enjoy freedom of expression and affirmation of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, cultural and religious identities?</li> <li>- How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</li> <li>- What are the obstacles and limitations to this freedom?</li> <li>- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to the existence of conditions for freedom of expression and affirmation of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, cultural and religious identities?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Freedom of movement and	- Mobility networks.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b>	<b>Does the project contribute to the existence of conditions of freedom of movement and means of mobility?</b>

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	means of mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transport systems.</li> <li>- Freedom and ability to move safely.</li> <li>- Geographic mobility.</li> <li>- Access to adequate and quality means of public transport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do people in the project's area of influence enjoy freedom of movement and means of mobility?</li> <li>- How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</li> <li>- What are the obstacles and limitations to this freedom?</li> <li>- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Access to culture, enjoyment and cultural expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities for cultural enjoyment.</li> <li>- Access to cultural facilities.</li> <li>- Opportunities for cultural expression</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do people in the project's area of influence have access to cultural enjoyment and expression?</li> <li>- What are the gaps and shortcomings that exist?</li> <li>- How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</li> <li>- What are the causes of these gaps and deficiencies?</li> <li>- What are the obstacles and limitations to overcoming?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to improving access to cultural enjoyment and expression?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to this improvement.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p>

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			- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to this improvement. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to that improvement.
	Leisure and recreation opportunities	- Access to spaces, structures and equipment for leisure and recreation	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do people in the project's area of influence have access to spaces, structures and leisure and recreational equipment? - What are the gaps and shortcomings that exist? - How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale? - What are the causes of these gaps and deficiencies? - What are the obstacles and limitations to overcoming? - What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b>	<b>Does the project contribute to improving access to spaces, structures and leisure and recreational equipment?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to this improvement. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to this improvement. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u>

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			Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to that improvement.
	Opportunities to develop, exercise and express creative powers	- Contexts: a) educational, cultural development, and vocational training policies; b) work contexts, possibilities and opportunities for creativity at work; c) family contexts; d) associative and community contexts. - People in the project's area of influence: freedom, resources, and opportunities to develop, exercise, and express creative powers	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do people in the project's area of influence enjoy freedom, resources and opportunities to develop, exercise and express their creative powers?</li> <li>- How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</li> <li>- What are the obstacles and limitations to this freedom?</li> <li>- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to the existence of conditions of freedom, resources and opportunities to develop, exercise and express one's creative powers?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>

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	Opportunities to develop and exercise a critical spirit, build a vision of the world and define an ethical orientation of respect for others and solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contexts: educational policies, cultural development; empowerment policies and practices; policies and practices of inclusion and social solidarity; family and community contexts.</li> <li>- People in the project's area of influence: conditions and opportunities to develop and exercise reflective capacity, dialogue with others, and respect for others.</li> <li>- Existence of structures and relationships of support and care.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do the people in the project's area of influence enjoy conditions of empowerment, conditions for the development and exercise of a critical spirit, construction of a vision of the world and an ethical orientation of respect for others and solidarity?</li> <li>- What structures and relationships of support, support and care do you enjoy?</li> <li>- How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</li> <li>- What are the obstacles and limitations to the existence of conditions and opportunities for this?</li> <li>- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to the development and exercise of a critical spirit, empowerment, the construction of a vision of the world and an ethical orientation of respect for the other and solidarity?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>

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	Freedom of participation in public life, association, intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contexts: political regime, human rights, empowerment policies and practices; family and community contexts.</li> <li>- People in the project's area of influence: freedom, resources and opportunities for participation in public life, freedom and opportunities for association and intervention.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on the analysis carried out (categories), do people in the project's area of influence enjoy conditions of empowerment, freedom, resources and opportunities for participation in public life, freedom and opportunities for association and intervention?</li> <li>- How is their situation articulated and structured in relational contexts (environmental, territorial, family, community, societal, global) and on the temporal scale?</li> <li>- What are the obstacles and limitations to the existence of conditions and resources for this?</li> <li>- What structures, potentialities, activities and opportunities are there to improve the situation?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to the existence of conditions of empowerment, freedom, resources and opportunities for participation in public life? Does the project contribute to the existence of conditions of freedom and opportunities for association and intervention?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
<b>Family and family relations</b>	Households (composition, age structure,	- Structure, composition and size of the family unit.	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the structure, composition and size of the households in the project's area of influence?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to the elimination, reduction or compensation of situations of vulnerability of households and their members?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b></p>

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	kinship, vulnerabilities)	- Existence of vulnerabilities and special needs (poverty; illness; single-parent families; heads of households women, children or the elderly; children or elderly living alone)	- Are there situations of vulnerability and special needs (poverty; illness; single-parent families; heads of households women, children or the elderly; children or elderly people living alone)? - How and to what extent does this family structure limit, condition or favor the well-being and flourishing of each of the members of the household? - What trends of change can be identified? In what sense? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Kinship networks and family obligations	- Extended family relationship networks (close and long-distance), support and dependency relationships and functions, obligations.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - How, at what level (location, lands of origin, emigration situations) and in what type (support functions, dependency and obligations) of family relationship networks are the households in the project's area of influence integrated? - How and to what extent do these extended networks and relationships limit, condition or promote the well-being and flourishing of each member of the household? - What trends of change can be identified? In what sense? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b>	<b>Does the project contribute to ensuring or promoting situations and dynamics of well-being and flourishing, provided by family networks to households and their members?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.

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			Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Marriage, dowry, and marriage strategies	- Forms and prevalence of legal and traditional marriage. - Child marriage. - Dowry and marriage strategies. - Family alliances, bonds and obligations. - Positive or negative effects on the well-being and flourishing of	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What forms, legal and/or traditional, formal and informal, does the institution of marriage take in households in the project's area of influence? - How and to what extent do forms of marriage establish and reproduce relations of power, domination and subalternization within the family? - What is the prevalence of child marriage? - What is the prevalence of prearranged or forced marriage? - What forms and functions does dowry assume? - What is its importance in family marriage strategies? - What kind of family alliances, bonds and obligations, relationships of dependence and power are established through marriage? - How and to what extent do previous factors and processes impede, limit, condition or favour the well-	<b>Does the project contribute to ensuring and promoting respect for human rights, women's and children's rights, to ensuring and promoting dynamics of well-being, emancipation, and flourishing, in the context of the structures and forms of marriage prevalent in the project's area of influence?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u>

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		individuals and families.	being and flourishing of people, and in particular girls and women? - What trends of change can be identified? In what sense? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Relations of power, domination and subalternization	- Patriarchal or matriarchal structures. - Roles and powers. - Inheritance rights. - Contributions to livelihoods, and type and forms of management of the family budget. -Child labour. - Responsibilities and division of domestic work.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What kind of structures, patriarchal or matriarchal, prevail in the project's area of influence? What are the roles, decision-making powers and action? - What kind of inheritance rights, legal and traditional, are practiced? - What is the structure and responsibilities of contributions to household livelihoods? - What is the dimension of child labor? - What is the distribution of responsibilities in domestic work? - What is the distribution of responsibilities in care relationships? - What are the prevalence levels of gender-based violence? - What are the prevalence levels of violence against children or the elderly? - What institutions and mechanisms to support victims exist? How effective is it?	<b>Does the project contribute to ensuring and promoting respect for human rights, the rights of women, children, the elderly, and the disabled, to ensure and promote dynamics of well-being, emancipation, and flourishing, in the context of the family structures prevalent in the project's area of influence?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsibilities in care relationships.</li> <li>- Gender-based violence.</li> <li>- Violence against children or the elderly.</li> <li>- Gender discrimination in the allocation of resources, access to education and training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What kind of discrimination (gender, age, physical or mental vulnerability) exists within households in relation to the distribution of resources and access to education and training?</li> <li>- How and to what extent do previous factors and processes impede, limit, condition or favour the well-being and flourishing of people, and in particular children, girls and women, the elderly and the disabled?</li> <li>- What trends of change can be identified? In what sense?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u></p> <p>c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects.</p> <p>c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
<b>Housing and habitat</b>	House – housing (type, building quality, water, sanitation, electricity, outdoor areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Housing: typology, area, materials used, outdoor spaces, water supply infrastructures, sanitation, energy, accesses.</li> <li>- Situations of absence of housing and shelter.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the typology, the occupied area, the materials used in the construction, of the existing houses in the project's area of influence?</li> <li>- What is the size and characteristics of outdoor spaces?</li> <li>- What systems and infrastructures for water supply, sanitation, energy, accessibility do homes serve?</li> <li>- Do the above factors and aspects configure decent housing and habitability conditions?</li> <li>- What situations are there of lack of housing and shelter?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to improving and promoting housing and habitability, in an equitable way, in the project's area of influence?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b></p> <p>a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p> <p>b) <u>It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u></p>

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			<b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	House - complementary activity spaces (sales, small shops and kiosks, backyard / vegetable garden, rest and leisure)	- Complementary spaces to the house: typology (sales, small shops and kiosks, backyard / vegetable garden, rest and leisure) and area.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What is the typology (rest and leisure, commercial/productive, family graves) and functionality (sales, small shops and kiosks, backyard/vegetable garden) of the complementary spaces to the house and what is the respective area? - What is the importance of the activities developed for the formation of family income, for the enjoyment of space, and what is the spiritual importance? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<b>Does the project contribute to preserving or improving the quality and functionalities of the spaces complementary to the housing in the project's area of influence?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects.

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				c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Type of tenure of land and structures and buildings (ownership, lease, informal occupation)	- Policies and legislation on land and property tenure and usufruct. - Ownership of land and constructions and buildings (ownership, lease, informal occupation) and time of possession or occupation.	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What type of ownership of land, constructions and buildings (ownership, lease, informal occupation) is prevalent in households in the project's area of influence?</li> <li>- How long has the households been in possession or occupation?</li> <li>- Who has ownership within the family?</li> <li>- What are the rights of the parties in the event of separation or divorce?</li> <li>- What are the risks associated with informal renting and tenure, in the local and national context, especially for the most vulnerable households?</li> <li>- How do the above factors contribute to the security or precariousness of housing tenure?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to eliminating or reducing precariousness and promoting secure tenure of housing, especially for the most vulnerable family clusters?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Housing availability and price level	- Housing policies and housing promotion.	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the conditions of availability and supply of decent housing in the project's area of influence?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to ensuring or promoting adequate conditions of access to decent housing for all, especially for the most vulnerable?</b></p>

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		- Availability and conditions of access to housing, price level (property, rental)	- What are the conditions of access to housing, price level (property, rent), especially by the most vulnerable? - Do the above factors configure adequate conditions for access to decent housing for all, especially for the most vulnerable? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Environment (environmental quality and environmental risks)	- Environmental quality and environmental risks of the territory in which the house is located (air quality, water quality, noise and vibrations,	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What are the levels of environmental quality in the living spaces in the project's area of influence (air quality, water quality, noise and vibrations, landscape quality)? - What are the levels of environmental risk in the living spaces in the project's area of influence (traffic, soil contamination, exposure to hazardous waste, risks of erosion, flooding and other natural hazards, climate and vulnerability to climate change)? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b>	<b>Does the project contribute to ensuring or promoting the existence of adequate conditions of environmental quality and to reducing environmental risks?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u>

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		landscape, traffic, soil contamination, exposure to hazardous waste, erosion, flooding and other natural hazards, climate and vulnerability to climate change).	Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
<b>Territory and resources</b>	Current and traditional relationship of people and communities with the territory; attachment to the place; sacred places with symbolic value.	- Forms of appropriation and traditional and community use of the territory. - Sacred places or places with spiritual value. - Territory as mediation and expression of the relationship with ancestors. - Affective attachment and	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What are the forms of appropriation and traditional and community use of the territory (spaces for production, recollection, grazing, feasting and celebration) in the project's area of influence? - Are there sacred places, with spiritual value or ancestral connection? - What is the level of affective attachment and connection to places on the part of people and communities? - What is the importance of the previous factors, in ways of life and culture, in the construction of identities and feelings of belonging? - What trends of change can be identified? In what sense? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b>	<b>Does the project respect and safeguard the forms of appropriation and traditional and community use of the territory, sacred places or places with spiritual value, the affective connection and attachment to places by people and communities?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u>

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		connection to places.	Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Ecosystem resources and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policies for the conservation, promotion and use of natural resources.</li> <li>- Availability of natural resources and ecosystem services.</li> <li>- Exploitation of natural resources and ecosystem services by local communities.</li> </ul>	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the availability of natural resources and ecosystem services (soils, forests, water bodies, natural pastures, non-wood forest products and wild fruits, medicinal plants, wood and firewood).</li> <li>- What are the forms and extent of the use of natural resources and ecosystem services by local communities, depending on local contexts and national policies?</li> <li>- Is this use environmentally sustainable?</li> <li>- What is the importance of this use in the production of livelihoods and livelihoods for people and communities?</li> <li>- What trends of change can be identified? In what sense?</li> </ul> <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<b>Does the project contribute to ways of using natural resources and ecosystem services in a socially and environmentally sustainable way?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects.

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				c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Pressures on resources and capture of resources by elites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policies for the conservation, promotion and use of natural resources.</li> <li>- Pressures on the sustainability of resources.</li> <li>- Pressures on traditional community spaces and rights.</li> <li>- Capture by the elites.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the forms and dimension of the intensive and extensive use of natural resources, of a business nature, depending on local contexts and national policies?</li> <li>- Is this use socially and environmentally sustainable?</li> <li>- What pressures are exerted on the sustainability of resources (land degradation, deforestation, extractivism, real estate speculation, appropriation of community spaces).</li> <li>- What events and processes of private appropriation of community and indigenous people's territories and resources are ongoing, have they happened in the past or are foreseeable in the future?</li> <li>- What effects have these processes had, have or can have on the ways of life and culture and on the production of livelihoods and livelihoods of people, local communities and indigenous peoples?</li> <li>- What trends of change can be identified? In what sense?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p>c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p> <p><b>Does the project contribute to ensuring ways of using natural resources in a socially and environmentally sustainable way, while respecting the rights, ways of life and culture of local communities and indigenous peoples?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>

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	Territorial cohesion, marginalised or discriminated territories	- Territorial cohesion policies and actions. - Differentiation of the territory in terms of resources and access to resources, accessibility, social equipment and infrastructure, levels of health and well-being.	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <p>- How does the project's area of influence fit into the territory, in terms of territorial cohesion (sectoral and territorial cohesion policies and measures, natural resources, accessibility, social facilities, infrastructure, employment and livelihoods, poverty, health and well-being)?</p> <p>- What trends of change can be identified? In what sense?</p> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to territorial cohesion in your area of influence?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to this objective.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to this objective. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to that objective.</p>
	Environmental quality (at territorial level)	- Environmental policies and legislation. - Environmental quality and environmental risks of the territory (air	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <p>- What environmental protection and environmental risk reduction policies and actions affect the territory in which the project's area of influence is located?</p> <p>- What are the levels of environmental quality in the territory in which the project's area of influence is located (air quality, water quality, noise and vibrations, landscape quality)?</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to ensuring or promoting the existence of adequate conditions of environmental quality and to reducing environmental risks?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p>

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		quality, water quality, noise and vibrations, landscape, traffic, soil contamination, exposure to hazardous waste, erosion, flood and other natural hazards, climate and vulnerability to climate change).	<p>- What are the levels of environmental risk in the territory in which the project's area of influence is located (traffic, soil contamination, exposure to hazardous waste, risks of erosion, flooding and other natural hazards, climate and vulnerability to climate change)?</p> <p>- What trends of change can be identified? In what sense?</p> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>2) No:</b></p> <p>a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p> <p>b) <u>It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives.</p> <p>c) <u>Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
<b>Resources and forms of livelihood production</b>	Employment; working conditions, hygiene and safety; child labour.	<p>- Labor and employment policies and practices.</p> <p>- Formal and informal employment</p> <p>- Salary levels and means of remuneration</p> <p>- Discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual</p>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <p>- What are the levels of employment and unemployment in the project's area of influence? How are they distributed by sectors of economic activity?</p> <p>- What are the salary levels and means of payment (money, gender)?</p> <p>- What working conditions, hygiene and safety exist?</p> <p>- What are the levels of child labour?</p> <p>- What are the levels of slave, semi-slave, forced labour?</p> <p>- What are the levels of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, access to work and wage levels?</p> <p>- What are the levels of informal work? How are they distributed by sectors of economic activity?</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to ensuring or promoting decent conditions of employment and remuneration, working conditions, health, hygiene and safety, absence of child, slave or forced labour, absence of discrimination, absence of harassment, abuse and sexual exploitation?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p>

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		orientation, access to work and wage levels. - Working conditions, hygiene and safety. -Child labour. - Forced and slave labour. - Sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation.	- What are the levels of sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Ways of life based on land ownership and cultivation	- Policies and legislation on land and property tenure and usufruct. - Agricultural development policies. - Ownership of land tenure (ownership, lease, informal occupation) and time of	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What type of ownership of land, buildings and constructions (ownership, lease, informal occupation) is prevalent in family farms in the project's area of influence? - How long have the households been in possession or occupation? - Who has ownership within the family? - What are the risks associated with informal renting and tenure, in the local and national context, especially for the most vulnerable households? - How do the above factors contribute to the security or precariousness of land tenure? - Size of holdings.	<b>Does the project contribute to improving the conditions and means of agricultural and livestock production, productivity, access to markets, with particular attention to the most deprived, poor or vulnerable family farms?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u>

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		possession or occupation. - Type of ownership of buildings, constructions and structures. - Forms of land sharing and land usufruct. - Crops and plantations, animal husbandry. - Production for self-consumption - Production for the market, formal and informal sales, earning income.	- Type of crops, production conditions, productivity. - Type of animal production. - Availability of water for irrigation. - Production for self-consumption. - Subsistence production, production for the market, formal and informal sale. - Conditions of access to markets. - Income levels. - Access to agricultural extension services. - What are the dynamics of land use change? - How do these dynamics put pressure on the availability of land for agriculture? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Hunting, fishing, beekeeping, collection of non-wood forest products.	- Existing resources, type and form of access to resources. - Sustainability of resources and	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What resources are available? - What kind of use is made? - How do legal regulations condition this use? - What type of activities are developed in the collection and use of resources, location in space and time (seasonality).	<b>Does the project contribute to improving or reconverting the conditions of resource use activities, especially for the most needy, poor or vulnerable families?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b>

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		<p>pressures on them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Type of legal regulation, limitations and constraints.</li> <li>- Importance for ways of life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is there appropriation of resources by elites?</li> <li>- What pressures (environmental, economic, social) are felt on resources and their sustainability?</li> <li>- What is the importance of using resources for the livelihoods of people, families and communities, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p>Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. b) <u>It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. c) <u>Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Small-scale mining and prospecting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Existing resources, type and form of access to resources.</li> <li>- Sustainability of resources and pressures on them.</li> <li>- Type of legal regulation,</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What mining resources are available?</li> <li>- What kind of use is made?</li> <li>- How do legal regulations condition this use?</li> <li>- What type of activities are developed in the collection and use of resources, location in space and time (seasonality).</li> <li>- Is there appropriation of resources by elites?</li> <li>- What pressures (environmental, economic, social) are felt on resources and their sustainability?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to improving or reconverting the conditions of resource use activities, especially for the most needy, poor or vulnerable families?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p>

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		limitations and constraints - Importance for ways of life.	- What is the importance of using resources for the livelihoods of people, families and communities, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Artisanal production.	- Characteristics and forms of artisanal production. - Type of products and usage values. - Forms of product circulation. - Importance for ways of life.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What are the types of productive organization (individual, family, cooperative)? - What is the type of artifacts and their purpose (utilitarian products, cultural expression)? - What kind of materials are incorporated and what is the access to these materials? - What are the forms of circulation of products (exchange, sale, offer)? - What is the importance of the activity in shaping the livelihoods of people, families and communities? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<b>Does the project contribute to improving the conditions of artisanal production activities, especially for the most needy, poor or vulnerable families?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u>

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				c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Access to micro-credit.	- Systems and conditions for access to microcredit. - Importance for the formation of livelihoods.	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What systems and conditions for access to microcredit are available?</li> <li>- What kind of complementary support (management, production, marketing) is granted?</li> <li>- What is the balance/evaluation of the available systems, and the results obtained?</li> <li>- What risks do they pose to the poorest and most vulnerable families?</li> <li>- What is the importance of microcredit in shaping the livelihoods of people, families and communities?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to providing support (financial literacy, management, productive organization, marketing, etc.) to the most needy, poor or vulnerable families, who have resorted or intend to use microcredit systems?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>

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	Business activity (industry, commerce, services, tourism).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business structure and diversity.</li> <li>- Sectors and branches of activity.</li> <li>- Multinational companies.</li> <li>- Turnover and employment volume.</li> <li>- Working conditions, gender equality and human rights.</li> <li>- Migratory flows associated with economic activities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the spatial distribution of economic activities?</li> <li>- What is the distribution of companies by sectors and branches of economic activity?</li> <li>- What is the distribution of companies by volume of staff employed and by turnover?</li> <li>- What is the importance of local employment in the structure?</li> <li>- How dependent are local communities on employment in certain companies?</li> <li>- What are the main legal standards on working conditions, gender equality and labour rights?</li> <li>- What are the effective working conditions, gender equality and respect for labour rights?</li> <li>- What is the type, characteristics and seasonality of migratory flows associated with economic activities?</li> <li>- What are the living and working conditions of immigrants?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to promoting employment, vocational training, working conditions, gender equality, and ensuring respect for labour and human rights, including the rights of immigrants?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Illegal activities: corruption; drug trafficking; illegal hunting,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Type of existing activities.</li> <li>- Degree of dependence on</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What type of illegal activities exist and their distribution in the territory?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to providing support to people and communities, especially the most needy, poor or vulnerable, involved, dependent or victims of illegal activities?</b></p>

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	fishing, and logging; sex work; contraband; theft/crime).	people and communities. - Risks and dangers associated with illegal activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the degree of importance that illegal activities have for the formation of livelihoods of people and communities, especially the most needy, poor and vulnerable?</li> <li>- What are the risks and dangers associated with illegal activities, for people and communities?</li> <li>- What are the levels of gender-based violence?</li> <li>- What are the levels of labour exploitation, namely child labour?</li> <li>- What victim support systems and mechanisms are available?</li> <li>- What is the role and degree of intervention of public security forces?</li> <li>- What is the role and degree of intervention of private security forces?</li> <li>- What potential is there for structuring and implementing alternative activities?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to the structuring and implementation of alternative activities to illegal activities?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Other forms of livelihood support: exchange of products;	- Informal activity of collection and reuse of waste and garbage.	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What other forms of livelihood support exist in the project's intervention area?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to reducing precariousness and insecurity, improving the conditions for the production of livelihoods and providing support to people and families, particularly the most deprived, poor or vulnerable?</b></p>

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	provision of care and assistance; compensation; remittances from emigrants; pensions; dowries; gifts.	- Type of non-market production (domestic services, care and assistance, exchange of products). - Social benefits (pensions and allowances) and compensation. - Remittances from emigrants. - Dowries, gifts.	- What degree of importance do they have for the formation of livelihoods of people and communities, especially the most needy, poor and vulnerable? - What are the levels of risk, precariousness, insecurity and vulnerability associated with these activities? - What conditions and opportunities exist to improve the situations and forms of support for the production of livelihoods? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
<b>Community, infrastructure, resources, socio-cultural relations</b>	Basic infrastructure (water, sanitation and drainage, electricity, waste collection, road access, transport,	- Water supply systems. - Drainage and sanitation systems. - Waste collection and treatment systems. - Electricity supply systems.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What is the coverage level of the water supply networks? - What is the level of treatment of drinking water? - Are tariff levels segmented according to family income, with social tariffs for the poorest and most vulnerable? - What is the level of coverage of drainage and sanitation systems? - What are the waste collection and treatment systems and their level of coverage?	<b>Does the project contribute to promoting the improvement of systems and coverage rates for water supply, sanitation, electricity, waste collection and management, telecommunications, with affordable prices for the poorest and most vulnerable, and to promote the improvement of the road and transport network?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b>

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	telecommunications)	- Telecommunications systems. - Road network and transport systems.	- What is the level of coverage and quality of the electricity supply systems? - Are tariff levels segmented according to family income, with social tariffs for the poorest and most vulnerable? - What is the level of coverage and quality of telecommunications systems? - What are the characteristics, level of service, coverage and state of conservation of the road network? - What is the type, quality and coverage of transport systems? - What are the main needs and needs? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Equipment (education, health, culture, religion), leisure spaces, diversity, quality and quantity	- Social equipment. - Leisure spaces.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What are the characteristics, quality and quantity of social facilities (education, health, culture, social support, religion) available? - What are the characteristics, quality and quantity of leisure and sociability spaces? - Are there good access and security conditions? - What are the main needs and needs? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.	<b>Does the project contribute to reducing or meeting the needs in social equipment and spaces for leisure and sociability?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.

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			<b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Media	- Type and diversity -Property -Accessibility - Social function -Use	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What mass media are accessible to people and communities? What are its characteristics and expansion? - Are there community media outlets (radio, newspaper, wall newspaper, bulletin, others)? - Is there signal coverage for mobile communications? - Are there public internet access points? - What is the degree of use of the internet and social networks? - What social functions do the different media perform? - What are the main needs? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b>	<b>Does the project contribute to reducing or addressing the shortages in the media, including community media?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u>

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			Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Decentralized public services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agricultural extension services.</li> <li>- Employment and vocational training services.</li> <li>-Justice.</li> <li>- Social security and social support.</li> <li>- Public safety.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are there agricultural extension services?</li> <li>- Are there employment and vocational training services?</li> <li>- Are there justice services? What are the conditions for access to justice, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable?</li> <li>- Are there social security and social support services, support services for victims of gender-based violence, support services for children and the elderly?</li> <li>- Public security services.</li> <li>- What is the diversity, differentiation, quality, quantity, reliability, equity of access of the various existing services?</li> <li>- What are the main needs?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to reducing or addressing shortages, improving decentralized public services and ensuring access to services for all, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
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	Commercial and product supply spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Existing spaces in the community for the supply of products and for the sale of products.</li> <li>- Type, diversity and conditions (area, logistics, hygiene and safety)</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What spaces are available in the community for the supply of consumer products, agricultural inputs and other products necessary for local livelihoods?</li> <li>- What spaces are available in the community for the sale of agricultural and other local products?</li> <li>- What are the characteristics, diversity, hygiene and safety conditions of these spaces?</li> <li>- What are the main needs?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to reducing or addressing shortages and improving access to and functioning of spaces for community supply and the sale of local products?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Community lands and community natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community lands, type, area and regime of use.</li> <li>- Risks and threats to</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is there community-owned and/or managed land? What is the type, area and regime of use?</li> <li>- What environmental risks and social and economic pressures are felt on community lands?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to ensuring the maintenance and good management of community lands, the sustainability of community use of natural resources, and reducing or eliminating risks and pressures on community lands and resources?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b></p>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
		community property. - Natural resources for community use, type and regime of use. - Sustainability of resources, pressures on resources.	- Are there processes of appropriation of community lands by elites? - What type of natural resources are the object of community use? What is the regime and form of use? - What is the sustainability of resources and what kind of social and economic pressures are felt on resources? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Political and administrative organization, participatory structures	- Political system. - Political-administrative organization and forms of local power. - Participatory structures and forms of decision-making.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What is the type of political system, the level and the form of exercise of democratic rights? - What is the structure of the political-administrative system, organs of decentralized political power and forms of local power? - How do decentralised and local government bodies articulate with existing forms and practices of traditional and community leadership?	<b>Does the project contribute to ensuring or strengthening forms of democratic participation and empowerment of local people and communities, namely the most vulnerable and subaltern?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
			<p>- What are the type of participatory structures, participation rights, effective access to participation and forms of decision-making?</p> <p>- Are there forms and practices of discrimination (social, cultural, gender, age, or other)?</p> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives.</p> <p><u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Community structures and relations of power, domination, dependence and subalternization	<p>- Community organization, leadership systems, and power.</p> <p>- Participatory and decision-making structures.</p> <p>- Relations of domination, dependence and subalternization.</p>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What are the main institutions, forms of community organization, systems and practices of leadership and power, including traditional institutions, forms and leaderships?</p> <p>- What importance and role do participatory structures and democratic deliberation have?</p> <p>- What forms of discrimination or exclusion, based on race, ethnicity, gender or age, are practiced within the processes of leadership, participation and deliberation?</p> <p>- What relations of domination, dependence and subalternization are associated with or result from community institutions, forms of organization and leadership?</p> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project respect local and traditional institutions and forms of leadership and promote their involvement in the project?</b></p> <p><b>Does the project promote discussion and critical reflection on institutions and practices that violate human rights, promote discrimination or exclusion based on race, ethnicity, gender or age?</b></p> <p><b>Does the project value institutions and forms of leadership that promote participation and collective deliberation?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
			<b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	<u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Culture, religion and identities. Structures and spaces of sociability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural and religious institutions.</li> <li>- Worldviews, customs, beliefs, values, taboos.</li> <li>- Local and traditional knowledge.</li> <li>- Structures and spaces for sociability, festivity, sanctuaries and other sacred places or places</li> </ul>	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What kind of cultural institutions and practices, including those of a religious type, are present in the project's area of influence?</li> <li>- What are the prevailing worldviews, customs, beliefs, values and taboos?</li> <li>- What is the repertoire of local and traditional knowledge and its forms of transmission?</li> <li>- What are the main dimensions of intangible cultural heritage, languages and dialects, oral tradition, music, dance, art?</li> <li>- What is the typology and location of elements and sites of tangible and built cultural heritage?</li> <li>- What is the typology, location, and characteristics of spaces for sociability, festivity, religious celebration, and other sacred places or places with spiritual value?</li> </ul>	<b>Does the project respect the cultural institutions and practices that occur in its area of intervention and influence?</b> <b>Does the project contribute to the safeguarding and enhancement of local knowledge and cultural, tangible and intangible heritage?</b> <b>Does the project promote discussion and critical reflection on cultural institutions and practices that violate human rights, result in violence and subalternization of women, violence against children and vulnerable people, social and racial segregation?</b> <b>Does the project value institutions and cultural dimensions of an emancipatory and empowering nature for people and communities?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
		with spiritual value. - Ceremonies, festivities and festivals. - Material and built cultural heritage. - Intangible cultural heritage, languages and dialects, oral tradition, music, dance, art.	- What is the frequency and duration of the ceremonies, festivities and festivals? - Who are the main actors in the field of cultural institutions and practices? How is their position and social influence structured? - What are the main characteristics, trends and dynamics of the cultural dimensions mentioned above? - What elements of control, regulation or emancipation are present and functional in cultural institutions and practices? <b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project. <b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.	Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Cooperation and mutual aid networks	- Structures, forms and processes, legal and illegal, of cooperation and mutual aid. - Obligations, reciprocity, power asymmetries and dependence.	<b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b> - What kind of cooperation and mutual aid networks exist in the communities in the project's area of influence? - Do they have a formal or informal structure? - Do they operate on a legal basis and with legal practices and activities or on a non-legal basis, considering the current legislation? - What kind of obligations (reciprocity, dependence, obedience, subordination, exploitation) do they impose? - What dimensions of empowerment and emancipation do they support?	<b>Does the project promote and value cooperation and mutual aid networks that do not impose obligations that harm freedom and dignity, that provide support and care, and promote the empowerment and emancipation of people and communities?</b> <b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives. <b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
			<p>- What kind of support (economic, social, psychological, legal, other) do they provide?</p> <p>- What importance do they have for the ways of life of people and communities?</p> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p>Explain why.</p> <p><u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u></p> <p>Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives.</p> <p><u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u></p> <p>c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects.</p> <p>c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Social inequalities and vulnerabilities	<p>- Social stratification and asymmetries.</p> <p>- Situations of poverty and vulnerability (social, economic, gender, physical, psychological)</p>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <p>- What is the level of stratification and social asymmetry prevalent in the project's area of influence?</p> <p>- What are the levels of social inequality?</p> <p>- What are the levels of poverty, absolute and relative?</p> <p>- What other dimensions and situations of vulnerability (social, gender, physical, age, psychological) are prevalent? What are the levels of vulnerability?</p> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to the reduction of levels and situations of social inequality, poverty and vulnerability?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b></p> <p><u>a) Does not apply to the project</u></p> <p>Explain why.</p> <p><u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u></p> <p>Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives.</p> <p><u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u></p>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
				c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.
	Trade unions	- Diversity, characteristics, representativeness and activities.	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the type, number, sectors of activity of the existing trade union organizations?</li> <li>- What problems do they seek to answer?</li> <li>- What type of federation are they part of?</li> <li>- What is its representativeness, social recognition, level of activity and actions developed?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project respect the organisations and promote their involvement in the project?</b></p> <p><b>Does the project support the activities of trade unions that promote social sustainability?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
	Non-Governmental Organizations, associations	- Diversity, characteristics, representativeness and activities.	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the type, number, sectors of activity of non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations that exist?</li> <li>- What problems do they seek to answer?</li> <li>- What is its representativeness, social recognition, level of activity and actions developed?</li> <li>- What type of federation are they part of?</li> <li>- What results were obtained in the projects and actions developed?</li> <li>- Who are the main funding entities?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b></p> <p>Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b></p> <p>Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project respect non-governmental organisations and promote their involvement in the project?</b></p> <p><b>Does the project support the activities of non-governmental organisations that promote social sustainability?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Crime and Community security	- Crime typology and levels. - Security levels.	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the structure and means of public security systems and devices?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to promoting the improvement of the security levels of people and communities, in respect for human rights?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b></p>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structures and means, formal and informal, of public or private security.</li> <li>- Organized self-defense groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To what extent are public security systems captured by elites?</li> <li>- What is the structure and means of legalized private security systems and devices?</li> <li>- What kind of informal groups (youth, former combatants, martial arts practitioners, organized surveillance and self-defense groups) act at the level of security within communities?</li> <li>- What are the main types, forms of organization, areas of activity and levels of crime prevalent?</li> <li>- What are the safety levels of people and communities?</li> <li>- What are the main problems and needs of people and communities in terms of security?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p>Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b>  <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u>            Explain why.  <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u>            Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives.  <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u>            c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects.            c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>
	Emigration and immigration flows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emigration flows and relations with emigrant communities.</li> <li>- Immigration flows, origin, cultural characteristics,</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the levels of emigration, the places of destination and the trends of emigration flows?</li> <li>- What kind of emigration networks, legal and illegal, operate in the project's area of influence? How do they organize themselves?</li> <li>- What causes and motivations underlie emigration?</li> <li>- What are the risks and costs associated with emigration processes?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Does the project contribute to defending and promoting the rights of migrants, providing support to their organizations, promoting social support and protection, occupational safety and security, and other social sustainability objectives?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	<b>1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project.</b> <b>2. Sustainability diagnosis</b> <b>3. Sustainability objectives</b>	<b>Analysis of the project intervention/actions</b> <b>(Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)</b>
		social inclusion and exclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What kind of relationships exist between local communities and emigrants?</li> <li>- What are the levels of immigration, the places of origin and destination and the trends of immigration flows?</li> <li>- What kind of immigration networks, legal and illegal, operate in the project's area of influence? How do they organize themselves?</li> <li>- Which government entities, non-governmental organizations and other civil society entities provide support to immigrants and immigrant communities?</li> <li>- What are the forms of self-organization, mutual help and identity affirmation of immigrant communities?</li> <li>- What kind of resources are mobilized and what activities are developed in support of immigrants and new immigrants?</li> <li>- What are the conditions of accommodation, access to work and work of immigrants?</li> <li>- What is the degree and forms of social inclusion or exclusion of immigrants?</li> <li>- What social integration strategies are developed by immigrants?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>2) No:</b></p> <p>a) <u>Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why.</p> <p>b) <u>It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives.</p> <p>c) <u>Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>

Analysis of the social sustainability of projects				
Analysis dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Categories	1. Characterization/analysis/ of the current situation, trends and dynamics, without project. 2. Sustainability diagnosis 3. Sustainability objectives	Analysis of the project intervention/actions (Criteria for assessing the social sustainability of the project)
	Indigenous peoples	Indigenous Peoples (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007)	<p><b>1. Characterization of the situation and trends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the project's area of influence include indigenous peoples' communities and/or territory?</li> <li>- What kind of collective, specific and historical connection do they have with the territory and natural resources?</li> <li>- What are the main identity factors and aspirations?</li> <li>- What are the main characteristics of their culture and social institutions?</li> <li>- What traditional knowledge do they hold and practice?</li> <li>- What are their ways of life?</li> <li>- What is their social, economic and legal status in the context of the society in which they operate?</li> <li>- What forms of discrimination and social exclusion are they subject to?</li> <li>- What are their vulnerabilities?</li> <li>- What natural risks and social pressures are felt on their territory and ways of life?</li> <li>- What are their main needs, needs and aspirations?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Social sustainability diagnosis</b> Develop the diagnosis and identify needs related or relatable to the project.</p> <p><b>3. Social sustainability objectives</b> Depending on the identified needs, define the social sustainability contributions/objectives for the project.</p>	<p><b>Does the project respect the identity, autonomy, dignity, culture and ways of life of indigenous peoples?</b></p> <p><b>Is their full participation in the project promoted?</b></p> <p><b>Has the project obtained the Free and Prior Informed Consent of the indigenous communities or peoples?</b></p> <p><b>Does the project contribute to promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, valuing their culture and traditional knowledge?</b></p> <p><b>Does the project contribute to the well-being of indigenous peoples, communities and peoples?</b></p> <p><b>1) Yes:</b> Explain how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project contributes to these objectives.</p> <p><b>2) No:</b> <u>a) Does not apply to the project</u> Explain why. <u>b) It does not contribute, but it also has no negative effects</u> Define how, at what stage, at what level, at what scale and through what concrete measures the project could contribute to these objectives. <u>c) Has potential risks and/or negative effects</u> c1) Define measures and actions aimed at avoiding or mitigating these risks and effects. c2) Define how, at what stage, at what level, and through what concrete measures the project could be (re)configured to contribute to those objectives.</p>

#### 11.4.2.7 Operationalization of sustainability criteria and indicators

The sustainability criteria presented in the right-hand column of the previous Table 11.5 still need to be disaggregated into their component elements or sub-criteria and operationalized by means of indicators. The indicators, when necessary, can be aggregated into indexes.

Take, as an example (Table 11.5), the criterion ***Does the project contribute to the reduction of levels and situations of social inequality, poverty and vulnerability?*** in the sub-dimension *Social inequalities and vulnerabilities, dimension Community, infrastructure, resources, socio-cultural relations*, the following table summarizes its operationalization.

**Table 11.6 – Operationalization of the social sustainability criteria**

Criterion	Subcriteria	Concepts	Indicators	Indexes	
<i>Does the project contribute to the reduction of levels and situations of social inequality, poverty and vulnerability?</i>	Social inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define the concepts.</li> <li>- Identify areas of overlap, contiguity, or complementarity.</li> </ul>	Indicator 1 Indicator 2 Indicator n	Index(es)?	Index(es)?
	Poverty		Indicator 1 Indicator 2 Indicator n	Index(es)?	
	Vulnerability		Indicator 1 Indicator 2 Indicator n	Index(es)?	

It is not the objective of the present work to deepen and explore this phase of the assessment. The main objective was to reflect on the paths and processes that lead to this moment, since, if there is a great profusion of work dedicated to the construction of indicators and indices from a sustainability perspective, the same is not true for the discussion of the foundations of social sustainability and the processes of its assessment. Currently, a wide variety of frameworks and indicators on themes and dimensions of social sustainability are available worldwide, whether within the scope of the United Nations and its network of institutions, the European Union, Governments, the various Development Banks, business, economic and financial activity, such as *Socially Responsible Investment* and *Corporate Social Responsibility*, non-governmental and other organisations, as well as in the fields of social impact assessment and social sustainability assessment. Labuschagne and Brent (2006) and Colantonio and Dixon (2011) identify more than three dozen, to which others could be added.

If it is necessary to take into account the specificities of scope and objectives, their complexity and other characteristics, it is possible to use several of the available indicators or create new indicators, depending on the needs and particularities of each assessment process and respective contexts. Indicators of a qualitative or quantitative nature can be chosen, which can be used in a complementary way. When choosing or creating indicators, however, it is essential to maintain a critical perspective and take into account the limits and limitations of each indicator.

The perspective of the assessment of social sustainability, defended in this work, is a critical, participatory perspective that gives particular attention to the most vulnerable and subordinate.

This perspective therefore favours the choice of indicators whose understanding can be accessible and explainable to anyone, regardless of their level of education. On this basis, the use of indicators, whether qualitative or quantitative, does not dispense with a qualitative analysis and description of the realities that the indicators are supposed to represent.

One of the limitations pointed out to the indicators is their reductionist character in relation to what they represent, which can result in distortions, simplification of complex social realities, and even manipulation by those in positions of power (Hale et al, 2019).

Although often considered as accurate representations, indicators are signs that require interpretation (Reid and Rout, 2020) and contextualization. The authors underline that the construction of indicators is often carried out from a technocratic paradigm and based on mechanistic models, treating the complexity of socio-ecological systems in a reductionist way, ignoring their intangible properties, privileging quantification, standardization and universal application, to the detriment of the specificities of the contexts, which distorts sustainability assessments. The technocratic and mechanistic perspective is hardly compatible with participatory and "transparent" assessment frameworks, in which participants clearly express their values and identify quantitative and qualitative indicators that allow them to determine the change according to these parameters (Reid and Rout, 2020).

#### **11.4.2.8 Assessment and classification**

Assessments usually translate into classifications that seek to express the degree and level of performance of projects based on the application of the defined criteria.

Regarding assessment and classification techniques, and from the perspective of open and participatory processes, the same concerns of simplicity, comprehension and ease of use are raised as those that arise in the choice and use of indicators.

It is possible to use assessment techniques based on multicriteria analysis (Omann, 2004; Munda, 2003, 2005) or to less complex techniques, including the assessment matrices, commonly used in environmental impact, social impact, social sustainability assessment processes, in which the project's actions are assessed by assigning a performance rating according to each defined assessment criterion.

In the case of sustainability assessment, the rating is assigned according to the performance of the project in each sustainability criterion, and the overall aggregation of the results obtained in each criterion.

Vanclay et al (2017), within the scope of the assessment of social impacts, propose a risk scale, from 1 to 5, for negative impacts, in which: 1 – Insignificant risk; 2 – Reduced risk; 3 – Moderate risk; 4 – High risk; 5 – Catastrophic.

Gibson (2006), as part of a sustainability assessment, uses a scale from I to IV, in which: I – The project is fully beneficial in terms of sustainability gains, with no significant damage or negative effects expected; II – The project provides net gains, in terms of sustainability, but implies some negative effects that, however, can be mitigated; III – The project does not ensure net gains, in terms of sustainability, and significant negative effects or risks are likely or possible; IV – The project entails net losses, in terms of sustainability, including significant negative effects or risks that cannot be adequately mitigated.

Colantonio and Dixon (2011), in projects in urban areas, use a scale from 1 to 5 to classify the contribution of projects in terms of social sustainability, in which: 1 – Very negative; 2 – Negative; 3 – Neutral; 4 – Positive; 5 – Very positive.

These are mere examples, among many others.

Evaluation scales are value scales, that is, based on values or valuations that attribute a certain importance (positive or negative) to the project's actions.

In participatory processes, this valuation may vary according to the values and interests of the participants and will have to be consensual.

However, it is also based on some objective parameters, recurrently used in the environmental and social assessment processes of projects, such as the temporal duration of the action (punctual, short, medium or long term), the scale on which it is felt (local, regional, national, transnational), its quantitative dimension (quantity, volume, area), among other factors.

The fact that projects are assessed according to each sustainability criterion raises questions of global assessment, considering the aggregation of evaluations in each criterion. An aggregate evaluation based on simple averages means that equal importance is given to all criteria, which hardly corresponds to the reality and needs of each concrete evaluation situation. The use of weighted averages implies the definition and application of weighting criteria.

Finally, a central issue is the management of *trade-offs* between positive contributions in terms of social sustainability and negative risks and effects. To what extent are the risks and negative effects acceptable, even in a project that has significant positive contributions? Choices are at stake, in a context of decision on the configuration and even the feasibility of the project. The rules proposed by Gibson (2005, 2006) constitute a basis for the management of *trade-offs*, as already analysed earlier in this work (see Table 10.4, section 10.2).

#### **11.4.2.9 Cumulative effects and monitoring**

The methodological process outlined in Table 11.2 also includes two moments of great importance that are part of the various types of environmental and social assessment:

- The analysis of synergistic or cumulative effects of the project under assessment with other projects with intervention or influence in the study area;
- Monitoring the effects, as well as the actions and measures implemented.

These two moments are fundamental, namely, monitoring, but are not deepened in the scope of this work, beyond the general indications already presented in Table 11.2.

### 11.4.3 Final considerations

The main objective of chapter 11 of this work was to seek to clarify how the principles and objectives of sustainability identified in chapter 8, following a demand for social sustainability and a process of critical analysis of the concept, could be considered and operationalized in processes of assessment of the social sustainability of projects.

Thus, and considering the limits of a doctoral thesis, in chapter 11 the operationalization at the level of sustainability criteria was privileged, in relation to the definition of indicators and assessment and classification techniques, whose approach was very summarized.

What was called the *conceptual level*, from the evaluator's perspective, was also privileged in relation to what was called the *configurational level*, where the relationship between the parties involved in the assessment is processed.

In this way, the *configurational level* was addressed in its general aspects, but was not the object of in-depth analysis, which would be a matter for another doctoral thesis. It is important, however, to underline that this is a topic of central importance in assessment processes, because it is at this level that the social process of assessment and decision-making takes on effective and often definitive and irreversible configuration and consequences.

## 12. Conclusions

The present PhD Thesis was closely motivated by the professional practice that the author carries out in the field of environmental and social assessments, and the search for some answers to the problems and difficulties that this practice faces daily and the for the reconfiguration and evolution of these practices, in a perspective of socio-environmental sustainability, in general, and social sustainability, in particular.

In this context, the present work had as its central theme and object the concept of *social sustainability* and the search for its operationalization in a *social sustainability assessment framework* that is not only reactive, but guiding and proactive, which assesses, but also promotes, the sustainability of planned actions (policies, plans, programs or projects).

The relative novelty of the field of assessments from a sustainability perspective, and the complexity of the topics involved, determined, from the outset, an eminently exploratory research in which the literature review and the state of the art, and the reflection and critical elaboration from the elements collected in it constituted fundamental tasks.

As social sustainability is the central subject of the thesis, the treatment of the theme could not fail to begin with its contextualization in the more general scope of sustainability and sustainable development. Part I of the thesis was thus dedicated to the analysis, from a critical perspective, of the notions of sustainable development and sustainability.

It sought to analyse the process of construction of the dominant conception of *sustainable development*, its main characteristics and the structural contradictions it entails.

The analysis carried out provided some bases to substantiate the perspective that there is a dialectical contradiction between the concerns and desires expressed in the concept of *sustainability* and the constraints posed by the dominant worldview and ideology that consider the current mode of production, appropriation, exchange and consumption indisputable and irreplaceable. These constraints are reflected in the limitations of the design and policies of sustainable development, and the respective programmatic guidelines, proposals and action measures that often oscillate between voluntarism, goodwill and mere recommendation, and whose results fall far short of the needs expressed in sustainability concerns and aspirations.

In Part II, without losing the general perspective of socio-environmental sustainability, the analysis was focused on the notion of *social sustainability*, the specific object of the thesis, seeking, on the one hand, to understand how it emerged within the scope of sustainability and sustainable development problematics and, on the other hand, how the themes it mobilizes also emerged within the scope of other fields, more or less close or confluent. Subsequently, a search for an understanding of the meaning of the notion of *social sustainability* began. Several proposals for the definition and operationalization of the notion were analysed, as well as other proposals that, although not directly related to social sustainability, actually address its problematics, such as *human rights*, the *capability approach* of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, the perspective of *buen vivir*, and the updating of the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia* developed by the current of critical realism. From the analyses and discussions developed, from a critical perspective, resulted a proposal for the conception of *social sustainability as a relational process of human flourishing* and as *a process of caring*, necessarily comprising an actual dimension and a utopian dimension, understanding as utopia, following Karl Mannheim, the search for the realization of desirable, emancipatory and achievable futures, in a horizon of possibilities. The path taken in search of social sustainability was guided by a critical perspective, already present and expressed in Part I, understood as including the valorisation of reflexivity, a critical position on certain social practices and structures, a critique of dominant ideological positions and justifications of these practices and structures.

This path included the passage through several central points, such as the need to overcome dichotomies such as society/nature, individual/society, structure/action, facts/values, objective/subjective.

Although this work and the path explored in it focuses on the social, there is another aspect that is structurally valued: the involvement with the natural world, that is, the need to overcome the society/nature dichotomy and the assumption that social relations are inseparable from relations with nature.

The overcoming of the individual/social dichotomy constituted another central point, valuing the individual, but also social relations and sociabilities, to the extent that there is no well-being and flourishing that is not necessarily felt and experienced at the individual

level, just as there is no individual well-being or flourishing outside the structures, contexts and processes of socialization and sociability, of its stimuli and its conditioning or blockages. However, if the networks of social relations and sociabilities are indispensable for well-being and flourishing, the quality of relations and sociabilities does not depend only on the fact that they exist, nor only on moral values, on individual will, on 'practical reason' and 'practical action'. This quality, that is, whether networks of relationships and social relations are a factor of well-being or malaise, is also the result of social structures, namely by the way they structure the production and reproduction of inequalities, relations of domination and subalternization, which influence, condition and, sometimes, determine the configuration of social relations and the nature of interactions.

Therefore, the path could not fail to pass through the critical point of the configuration of structural relations (social and between society and nature) in the capitalist mode of production.

Concluding this journey, the conception of *social sustainability* as a *relational process of human flourishing* and as a *process of care* was configured in a set of *principles of social sustainability* and a set of *social sustainability objectives*, resulting from those principles, presented as an open proposal.

This set of principles and objectives, of an ethical nature, proposed at the end of Part II, constitutes a matrix basis for the normative orientation of practical action and, concomitantly, a *reference of values* for the *assessment of the social sustainability of the planned actions*, the specific object of the doctoral thesis.

This assessment and its practical processuality were the theme of Part III, in which, finally, the theme of environmental and social assessments of planned actions was addressed, but in the light of the discussions held in Parts I and II.

Considering that reference of values simultaneously as a foundation, compass and horizon, advancing in the practical application of the assessment of social sustainability implied, then, that each planned action, each policy, each plan, each program, each project, could be questioned in order to obtain an answer to the following questions:

- Does it contribute to the achievement of social sustainability objectives? In what way? To what extent? Is such a contribution sufficient or should it be deepened and amplified?
- If it doesn't contribute, what is the reason or reasons for this to happen? What needs to be changed? What needs to be done?

This step naturally implied operationalizing the principles and objectives of social sustainability in *assessment criteria* and considering the issue of *indicators*. On the other hand, it was important to discuss and define the *configuration of the assessment processes, as a social processes* and as *a methodological processes*.

The discussion of these issues would necessarily have to be done in the context of the processes of environmental and social assessment of planned actions that constitutes the field in which this work is inserted and, particularly, in the way in which, in this field, the perspective of sustainability has been integrated and developed.

In this way, it was addressed how environmental and social assessment, based on sustainability principles and objectives, is at the centre of the perspectives that emerged in this first quarter of the 21st century and that advocate *sustainability assessment* as the third generation of assessment processes, following the oldest and most consolidated *environmental and social impact assessment*, and to the also institutionalized *strategic environmental assessment*.

The present work is part of this general context of environmental and social assessments and, particularly, in the context of the emergence of *sustainability assessment*. The contribution it intends to make is mainly in terms of the content and objectives of the assessment of the social dimension of sustainability.

To achieve this contribution, several aspects have been addressed in the chapters and sections of Part III, starting with an overview of the emergence of several generations of environmental and social assessment, followed by a more detailed analysis of the *sustainability assessment perspective*.

The focus was then on the assessment of the social dimension, and a contribution to the frameworks for assessing the social sustainability of projects and their operationalization was proposed.

As a proposal, it is one of many other possible proposals and, as a contribution, it was built, to a large extent, integrating elements of other existing proposals, seeking to add something else, from a critical perspective of human flourishing.

After recalling the starting questions that motivate the assessment of social sustainability and discussing the legitimacy of its application to any type of project, we began by reflecting on the more general configuration of the assessment processes, structured in two levels of analysis and action, interconnected, but distinct, which reflect the dual nature of participatory assessment processes: that of instrument of analysis and assessment, and that of social process.

At the first level, which was called the *conceptual level*, there are analytical, scientific and technical requirements, but also requirements of an ethical-normative type.

The second level, which is *emergent* in relation to the first, configures a social process of communication, discussion and deliberation, structured by interests, values and powers, to which are placed demands of representativeness, information/communication, expressiveness, commensurability between forms and ways of thinking and knowing, and democratic deliberation. This process is commonly referred to as public participation or involvement of affected and interested parties. In the present work, taking as a reference Norbert Elias' concept of *figurations*, it was preferred to designate it as *the configurational level*, in order to highlight the characteristics of a structured process, in which the interdependencies and interactions between people or groups, which result in the course of action, are governed by asymmetrical relations of power(s) (social, economic, cultural, political), in a flexible interweaving of tensions.

The identification and recognition of these asymmetries, their logics and the constraints they introduce into these processes is essential so that the interaction between people and groups is as balanced as possible and that consensus and agreements can result from it.

Considering the complexity of the themes, the limits and the specific objectives of the present work, the *configurational level* was not the object of deepening.

The central theme of Part III was, then, the *conceptual level*, that is, the level at which, in the position and perspective of the evaluator, the process of knowledge about the reality in which the project will be inserted and which will change is structured; the level at which

the assessment criteria that make it possible to determine the positive, negative or neutral value of the actions assessed are structured, from a social sustainability perspective; the level at which actions are proposed and established to ensure and/or promote social sustainability. In short, the level at which the methodology for analysing and assessing the social sustainability of projects is configured and implemented, from the evaluator's perspective.

In this context, bearing in mind and integrating elements of the methodological processes of other forms of social and environmental assessment, such as environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, some considerations were made about the strategic perspective in sustainability assessment, some of the main differences between social sustainability assessment and social impact assessment were mentioned, the main moments of the methodological process were indicated, and the issue of assessment throughout the life cycle of the projects was addressed.

The analysis then focused on the aspects that constitute the main motivation of Part III of this work: the analytical framework, the dimensions, sub-dimensions and criteria of social sustainability that guide the assessment, seeking to operationalize, at the level and scales of the assessment of the social sustainability of projects, the principles and objectives of sustainability with which Part II was concluded.

Part III concluded with a reference to other moments and aspects of the assessment process that were not further explored, such as the issue of indicators, the analysis of cumulative effects and the monitoring of processes.

In summary, the possible contributions that this work may have given are mainly in the following aspects:

- i) Critical analysis of the dominant discourse on *sustainable development* and its structural contradictions;
- ii) Valuing the transformative and emancipatory potential of the concept of *sustainability*;
- iii) Search for theoretical foundations and proposal for the construction and definition of the concept of *social sustainability as a relational process of human flourishing* and as *a process of care* and, as such, as an *emancipatory*

- and *utopian process*, in the sense of actualizing possible and desirable futures, through the intervention in the conditions of the present;
- iv) Configuration of the concept of social sustainability, translating and disaggregating it into *principles and objectives of social sustainability*, normatively oriented towards the *promotion of the sustainability* of human actions;
  - v) Proposal of a *framework for assessing the social sustainability of projects* that integrates and operationalizes those principles and objectives, namely, in the *methodological process*, in the *general analytical structure* and in the *analytical and normative framework* (dimensions, sub-dimensions, categories and criteria for analysis, diagnosis, promotion and assessment of social sustainability).
  - vi) More generally, this work is mainly a map of problems and obstacles, and a guide for reflection on them, with some proposals for guidance and possible directions in a perspective of promoting social sustainability in a horizon of socio-ecological sustainability.

This path, long, tentative, with an exploratory and unavoidably incomplete dimension, would not be the most recommendable for a doctoral thesis, but it was, however, the only one that could motivate the author, at the current moment of his professional career, to 'retreat' *from empirical to theory*, in order to improve his own empirical practice.

To an evaluator or environmental and social assessment team, as with other professional practices of social intervention, the problems and the required responses (usually within a limited time frame) are always posed in a holistic and interconnected way, in various dimensions of their complexity, appealing to interdisciplinary structures and practices, whose reality and visibility seems to be, however, inversely proportional to the frequency with which they are valued and advocated.

The present work sought to find some orientations and paths in this wide sea of complexities.

The results obtained throughout this process, although limited, have already had the power to modify the professional practice of the author, in which the perspective of social sustainability has been progressively and significantly deepened, hopefully for the benefit

of people and communities, to whom this work is directed, but also of the projects themselves.

If, moreover, the present work can contribute to stimulate reflection and the search for paths, by other professionals, from a perspective of social sustainability, and if it can be useful for all those who are confronted and interested in the paths of sustainability, then it will have been worthwhile.

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