

ICSS 2013: Mediterranean challenges towards sustainability

Aims and scope

The concept of sustainable development was proposed in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD), also known as the Brundtland Commission, defining sustainable development as *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*.

Sustainability is now recognized as a key issue facing our society, ensuring the coexistence of economy and the environment.

This definition leads to two notions:

- the notion of the concept of "needs", which can be defined as protecting those most vulnerable in today's society,
- the capability of the environment to meet present and future needs, accompanied by the notion of limited natural resources now widely shared by all.

Moreover, the definition leads to a dual approach:

- in space : everyone has the same rights, wherever they live, which leads to protect countries from the South, less fortunate than their counterparts from the North, in the implementation of sustainable development. A widely used example is the right for all to water,
- in time, implying the preservation of our resources, and emphasizing the rights as well as duties of mankind on earth.

From these notions and this approach result the three pillars of sustainable development:

- Environmental constraints: preservation, enhancement, improvement of natural resources,
- Social equity : governance, meeting in a more efficient and equitable way the needs for all (health, housing, transportation, culture...), people with disabilities, gender equality,
- Economic development : economic progress, innovation, initiative...

A sustainable development process must necessarily integrate each of the three parts without giving special preference to one of them. It must also create links from local to global, between sectorial and territorial approaches.

Sustainability science is rooted in the concept of sustainable development. It aims at bringing out the scientific and technological underpinnings of the concept of sustainability. It recognizes the fundamental link between science and economy, freeing the idea of sustainable development from purely political agendas and bias.

Sustainability science is not in opposition to economic development. Actually, it can provide guidance in response to the different crises our society faces: economic, but also environmental, public health, social and political.

This new discipline aims at integrating, through a trans-disciplinary approach embracing the social and natural sciences, various individual disciplines, up until now considered separately and independently, such as science and technology, politics and economics, human

lifestyles and behavior. Sustainability science is not the exclusive domain of universities and research institutions, as it necessarily reaches into the business, administrative and political sphere.

Aix-Marseille University will host the ICSS 2013 conference on 16-17 September 2013 in cooperation with University of Tokyo, Arizona State University, University of Arizona, La Sapienza and Barcelona Tech. It is the fourth conference of its kind after those held in Tokyo (2009), Rome (2010) and Phoenix (2012). The conference shall focus, but not exclusively, on the challenges faced by the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean, which is in itself a small world inside the world, shall be considered as a laboratory used to demonstrate the role of sustainability science in our society.

In the Mediterranean the increase of problems linked to the absence of sustainability is perceptible almost everywhere in the area: marine pollution; strong pressures on the environment mainly due to the coastal development of tourism activity, and also to urban development and agricultural irrigation; disparities between Northern and Southern countries accompanied by increased inequality, even within the countries in the North themselves.

According to the Plan Bleu* tendency scenario for the horizon of 2025, degradations on both sides and the risks of instability will increase, initially affecting emerging development markets.

Without any changes to this prospect, the Mediterranean area could enter into a spiral of decline as it progressively sheds the assets which make its abundance, with the risk of neglecting part of its population increasingly driven into a profound discontentment difficult to endure.

Such prospects must lead to a global reflection on the Mediterranean space, on its role, its competitiveness and its assets. It also provides the opportunity to properly manage economic development, improving the quality of life, and enhancing employment, all within the respect of related ecosystems and their limits.

The aim of the conference is to bring together researchers and practitioners from various sectors to help advance and promote sustainability science.

The emphasis on trans-disciplinarity for the contributions at the conference can help prove that, working all together and sharing the variety of our expertise and experience, specific solutions can be arrived at.

Focus will be on 4 themes, within the general heading of “Mediterranean challenges towards sustainability”:

- Sustainable management of natural resources (held in Aix-en-Provence)
- Global solutions for sustainable development (held in Aix-en-Provence)
- Population, health and food security (held in Marseille)
- Sustainable solutions for water challenges (held in Marseille)

The question remains: what kind of development do we want for our changing society and for future generations? The conference may hopefully help provide some answers.