

Strategy of Overall Social Development: The Challenge of Sustainability

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Abstract

The author exposes an idea of universal sustainability, which capturing on a whole the interconnected processes of sustainable changes in society. Applying this conceptual idea opens the door for ripen implementation of overall social strategy at global and national levels in the coming decade.

Keywords: Sustainability • Agenda • Social strategy • Inclusive institutions

Introduction

Theoretical point of view shared by the author coincides with the position of proponents of the idea of universal sustainability, the property of which is inherent in all social practices, and not just mediating the relationship between society and its environment. This approach is consistent with concrete integrative studies of sustainable development in the main interdependent areas in the coming era of digitalization that have recently been successfully completed.

Proceeding from the criteria of system sustainability including the resilience imperative, it becomes legitimate to choose the further trajectories of the overall social transformation as a way of progress. It can be named the Sustainable Overall Social Transformation (SOST) [1].

Towards the Fundamentally Updated Version of Agenda and National SD Strategies

Evidently the interpretation of overall social progress in the process of future system transformation essentially connects with the framework integrative concept of sustainable development Agenda 2030. Its adoption of the UN in 2015 had a tremendous positive impact on the activities of the governments of many countries and various non-governmental organizations. In this regard, the proposed improvements to the global indicators and individual provisions of Agenda can be of great practical value [2].

However, by opinion of many researchers, the initial framework concept fixed in Agenda remains selectively segmental and in fact far from the system one. It mainly focuses on environmental and humanitarian issues, the conservation of natural resources and the use of reproducible resources, overcoming the consequences of climate degradation, improving the efficiency of individual institutions [3].

In theoretical respect, the Agenda continues to rely on the long-standing textbook model of the “three pillars” of sustainable development—environmental, economic and social. Proceeding from this initial structure approach, the environmental targets are purely exogenous parameters that predetermine the desired changes in economic changes, especially within the most resource-intensive sectors. Such a premise is unrealistic. Actually, the state of the

environment ranges undergoes changes in a result of all social activities, and not only the functioning of distinguished economic sectors. It can be argued that in a larger degree the achievement of environmental imperatives is a consequence of institutional innovations, especially in relation to social capital, and adaptation to fundamental technological innovations at the system-wide level [4-6].

The perfectionist interpretation of the inclusive institutions for SD, represented by the adherents of the framework concept, also provokes a critic. It should be borne in mind that not all effective institutions needed for sustainable development are inclusive; moreover, not all can be incorporated into the framework of contractual relations. That has been said above primarily concerns the institutions of public regulation [7]. Many of them, in principle, are not inclusive, such as progressive taxation rules. Besides, key institutions that function in corporate and other limited competition markets, a number of informal political institutions and, largely, informal social norms conditioned by the specifics of national development are certainly not inclusive [8].

Based on the above reasoning, seemingly the question about the new version of the Agenda has timely posed in relation to the future decade; perhaps to the second half of the adopted time horizon (2024-2030).

At first place, a fundamental expansion of the composition of indicators measuring the degree of sustainability of distribution processes is required. In addition to the traditional indicators of income differentiation, it would be fruitful to incorporate indicators of structural changes in the composition of total capital (in particular, the share of rental capital), as well as indicators of migration tension and regional gaps. Besides, a need for the use of indicators of gaps (reduction/increase) in the level of economic development between countries, especially between the poor and developed, should fulfill.

It is also advisable to incorporate targets (relative to goal 10) in reducing the level of income differentiation in the form of recommended ranges (“forks”) into the updated Agenda. The formulation of target (10.5), concerning the regulation of financial markets, clearly needs improvement. It is necessary to emphasize the regime of solid monetary and financial policies, supplemented by the neutralization of illegal/criminal economic activity and the anti-corruption course on a stable legal basis.

In our opinion, the time comes directly to fix the imperative of achieving a just international economic order as an additional target of the Agenda. He assumes an unhindered stable trading regime, as well as stable regimes of international capital movement in its various forms and labor force, operating on the base of the coordinated application of global, regional and national legislation [9].

The identified fundamental corrections regarding Agenda can fully extend to national sustainable development strategies. Currently, they are accepted in a few countries (Germany, Switzerland and Canada). However, their number may increase significantly in the coming years after curbing Covid-19, taking

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into account at least the preparation of voluntary national reports on the implementation of the SD goals in grate range of countries [10,11].

What Next

In regards to individual countries, substantiation of realistically feasible progress in the main directions of SOST can become the most important preliminary stage in the development of a national development strategy. Judging by international experience, it is definitely advisable to fix the benchmarks of sustainable transformations within the framework of a system development strategy for the entire society. It makes sense to emphasize the fact that SD goals/targets had incorporated into the 13th and 14th five-year national plans of China, as well as in 11th and 12th Malaysia plans [12,13].

At the same time, it is worthwhile to remain realistic. Certain directions of the national strategy may involve the implementation of purposefully accelerated and obviously unstable transformational changes.

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How to cite this article: Martynov, Arkady. "Strategy of Overall Social Development: The Challenge of Sustainability." *Arts Social Sci J* 12 (2021) 473