Potential consequences of sustainable development

– A study based on the Sustainable Development Goals and Timor-Leste

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Potentiella konsekvenser av hållbar utveckling

– En studie baserad på de hållbara målen och Timor-Leste

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Acknowledgements

I will follow through this study with an open mind and great awareness that there is not one single right answer when it comes to sustainable development but hopefully with a better understanding of the consequences of the concept. My personal goal is that by understanding the purpose of this study I will gain valuable lessons of how to move forward and make something that is already good even greater for the future.

My burning interest for international relations and social development has always been with me as I am born to a Swedish mother and a British father and therefore since birth have had two cultures. The dual cultural legacy is a big part of my identity and something I value highly. My curiosity and broad interest in the society has always inspired me to analyse and explore the society and world that I live in. I therefore decided to study one year at University of Melbourne in Australia. At University of Melbourne I was further educated in the concept of sustainable development and was introduced to the sustainable development implementations in Timor-Leste.

My upbringing combined with my environmental studies, I believe has put me in the forefront of understanding the importance of progressing sustainable development. My ambition is to work towards a balanced interest for sustainable development across all branches to influence the development towards a more environmentally conscious society. Therefore I found sustainable development and Timor-Leste not only interesting because of the topics discussed but the opportunity to work with my favourite subjects from a completely new perspective.

It is the combination of sustainable development between different cultures and people that primary interests me in further deepening my knowledge in how a western concept, such as sustainable development, impact an eastern society such as Timor-Lestes'. I am a strong believer that it is always important to understand every aspect of a concept, both negative and positive, to fully be able to continue developing.

I would also like to thank my supervisor Anna Peterson knowing that this study would not have been possible without her. I greatly appreciate her enthusiasm and support.

Abstract

Sustainable development has been overpowered by the urge and haste to develop political economic growth over the will to sustain and develop social development. Sustainable development has become the buzz-word of the last centuries and is commonly used as voices around the world are demanding leadership and international policies on poverty, inequality and climate change. Demands on worldwide sustainable development have spread like wildfire and so has the progress of the concept. Aligned with the increased interest, potential consequences of the concept have become a reoccurring discussion and a subject famous for its complexity.

The research area of this literature study is the potential consequences of sustainable development. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and Timor-Leste are the specific target fields.

The aim of this study is to achieve clear indications of how the consequences of sustainable development influence the outcome of sustainable development implementations by answering two research questions; firstly, what are the major potential consequences of sustainable development? And secondly, how have these consequences influenced the sustainable development implementations in Timor-Leste?

This study has shown that the consequences of sustainable development are that the concept is built on an oxymoron, is a result of westernisation, and is rushing development. All consequences were strongly interlinked with each other and were proven to influence the sustainable development implementations in general as well as specifically in Timor-Leste. The consequences were primarily proven to negatively influence the social and local development but also positively influencing the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals in Timor-Leste.

The results of this study will help strengthening the strategy of how to further improve sustainable development implementations in the future.

Table of contents

1 Background

Timor-Leste is one of the youngest countries in the world having achieved its formal independence less than two decades ago in 2002. The collapse of the government left the post-conflict state in such a critical condition that the nation was put in front of the challenge to rebuild their nation and new government from scratch (Carvalho & Palmer, 2012). Due to the timing of the independence the challenge to rebuild Timor-Leste as a modern nation has included and evolved around sustainable development. The social, economic and environmental growth in Timor-Leste is therefore tied to the general interest for sustainable development (Brand, 2012).

There is a need for further knowledge of the consequences of sustainable development in order to value the risk of failing to sufficiently consult and include locals from an outsider-concern oriented approach when developing a country. Previous research has failed to analyse the relevance of implementing sustainable development, when dealing with smaller scaled issues, such as the post-conflict traumatised state Timor-Leste (Carroll-Bell, 2015).

This study is an attempt to increase interest in understanding both negative and positive outcomes of sustainable development; not the least from a developing countries' point of view. Both sustainable development and Timor-Leste are part of two well established research fields; however, the sustainable development in Timor-Leste is a sidetrack still worth developing. Studies on sustainable development as a concept is a relevant study field as the concept is growing and becoming a part of every aspect of our modern society, especially since the launch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. The concept has since then expanded from consisting of three Ps; people, profit and planet, to five Ps by adding peace and partnership (UN, 2015).

Studies on sustainable development in specifically Timor-Leste is of relevance as its regarding such recent and present history in a new country with great sustainable development interests. Timor-Leaste has since independence day experienced successive waves of foreign aid and sustainable development schemes. Many of these programmes have been argued to have been fraught with issues; and are often accused of failing to sufficiently include social development (McGregor 2007; Dada 2016).

1.1 Aim, research questions and purpose

The aim of this study is to achieve clear indications of how the consequences of sustainable development influence the outcome of sustainable development implementations. The following research questions will function as guidelines throughout the study:

1. What are the major potential consequences of sustainable development?

2. How have these consequences effected the sustainable development implementations in Timor-

Leste?

The purpose of this study is that the answers to my research questions will strengthen the strategy of how to further improve the implementation of sustainable development in the future.

2 Methodological foundation

This study is basing all its material on previous studies and therefore classifies as a literature study. This is a suitable method as I am writing my study from Sweden and there is already a wide range of previous studies performed both onsite and offsite, providing enough literature to gather material promoting both for and against sustainable development implementations in Timor-Leste. However, there is a lack of academic journals criticising the Sustainable Development Goals. Most possibly because the Sustainable Development Goals are being implemented in present time and it is therefore difficult to draw any conclusions on the results yet. Therefore the majority of the criticism towards sustainable development in this study is based on and connected to previous critical studies of the concept as a whole.

Previous methods used for studies on sustainable development and Timor-Leste have often been field studies or literature studies. The major difference in these two methods is that the research data in a field study is gathered onsite from "the real world" and literature studies gather data offsite based on previous studies. The common ground is that different methods are used for the same purpose; to gather enough material to answer the research questions. There are both strengths and weaknesses with every method and the most appropriate often depends on the study field (Hartley, 2009).

Most literature used in this study are academic, especially in the form of original articles published in scientific journals but also legitimised websites relevant to the subject, particularly the United Nation's and Timor-Leste's official websites. Much of the academic journals are recommended reading material for students studying The Bachelor of Environments at University of Melbourne, this to guarantee academically accepted and relevant sources. Sources that are not recruited from the University of Melbourne are sourced via Google Scholar mainly via key words such as, sustainable development, Timor-Leste, the Sustainable Development Goals, social development and the United Nations. To guarantee quality sources no academic readings were taken into account unless shown to have been previously cited in other studies.

2.1 Delimitations and justifications

There are many different fields to explore within sustainable development and therefore delimitations are needed.

Firstly, there are three dimensions of sustainable development; social, environmental and economic. In order to achieve sustainability, interest in social, economic and environmental development needs to be balanced evenly so they are essentially as important as each other. However, the interests of these three sustainable development dimensions are often unbalanced and depending on the sustainable development cooperation the concept is often analysed through different frameworks matching the co operations main interest. In general the social dimension has commonly

been recognised as the weakest dimension. This uneven balance of interests in development has slowed the process of sustainable development down (Lehtonen, 2004). Since previous interest in social development is proven to be the weakest and there is a need for a balanced interest in order to reach sustainable development, it is of relevance to mainly focus this study on the social dimension.

Secondly, sustainable development is analysed through different scales. By focusing on the social dimension through a local scale the importance and complexity of meeting local conservation and priorities through a concept based on a global scale will be highlighted.

Finally, the study is limited by the choice of method. As the study is based on the literature method this study will look at potential consequences exclusively through previous research and will not analyse the subject onsite or via Timorese locals or experts. The study is written from Sweden and without the insight of being physically onsite. The strengths of using the literature and offsite method is that the author is not manipulated by the onsite environment and therefore able to keep a more personal neutral option that favours a fact based study. The weakness is that social development is difficult to truly measure from offsite. The risk being that the results of the research questions is not relevant from a personal local Timorese's perspective.

2.2 Anatomy of the study

Throughout the study sustainable development and Timor-Leste is explained both in and out of relation of each other. In the following section 3 and 4, important contextual information are given, where separate brief historical contexts of sustainable development and Timor-Leste are presented. Sustainable development's and Timor-Leste's relationship with the United Nations will also be introduced in these sections. Sustainable development and Timor-Leste are mostly explained out of relation of each other in these sections, except for in section 4.1.

Thereafter, in section 5, summaries of potential consequences of sustainable development in general are explained, each consequence is also explained in context of Timor-Leste. Therefore each sustainable development consequence is explained both in and out of relation of Timor-Leste in this section and will answer research questions 1 and 2.

In section 6 summarises of the different potential consequences are further discussed including the authors personal view on the consequences of sustainable development and the influences of sustainable development implementations. To complete the study a conclusion is given in section 7.

3   Sustainable development historical context

The most commonly used definition for sustainable development was coined in United Nations' (hereafter UN) report *Our Common Future,* also known as the Brundtland Commission's report, in 1987. Brundtland's definition states that sustainable development is the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Redclift, 2005). Sustainable development has since the Brundtland Report become a politicised concept that evolve around the decision making for social, economic, and environmental development across the world.

There are three dimensions of sustainable development; social, economic and environmental (Lehtonen, 2004). The three dimensions are also commonly recognised as the triple bottom line or as the three Ps; People, Profit and Planet (Żak, 2015). In order to achieve sustainability, all three dimensions need to be balanced evenly. Achieved balance allows long-term social inclusion, economic growth and environmental protection (UN, 2017a).

Out of the three dimensions, the social development has commonly been recognised as the weakest. This has created an uneven balance of interests in development which slows the process of a sustainable and developed society down. In general terms the issue with social development is that is it difficult to measure and very individual depending on the situation. A global and commonly accepted definition for social development is not available, largely because there is no global agreement on what 'social' means. This primarily because social development is bipolar - meaning that it refers both to individual and collective levels. Therefore the perception of 'social' differs depending on the underlying framework and context (Lehtonen, 2004). Melamed, Scott and Mitchell (2012) states that the history of a balanced international sustainable development policies is not encouraging, as social, economic and environmental development has been proven hard to link and put together into a working policy in the past.

However, in recent years interests in social development has gained increased recognition. Social development is now often commonly entwined with economic and environmental development which creates better conditions for a sustained and developed future (Colantonio, 2009).

3.1   The United Nations and sustainable development

The UN as an intergovernmental organisation, has since the end of the second world war in 1945, been on a mission to unite the world in order to keep world peace. The UN promotes international cooperation and work towards developing friendly relations, maintaining peace between nations and currently exist of close to 200 Member States. The idea is that the UN function as a platform where the Member States discuss, and hopefully agree on, ways to solve global problems together. The UN has for the majority of its existence prioritised the upholding of the protection of human rights and the

promotion of democracy. In recent years and present time, the Members States are also working together to fight climate change. The UN have the last decades merged all of their previous priorities together with climate change and fitted all of these priorities into the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development is therefore now one of the UNs' main priorities when confronting the world issues of the 21st century. The understanding is that sustainable development will lead the path for the UN to maintain and reach all of the UNs' priorities. This has resulted in a number of different sustainable development meetings, reports, global climate agreements and portals launched by the UN (UN, 2017b).

In September 2000 the world was railed around a common 15-year agenda to tackle the indignity of poverty. Eight Millennium Development Goals (hereafter MDGs) were established to measure universally-agreed objectives for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. The goals included preventing deadly but treatable disease and expanding educational opportunities to all children, among other development imperatives (UN, 2017c). The results of the MDGs were a success and voices around the world started demanding further leadership on poverty, inequality and climate change. In 2012 world leaders came together at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio to discuss the process of establishing new ambitious and extensive universally applicable goals (UN, 2012).

By 2015, the target year for the MDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter SDGs), came into effect to replace the MDGs. The SDGs, officially known as *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development*, are guiding policy and funding from 2015-2030 and began with a historic pledge to permanently end poverty everywhere. On January the 1st 2016 the implementations of the SDGs officially came into force all around the world. Unlike the MDGs, that distinguished developed and developing countries, the SDGs apply to all countries alike. The SDGs, compared to the MDGs, are more extensive and comprises 17 goals with collectively 169 targets. The 17 goals have also extended the three Ps of sustainable development; people, profit and planet, into five Ps by adding peace and partnership. All goals and targets are interlinked, equally as important and related to climate change. The SDGs are not legally binding and the success of the goals relies on each country to take ownership and responsibility. Each country is expected to establish a national framework by implementing the goals into national plans, programmes and policies. Each country is also expected to follow-up and review the process of the SDGs. By creating national none legally binding frameworks the SDGs encourage all stakeholders to contribute towards reaching the goals in a way that is adapted to best ability, ensuring that no one is left behind (UN, 2015).

The common difference from previous sustainable development initiatives is that the SDGs include everyone, not just world leaders or richer countries but also private people and poorer countries, to participate. The SDGs in particular encourage everyone to have the ambition to live up to the goals to their own ability. This has resulted in a broader range of engagement, awareness and intuitive around the world (UN, 2017c).

4 Timor-Leste historical context

Timor-Leste has a rich international history, possessing a longstanding colonial legacy with over 400 years of Portuguese colonisation, 24 years of Indonesian occupation, and three years of UNs' transitional administration period. In 1999 a vote for independence was conducted which precipitated a violent, deadly and destructive backlash from militia groups (Carvalho & Palmer, 2012).

During colonisation, the Portuguese exploited the environment and natural resources in Timor-Leste but unlike most other colonials, the Portuguese did not intend to eradicate the local Timorese. This helped the Timorese society to preserve its native socio-political structure throughout the Portuguese colonisation. The more serious threat to the local population and social development began with the Indonesian occupation. The Indonesians demanded the Timorese to integrate with Indonesian culture and regime which the Timorese naturally resisted. A violent couple of decades followed and the local Timorese were quickly restricted from their socio-political rights.

In 1999, when Timor-Leste finally became free from the Indonesian regime, the country was left without a functioning government and without any legal Timorese representatives. Timor-Leste was left on its knees with a fallen economic, environmental and social society (Flores-Castillo, 2013).

Today the newly-independent country stands in front of the enormous task to stabilise their country and depend on international non-governmental support to do so. Poverty is still a major issue in Timor-Leste, especially in the rural areas where the majority of the population live (Carvalho & Palmer, 2012). Carroll-Bell (2015) amongst other researches, argue that the desired outcome of a completely thriving new country is yet unfulfilled.

4.1 The United Nations and Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste's collapsed government left the state as a blank canvas for sustainable development organisations to paint their ideas and theories on (Carroll-Bell, 2015). For a large amount of non-governmental organisations, the rebuild of Timor-Leste was a great opportunity to truly practice and test their sustainable development theories.

Since 1999 to present time, the UN has been involved in the rebuild of the nation with the aim of improving the future and general welfare of the Timorese. The UN was especially involved in the rebuild of the country as from 1999 to 2002, when the UN temporarily took over the administration on a peacekeeping and state-building mission. The aim was to improve the future and general welfare of the people in Timor-Leste. During the three years of administration, the UN assisted and provided technical advice and assistance to build strong and capable public institutions at national and sub-national levels (Flores-Castillo, 2013). Many authors argue that Timor-Leste did not become completely independent until the United Nation's transitional administration period was over and Timor-Leste was left to fight for its own on the 20th of May in 2002 (Carvalho & Palmer, 2012).

Today, the UN's SDGs are functioning as a roadmap to balance the social, economic and environmental issues still remaining in the newly built state of Timor-Leste. The hope, perception and ambition are that Timor-Leste will reach a balanced sustainable and developed society in time of the SDG's target year, 2030. Over the recent years of independence Timor-Leste have ambitiously, and many times successfully, kept striving towards a sustainable and developed future (Timor-Leste, 2017).

5 Potential consequences with sustainable development

5.1 Sustainable Development as an oxymoron

Although Brundtland's definition is generally seen as the coined and established definition for sustainable development, settling for one singular definition for the concept has been proven a great challenge in the past and is to present day a huge discussion. The issue may lay in the fact that sustainable development is built of two words, sustainable and development, both which individually are filled to the brim with multiple contradictory definitions. Having these contradictory terms appear in conjunction, sustainable development is often argued for being an oxymoron (Redclift, 2005).

Owens (2003) argues against Brundtland's definition with the argument that the search for a singular definition of sustainable development should be abandoned all together. Bender (2012) suggests that there are more likely a series of working definitions that all in their own way are correct, yet different, definitions of sustainable development. Other studies argue that if Bender's statement is true the inconsistency and open attitude towards sustainable development invites anyone to reapply and manipulate the term to fit their personal needs. This is argued to make sustainable development meaningless in practice as there is no guarantee that everyone's personal interests, hopes, and aspirations benefit the environment (Kates et al. 2016).

As proven, a generalised definition is difficult to achieve. Ostrom (2009) states that the biggest issue with sustainable development indeed is the broad range of definitions around the world. Her argument being that the inconsistency of technical terms and concept descriptions complicates the process of accurately measuring degradations and improvements of sustainable development. Ostrom (2009) continues by arguing that without a common framework to refer to the consensus of scientific findings of sustainable development is not guaranteed and results remain irrelevant if based on different frameworks.

Another outcome from the consequence is that the definition of the concept largely differs depending on how and by whom it is framed as people and organisations are known to frame matters in a way that ultimately benefit their own credibility (O'Neill et al, 2015). Sustainable development is often looked at through either an economic or environmental lens which has led to environmentalists and economists taking two different stands towards the meaning of sustainable development and this divide have created an "us and them" attitude. The differently framed definitions also acquire different amount of credibility in particular societies. As sustainable development acquire different amount of credibility in particular societies the definition of sustainable development display a great deal of interpretive flexibility which leads to varies interests to shape and frame their definition in a way that recruits the most amount of credibility and benefits their own interests (Miller, 2000).

5.1.1 Case Timor-Leste

By the time of independence in Timor-Leste in 2002, the MDGs were already established and implemented around the majority of the world. This has resulted in a more stable and settled international idea and definition of sustainable development. Therefore, Timor-Leste missed out on the first confused decades of sustainable development as an oxymoron. This because, Timor-Leste have since independence day been able to use the MDGs as a guiding framework in their process of establishing their own governmental strategies of sustainable development. Timor-Leste was therefore in 2002, quickly able to agree on a national vision, much similar to the then exciting MDGs and also the later created SDGs. The government in Timor-Leste started off with creating an integrated package of policies aligned with the MDGs, called *Timor-Leste 2020, Our Nation Our Future*. Further using the MDGs as a framework and definition for sustainable development the government of Timor-Leste created a post-2015 consultation process to define a successor framework to the MDGs. The result being the currently used strategy plan, called *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030* (hereafter SDP) (Timor-leste, 2010).

By 2015, the year of the launch of the SDGs, Timor-Leste was therefore in the forefront of sustainable development worldwide when considering their progress in establishing local strategic plans. The government in Timor-Leste had already embraced many of the SDG's in their local politics and could easily adapt and create a substantial roadmap for the implementations of each goal. Hence why Timor-Leste was able to adopt the SDGs on the 23rd of September, two whole days before they were formally adopted by the UN at the General Assembly (Timor-leste, 2017).

5.2 Sustainable Development as a result of westernisation

Post-development theory holds that the whole concept and practice of development is a reflection of western-northern hegemony over the rest of the world, meaning that the concept of sustainable development is primarily formed by and suited for western countries. The theory criticises sustainable development for being a methodology that focuses on implementing projects to help developing countries "catch up" with the developed societies in the west. The risk being that rich western countries argue for better knowledge of what the poorer countries need by implementing sustainable development schemes that does not necessarily suit or meet the local communities' initially believed needs (McGregor 2016).

Furthermore, the distribution of power and authority among the political actors on the global stage, also known as the international-relations term 'global order', empathises the risk of capitalism as a further consequence of westernised sustainable development. Considering that western nations are often run by capitalism, international linkages are believed to spread capitalist ideologies, encouraging developing countries to live up to the developed capitalist, market-oriented western societies' standard (Dada 2016). Capitalism is accused of manipulating global order as the entire international

relationship system, including international sustainable development relations, easily can be linked back to financial profit (Chomsky, 1999a).

The westernised frame creates a discourse where there is only one correct way to develop and alternative economies of semi-subsistence and low gross domestic product (hereafter GDP) are incomplete (McGregor 2016). This has created a subset of countries and populations aiming to become what they have been taught is the ideal state and were economic growth equates with development. In this sense it has become a form of neo-colonialism (Howitt & Stevens 2010) where developed western countries implement schemes that do not necessarily suit local social development needs (McGregor 2007). Dada (2016) continues by stating that sustainable development has become an ideology where westernisation is the ultimate goal.

5.2.1 Case Timor-Leste

McGregor's (2007) analyse of post-development theory partly explains why significant monetary aid and international assistance has seen relatively little progress in terms of meeting people's basic social needs in places like Timor-Leste. The young country's leaders are proven to be influenced by the idea of westernised economic development which is affecting the countries evaluation on resources. The prioritisation of the petroleum industry in Timor-Leste is a clear example proving that Timor-Leste's government has been influenced by the western development praxis. Petroleum projects have been responsible for building superhighways through residential areas in Timor-Leste, jeopardising people's livelihoods, not only in the form of food security but also disturbing culturally significant lands (Lundahl and Sjöholm, 2008).

Despite attempts to economically catch up, Timor-Leste is still financially struggling as economic growth from state owned natural resources, such as petroleum, is not yet reaching the rural poor, which is the majority of the country's population. Traditionally, before westernised capitalist measures, locals would value land and natural resources as local currency. However, on a global scale and though a capitalist framework, traditional Timorese are rated poor as 41% of the country's population is estimated to be living in absolute poverty, with 73% on less than USD2 a day (Carroll-Bell, 2015). The government's focus on developing a westernised economy and policy instead of sustaining social development has increased the economic and social inequality. According to Carrol-Bell (2015) a big part of the problem lies with the orthodox development meaning that economic growth equates with development. The GDP of a country has continually been used by intergovernmental organisations such as the UN, to equate their economical stance to their level of development. The approach can be critically judged for being ethnocentric and one dimensional. The approach fails to adapt and custom sustainable development to the setting to suit the local authority, population and ways of society for the benefit of the social justice and development. Carroll-Bell (2015) summarises by arguing that, despite significant resources, Timor-Leste will remain far from reaching long-term and stable sustainable development until local social development is prioritised.

Much suggests that as long as power and authority is ruled by westernisation and capitalism, or as Chomsky (1999b) puts it; as long as there is profit over people, the prospects of a sustainable and developed future in Timor-Leste looks blank.

In spite of raising criticisms against westernised sustainable development, the purpose is not to denounce the western involvement too harshly, especially considering moral obligation and responsibility. Frankly meaning that although there is no legal obligation for developed countries to help developing countries, there is a certain moral duty to do so (Mahon, 1972). As long as the benefactors and intentions are focussed on improving the lives of the poorest, most marginalised and most vulnerable people on the planet, regardless of race, religion or location, the argument is that the moral of not getting involved at all does not align with the moral obligation.

Westernisation, capitalism and global order have indeed, in the past failed to distribute enough power and authority to social development. However, once again the timing of the governmental collapse in Timor-Leste was to their favour as Timor-Leste have been able to tailor their roadmap to sustainable development success in a better way that suits the local communities' initially believed needs by using the 'five Ps'. Placing the SPD in terms of the 'five Ps' of the SDGs, the prime priority in Timor-Leste has been on 'People' in the short term, 'Prosperity' in the medium term and 'Planet' in the longer term. This means that the economic and capitalist westernisation has not infiltrated to neither the first or long-term priority. Meanwhile, 'Peace' has been the basis for Timor-Leste's development aspiration since 2002, and 'Partnerships' has already been a strong dimension of Timor-Leste's engagement with the rest of the world. Although Timor-Leste's roadmap for the implementation of the 2030 agenda starts with partnership, Timor-Leste has via the SDP integrated a package of international policies that align with the MDGs and SDGs that reflect their unique history, culture and heritage. Therefore, Timor-Leste are creating an unique sustainable development plan with western support but hopefully without mimicking western ideologies (Timor-Leste, 2017; Timor-Leste, 2010).

5.3 Sustainable Development rushing development

International sustainable development organisations often rush to develop and fail to sufficiently consult and include local people in an outsider-concern oriented approach. This does not just mean that the whole original concept of sustainable development lacks the ability to consider and adjust to meet the needs of local traditions and societies but also creates a subset of nations and populations who struggle with trust (Dada 2016).

Rothstein (2017) claims that the level of trust that local citizens feel for the politicians, institutions and governmental systems in charge reflects on the evaluation of the moral standard in the country. He continues by arguing that trust is psychologically delicate and hard to repair once broken. Rothstein

(2017) also highlights the importance of no corruption in official institutions and states that social trust is crucial for a working democratic country.

On that note, Ringborg (2017) criticises the lack of a democratic goal in the SDG's and continues by stating that democracy is crucial for achieving sustainable development. Ringborg (2017) draws the conclusion that if a nation has first and foremost achieved a strong, transparent, trusted and corruption free democracy the more likely the nation is to reach the SDGs. However the requirement is that the democratic system is highly respected and understood by the local citizens. A functioning democracy lay the base of giving local citizens a political voice. Without the base of a stable democracy, the risk is that national politics will fail to evenly balance relevant interests in social development in their haste to develop the national economy and environment. Depending on how well a nation meets the basic factors of a strong, transparent, trusting and corruption free democracy is believed to cohere with the nation's progresses and failures with sustainable development.

5.3.1 Case Timor-Leste

The UN administration period in Timor-Leste is an example of a sustainable development project rushing to develop. The UN administration period was implemented with good intentions and during this period the UN helped with a lot of the rebuild of government and non government institutions, such as the police and defence forces in Timor-Leste.

Despite this, the temporary UN administration period has been regarded as deficient in supporting the local Timorese. The main criticism being that the UN was too controlling for a short amount of time without consoling and listening to the local Timorese for a more long-term solution. The UN are criticised for leaving Timor-Leste to fight for their own without enough funding and with only a skeleton of a ready country (Flores-Castillo, 2013). The UN therefore failed to successfully implement stable foundations for sustainable development in Timor-Leste as only two out of the three dimensions of sustainable development were properly supported. The third, social dimension was still left on its knees. The primary issues being that the decades of violence has left the population of Timor-Leste profoundly traumatised and humiliated which is a much more complex issue to tackle than short term administration.

Although the violent history has resulted in a nation suffering with a wounded economic and environmental development the biggest wound was left on the social development and the souls of the local Timorese (Carvalho & Palmer, 2012). Once again the Timorese were victims of an international organisation that rushed to develop and therefore failed to sufficiently consult and include locals.

Moving further on to the importance of democracy, the German think tank Bertelsmann Stiftung and UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network has presented *The SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017* report were 157 counties have been ranked on how well each country performs in relation to each of the 17 SDGs. The list shows are great trend of the top ranked countries being countries with

stable and trusted democracies (Sachs, et al. 2017). This report therefore backs up Ringborg's (2017) theory of a connecting between a stable democratic base and successful sustainable development.

While the government in Timor-Leste is understandably under pressure, from both international forces and also partly from local Timorese who have waited a long time for independence, to develop quickly (Carvalho & Palmer 2012), there are still expectations of appropriate consultation. Timor-Leste has in the first decade of independence successfully laid their own foundation for peace, stability and nation-building. The country has also built an impressive track record regarding human rights and democracy, rating well above their neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. The relatively new government has managed to keep stable peace for the first time in modern history and finally been able to truly focus on development.

With a fresh memory of the importance of peace the government in Timor-Leste has strongly advocated for a goal supporting peace during the establishment of the SDGs. This resulted in goal number 16; peace, stability and effective institutions, which is particularly relevant for developing countries such as Timor-Leste. Another important element of Timor-Leste's approach to achieving the SDGs (and the previous MDGs) was to sequence and focus attention on priority development needs (i.e. SDG targets and indicators). This sequencing was based on the developmental status of the country, as well as those priorities identified in order to meet people's needs, while also maintaining peace and social cohesion (Timor-Leste, 2017).

6 Discussion

Firstly and considering sustainable development as an oxymoron; this consequence is proven to have influenced the sustainable development implementations despite Brundtland's definition, as the discussion of trying to settle for a singular definition is to present day a hot topic. However, considering the Timor-Leste case, the consequence was proven to be partly settled due to the implementation of the MDGs and the SDGs. By creating a unified framework and by interlinking different interests, the SDGs have indeed solved much of the previously big issue with sustainable development being an oxymoron. The SDGs can therefore also be argued for being the new established definition for sustainable development. With that stated, it is important to remember that the expectations of the level of sustainable development ambitions and challenges differ depending on national circumstances (UN, 2015).

In a wider general context the SDGs vary depending on the country's ability to perform. In that sense, Bender's (2012) theory that the definition of sustainable development differs depending on the situation applies to the SDGs and a singular and established definition is still absent. Considering Kate's et al. (2016) argument that if Bender's statement was true, this would mean that sustainable development is meaningless and also in the risk for opening up the opportunity to distort the purpose of implementing sustainable development.

This result means that, as people and organisations are known to frame matters in a way that ultimately benefit their own credibility, Timor-Leste has been framed to look at sustainable development implementations through the same or similar lens created by the organisations' own personal interests. This would mean that Timor-Leste has been framed to implement sustainable development in a way that benefits the UN first and Timor-Leste second (O'Neill et al, 2015).

However, with the knowledge of the SDGs framework, I do believe that the SDGs are well aware of all of these risks and have settled for a unified framework with clear, illustrated goals as a definitional base, as well as accounted for different national circumstances. Therefore reducing the risk of sustainable development becoming irrelevant and meaningless. I also believe that the SDGs are a great example of a compromise and a way for different interests to work together rather than against each other by truly including the third dimension, social development, into the policy. The new understanding being that sustainable development is about combining interests and not about pleasing either social, economic or environmental development but a balanced combination (Lehtonen, 2004). Furthermore, the common perception has in the past been that the three pillars are all the encounters and that they are separate (Żak, 2015). The SDGs have proven that there are at least 17 interlinked interests that all depend on and affect each other regardless if they primarily are associated with either social- economic or environmental development.

For future reference, I believe that it is important, especially for developing countries such as Timor-Leste, to be aware that it is difficult to create a unified definition regarding such an extensive

concept that suits all. Furthermore and on a global scale, I believe that this acknowledgement would benefit future sustainable development implementations as local governments would only use the concept of sustainable development as a guideline but yet keep developing strategies that meets local needs, such as Timor-Leste did by creating *Timor-Leste 2020, Our Nation Our Future* and *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030* (Timor-leste, 2010). This because, when climate change issues and sustainable development actions have been spread by larger government policies the will to act on a more personal level has not seemed as assessable and have also been spread and framed before shared with the general public.

Secondly and considering sustainable development as a result of westernisation; this consequence is proven to have influenced the sustainable development implementations despite good moral intentions as Timor-Leste is to present day struggling with poverty. The conclusion that western societies have been idealised in the eyes of the politicians of newly independent Timor-Leste is quite easy to draw considering the strong outcomes of an overpowered economic development over the social development in Timor-Leste. However, the SDGS implementation of the two extra Ps of sustainable development; partnership and peace, has boosted the social development power.

In a wider general context the consequence of sustainable development as a result of westernisation can be argued for being more focussed on how the development looks to the rest of the world instead of focusing on local consequences. This section of the study has further highlighted the social issues that follow when sustainable development has become politicised, been made into general statements and merged into a westernised concept built by and for capitalist countries. The risks being that the idea of sustainable development has been formed by capitalism and exploited into such a wide range concept that it does not fit in anywhere and lost its purpose. The argument of acting with good moral intentions fails to impress when social and local traditions are not respected. While acting in good moral spirits it is indeed impossible to help and get involved without passing on some of the developed countries ideologies. Western ideologies are, after all, the developed countries' reference framework. Good moral intentions are however not worth much when the outcome is primarily negative (Mahon, 1972). Western sustainable development are fulfilling the need to catch up economically with western countries rather than listening to the local communities' needs. The establishment is that the track record of letting economy and power rule the world is not suitable as it is often results in a suffering social development as proven in Timor-Leste.

This result means that, although western sustainable development implementations are implemented with good intentions and many governments and organisations have great sustainable development ideas the outcomes are not necessarily positive. Considering the Timor-Leste case natives had their own ideas and ways taken away from them by government and bigger organisations. When power is taken and not given the power becomes unbalanced and unfair regardless of the intention.

However, with the five Ps and with the benefit of hindsight, I believe that the SDGs promote a stronger link between sustainable development and the world as a whole instead of a policy set and ruled solely by developed countries (UN, 2017). Therefore, the SDGs are discouraging one type of way of living to teach other ways of living and instead encourage meeting in the middle for a more give and take relationship creating equal possibilities for influencing sustainable development implementations. Additionally and considering moral obligation and responsibility, I believe that the SDGs are an act of moral obligation that attempts to act with the importance of an equal relationship and respect for social involvement in mind. As a counter reaction to the post-development theory and the lack of commitment and international consensus on the importance of social development, the SDGs are an alternative solution.

For future reference, I believe that there is a need to actively keep focus on social development and local inclusion to avoid copied and mismatched attempts to keep up with ideologies that is not suited for the local people involved. Furthermore, as long as the result is profit over people, westernised influenced sustainable development cannot be disregarded as a consequence to be ignored as there is a risk of hiding behind good moral intentions while increasing social and economic inequality.

Finally and considering sustainable development rushing development; this consequence is proven to have influenced international sustainable development implementations in Timor-Leste, despite Timor-Leste's history of untrustworthy international interference. This consequence is also proven to be strongly interlinked with the previously discussed consequence as it coheres with social development, moral intentions and equal relationships. The major negative outcome of the consequence is that not enough time is spent in establishing and earning trust. Considering the Portuguese colonisation followed shortly by Indonesian occupation and the UN's rushed administration period, the local Timorese have little reason to trust in international countries' interests and as Rothstein (2017) states trust is psychologically delicate and hard to repair once broken. However, Timor-Leste has proven to have used their experience of bad relationships and influenced the SDGs towards stronger partnership.

In a wider general context a transparent and trusted government is important as it leads the way to a stable and democratic country which is a good foundation for implementing sustainable development. Moreover, without enough time to invest in a trusting and democratic relationship between local populations and political powers the chances of a united, sustainable and developed country grow very slim. The lack of a democratic goal in the SDGs can therefore on a global scale be classed as a backlash for future sustainable development implementations. Furthermore, the importance of no corruption in official institutions, although implemented with good intentions, cannot be underestimated because as earlier mentioned, social trust is crucial for a working democratic country.

This result means that, even when none corrupted organisations, such as the UN, implement sustainable development in a rushed manner, especially in a new and fragile country such as Timor-

Leste, the border of "taking over" and helping is very unclear. Rothstein's (2017) statement argue against the local Timorese's ability to fabricate the level of trust needed for being able to rush international development, as they have had their trust for international rulers damaged in the recent past. Timor-Leste has for hundreds of years been ruled by undemocratic international forces and is now via the SDGs being rushed to shape their country according to international sustainable development ideas in only 15 years time. The risk being that local Timorese doom the UN for being yet another international power who is telling them how to live.

However, and considering Timor-Leste's influence on the SDGs towards stronger partnership, Timor-Leste shows that they are aware of these risks, and are fighting to remain a peaceful and democratic country. Timor-Leste is in this sense proven to know better than the UN. Timor-Leste's valuable experience of previously bad experiences of international implementations has influenced the outcomes of a stronger peace strategy for the SDGs (Timor-leste, 2017). I believe that this further strengthens the SDGs as a whole as it promotes an equal relationship. Hopefully local Timorese feel that their experiences and ideas matter which I believe advocates for a more transparent and trusted relationship.

For future reference, I believe that the negative outcomes of rushing sustainable development cannot be disregarded as something to be ignored as it does not allow enough time to establish stable democratic countries. In order to in the long run maintain a balanced sustainable development and to interlink with the previous discussed consequences, I believe that social development preferably should be implemented via and in cohesion with the local government rather than predominately by international organisations. Moreover, the UN's temporary administration period rushed development and took over too much power instead of including Timor-Leste, despite their good intentions. I believe that the concept of sustainable development can be revitalised in thought and in practice but to avoid further projects such as UN's temporary administration period in Timor-Leste, there is a need to shift priorities to social development by investing in long term trusting relationships.

7 Conclusion

This study has shown that a singular common definition for sustainable development is doomed difficult to establish, that western sustainable development implementations are not necessarily positive although implemented with good intentions and that taking the time to establish a trsuting relationship is important as it leads the way to a stable and democratic country which further benefits sustainable development. The common result can be announced straightforward by emphasising the importance of social development.

Drawing from previous literature studies this study argues that sustainable development is failing to include and account for human complexity, uniqueness and social development. This lack of attention is proven to be the greatest outcome of the sustainable development consequences. It explains both the difficulties with trying to define sustainable development and is shown in the confusing and sometimes negative results of implementing and rushing irrelevant western sustainable development schemes.

However, in general terms the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals have addressed most of these issues and have been proven to be a relevant sustainable development framework to build upon for future reference.

My personal conclusion is that all three consequences are interlinked with each other and that they all influence sustainable development implementations positively and/or negatively depending on how much emphasis is put on social development. To strengthen the sustainable development implementations in the future I believe that every different case should be evaluated and matched with their unique need and that sustainable development needs to be at the stage were sustainable social development always is the priority over economic development.

However, I also draw my personal conclusion that the SDGs are actively trying to amend previous negative sustainable development consequences and once again the level of success to do so has depended on the level of attention given to social development. In my opinion the SDGs combined with the lessons learned in this study is the first step towards truly reaching a more sustainable and socially fair environment without suppressing the need to develop and keep up with the rest of the world.

The challenge for future studies is to keep developing as there is an acute need for improvement in developing countries such as Timor-Leste as well as preserving culture and tradition. There is a need for a gradual process working together with and involving the community at each step of the way to ensure they are ready to move forward. The importance of social development cannot be disregarded as something to be left behind and forgotten, but rather built upon and learnt from to further improve the lives of its beneficiaries, but in the way they see fit.

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