



The Sarawak Museum Journal

Vol. XLVII No. 68

December 1994



ISSN: 0375-3050

E-ISSN: 3036-0188

Citation: Dandot, W. B. (1994). Planning for Growth and Sustainable Development in Sarawak: A Discussion on Application of Relevant Planning Techniques. The Sarawak Museum Journal, XLVII (68): 223-238

PLANNING FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SARAWAK: A DISCUSSION ON APPLICATION OF RELEVANT PLANNING TECHNIQUES

Wilson Baya Dandot

INTRODUCTION

This paper is intended to be a general discussion on the subject of planning for growth and sustainable development in Sarawak. The discussion will look at development planning in the country in the past, and how environmental issues and sustainable development have been treated. In the process, it will also reflect the extent to which these issues have been covered in development planning in the State.

An important aspect that is relevant in a discussion on the subject relates to the planning techniques for sustainable development. Without these techniques, planning for sustainable development will only be in spirit, but not in substance. It is observed that the main planning techniques used to date is the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), while other planning techniques are either unheard of, or given lesser/minimal consideration. Of the latter, the Threshold Analysis (TA) and Ultimate Environmental Threshold (OET) techniques are viewed as highly relevant for project planning particularly at the pre-feasibility study or project identification phases. A brief introduction of these two planning tools will be highlighted.

The relevance of the discussion in this paper may not be as obvious as those other papers that deal directly with culture; traditions and customs in this Seminar. However, it must be noted that our way of life is closely determined by the use of our resources (especially among natives in Sarawak). There is a real need for us to know existing planning methodologies and to find how best we can modify these techniques to suit our way of life, or the other way round.

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It needs to be pointed out right at the outset that a discussion on such a broad subject as sustainable development is fraught with difficulties, due largely to varying interpretations of terms and definitions. Moreover, it depends also on whose perspective we are looking at — the economist, forester, biologist, and so on. Some of these definitions nonetheless will be highlighted below.

II. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS: Sustainable Development

One of the most commonly quoted definitions on Sustainable Development is that used by the Brundtland Commission (Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development). Sustainable development is defined as ...

"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

This definition addresses the broad **macro** issues but has also generated comments on several key conceptual issues which include, *inter alia*:

- (i) Aspect on intergenerational equity
- (ii) Approaches to the use of non-renewable and renewable resources. The views of the economists and biologists would likely be different here.
- (iii) Biological diversity and ecological sustainability.
- (iv) Setting of appropriate environmental standards.

A 1992 IUCN publication 'Caring for the Earth' defined sustainable development as ... "improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of ecosystems."

WWF Malaysia while embarking on the National Conservation Study (1992) for instance have defined sustainable development as ... "a development that distributes the benefits of progress more equitably within and between generations, conserves the local and global environment for the future, and maintains and improves the quality of life."

As we go into the sectoral or **micro** issues we are likely to find the varied application and definitions of sustainability (as related to sustainable development).

In the **forestry** sector, the term Sustainable Forest Management is long considered as an integral part of the language of forestry. Yet in recent times sustainable management in the forestry sector has become an urgent subject of discussion as a result of environmental and related issues. Sustainable Forest Management is defined as ... "management of forests that will not irreversibly reduce the potential of that fore to produce all products in subsequent future harvests" (Wyatt-Smith (89); Poore (89)).

Salleh M.N (1991) explained it as utilising the forest while ensuring that the productive capacity of the forests or the ability of the forest to regenerate itself is not impaired, and that the forests can continue to produce the desired product at a determined and usually enhanced level in perpetuity.

The ITTO Report (1990) in their study of the forestry sector in Sarawak referred to sustainability of the forest resources in the State as ... "the attainment and maintenance of a forest estate yielding a continuing and non-declining flow of benefits and products at levels of each considered best by the people of Sarawak and at levels which can be supported or even increased in the future" (pg. 19).