

SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION: WE CONTINUE TO THINK ABOUT THE CONCEPT

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Eco-industry, clean technologies, environmental technologies. .. Well, now René Kemp, an expert in innovation and sustainable development, says that sustainable technologies do not exist.

This is the provocative title ([!Sustainable technologies do not exist](#)) from one of his latest articles published in the issue 75 of the *Ekonomiaz* magazine: *Eco-innovation. Beyond the factors, the productivity of resources*. After reviewing the classic meaning of innovation, using the *Oslo Manual*, he does the same with the concept of sustainable development.

Regarding this, I agree with what Meadowcroft points out ("Planning for Sustainable Development: What can be learned from the critics?"): sustainable development is a process and a standard, but not a final state. Therefore, *"each generation must consider the challenges as something new and must decide what trajectory their development objectives should follow, what are the limits of what is environmentally possible and desirable and what is meant by the requirements of social justice"*.

According to this, I interpret that each generation must review the degree of commitment it acquires with future generations, evaluate what new alternatives will be offered from now on for the development of those to come based on the opportunities that we have already exhausted (this is you can visualize with oil and renewable energy, for example).

The other topic that has been interesting to me refers to the scale with which to evaluate sustainability. René Kemp points out that *"the sustainability of a product, technology or practice should be assessed systemically, paying special attention to its use and contexts"*. This is related to the [rebound effect that I have already written about in other posts](#): the increase in the efficiency of a certain product can cause, at a systemic level, to generate more environmental impact than the less efficient product it replaces ; Kemp illustrates this with a quote from Collingridge ("The Social Control of Technology"): the impacts (of a new technology) cannot be easily predicted until the technology has been fully developed and is used by a large number of users.

After reading the article, I agree with the following conclusions by René Kemp:

- Sustainable development cannot be determined scientifically.
- More attention needs to be paid to system innovations.
- No technology *per se* is sustainable.

We will continue [expanding the concept of innovation](#) in new posts. In the meantime, and to finish, I leave you with a fable from the people at [NEF](#) that exposes **what sustainable development is not**.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Sqwd_u6HkMo

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