

**PLANNING FOR HOLISTIC SUSTAINABILITY:  
A Study of the 'Process' in Kerala (India) and Sweden**

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## ABSTRACT

Numerous attempts have been undertaken to deliver a common understanding of the concept of sustainability. Most of these attempts however, have remained contested and ineffective. Weak conceptualisation has also affected the process of operationalisation of sustainability. This thesis addresses the above issues by firstly, interpreting sustainability and its underlying principles from a perspective that draws together social, economic, environmental, cultural, and institutional conditions and cross-linkages. Secondly, and more importantly, the research focuses on 'how' to operationalise sustainability across different regions. In doing so, the research acknowledges the significance of planning pathways in the process of achieving sustainability.

The research has been conducted using two case studies that critically examine the effectiveness of contemporary sustainability planning processes in Kerala (India) and Sweden. A total of 42 in-depth interviews, three focus group discussions and several participant observations have contributed to primary data collection for the two case studies. The research has developed a set of 'substantive' and 'process' criteria based on which planning efficacy in Kerala and Sweden has been evaluated.

By focusing on the 'how' and 'why' rather than the 'what' aspects of the sustainability problematique, the research findings contribute new knowledge that reduces the chasm between theory and practice with regard to operationalising holistic sustainability. The research also demonstrates that despite significant differences between social, economic and environmental settings, planning for sustainability in both Kerala and Sweden largely exhibits similar behavioural patterns. For instance, both regions suggest the importance of public participation and community engagement in achieving sustainability while planning process in both cases suffer from lack of integration between different components, issues and discourses and weak mechanisms of plan evaluation and feedback generation. The research thus argues that the division of the world into the developing South and the developed North does not affect the process of operationalising sustainability in any significant way. Finally, the thesis highlights implications of sustainability planning on policymaking and identifies priorities for governance that better reflect the complexity underlying sustainability operationalisation.

## DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying.

Vigya Sharma  
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To *Mummy* and *Papa* for their unconditional love and support

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## ACRONYMS

ADS	Area Development Society
AUD	Australian Dollar
BEST	BioEthanol for Sustainable Transport
CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States
CDS	Centre for Development Studies
CDS	Community Development Society
CIC	Curitiba Industrial City
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon dioxide
CPI(M)	The Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
ENAR	European Network Against Racism
EU	European Union
FG	Focus Group
GASB – SEA	Governmental Accounting Standards Board – Service Efforts and Accomplishments
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
IBGE	The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
ICIDI	Independent Commission on International Development Issues
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IPPUC	Institute for Research and Urban Planning
ISOE	Institute for Social-Ecological Research
IT	Information Technology
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
KCSS	Kerala Civil Society Stakeholder
KGR	Kerala Government Representative
KSCTE	Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment
KSPB	Kerala State Planning Board
KSRTC	Kerala State Road Transport Corporation
KSSP	Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad
KTH	Kungl Tekniska Hogskolan

KWh/m <sup>2</sup>	Kilo Watt Hour/ metre square
LIP	Local Investment Programme
LSGI	Local Self Government Institution
LUZ	Larger Urban Zone
Mk EL	Environmental Class – Electric
MTV	Music Television
NG	Neighbourhood Group
NIER	National Institute of Economic Research
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIA	The Infant and Adolescent Environmental Education Programme
PPC	People’s Plan Campaign
RMC	Metropolitan Region of Curitiba
SCSS	Sweden Civil Society Stakeholder
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SGR	Sweden Government Representative
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SUV	Sports Utility Vehicle
TLC	Total Literacy Campaign
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHE	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA	United States of America
USP	Unique Selling Point
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCS	World Conservation Strategy
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund/ World Wide Fund For Nature

## GLOSSARY

*Gram Sabha* – Literally, Gram means a village and Sabha, a meeting. Gram Sabha is therefore, a meeting of the village members to collectively plan for the development of the village at a local level. The Indian Constitution defines a *Gram Sabha* as a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls of a village to elect a local government council called the *Panchayat*.

*Favelas* – Squatter settlements or slums in Brazil

*Regeringskansliet* – Sweden's government offices

*Riksdag* – The Swedish Parliament

*Rs.* – Indian Rupee

*Sek* – Swedish Kronor

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