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# Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development

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### Abstract

The paper reviews how the concept of sustainable development has played out in industrialized countries since 1987. It examines the theory and practice of sustainable development in the context of three criticisms (it is vague, attracts hypocrites and fosters delusions), and argues for an approach to sustainability that is integrative, is action-oriented, goes beyond technical fixes, incorporates a recognition of the social construction of sustainable development, and engages local communities in new ways. The paper concludes with a description of an approach to sustainability that attempts to incorporate these characteristics.



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## Keywords

Sustainable development; Sustainability; History of ideas; Community applications

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