

The Green Economy and Sustainable Development in Africa: A Theoretical Study

Labenni Ahlem*

University of Jijel, Laboratory of
Entrepreneurship and Innovation
Strategies in the Financial and
Business Environment, Algeria
ahlem.labenni@univ-jijel.dz

Lamisse reffada

University of Jijel, Laboratory of
Entrepreneurship and Innovation
Strategies in the Financial and
Business Environment, Algeria
lamisse.reffada@univ-jijel.dz

submitted:03/04/2024

Accepted: 23/05/2024

published:30/06/2024

Abstract:

This paper aims to understand the importance of transitioning towards green economy and sustainable development in Africa. Initially, we defined the concepts of sustainable development and green economy and clarified the relationship between them

we reviewed some facts about green economy in certain African countries. The main findings in this review indicate that green economy and sustainable development are recent and important concepts in the development of African economies and The green economy encourages reducing pollution and using energy in new ways that preserve natural, human, and material resources ,Despite the challenges faced by countries in Africa, they have been striving diligently since 2005 to achieve targeted development and promote the transition towards a green economy.

Keywords: green economy, sustainable development, africa

JEL Classification Codes: Q57 ؛Q01.

* correspondent author

Introduction:

The African continent is currently undergoing a profound transformation aimed at achieving sustainable development and fostering a green economy built upon resource efficiency and environmental protection. The challenges confronting the continent encapsulate the fundamental principles of sustainable development and green economy, presenting both opportunities and diverse obstacles. The discourse surrounding "Green Economy and Sustainable Development in Africa" underscores the critical intersection of environmental concerns and developmental aspirations, underscoring the imperative to comprehend the challenges and opportunities confronting African nations.

Despite formidable obstacles, there exists genuine optimism for advancing towards a green economy and sustainable development across Africa. By fostering collaborative initiatives involving governments, local communities, international organizations, and the private sector, substantial progress can be made, promoting economic growth while concurrently preserving the environment.

From this, we address the following issue "Where do the features of the green economy and sustainable development manifest in Africa?, and what is the relationship between them?"

Importance of the Study:

The importance of studying lies in its ability to shed light on critical issues related to green economy and sustainable development in Africa. Understanding the current conditions and challenges facing African countries in adopting environmentally friendly economic practices and achieving sustainable development goals is of paramount importance to policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. By studying these factors, the study can contribute to providing valuable insights and recommendations to policymakers to develop effective strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting green growth and enhancing sustainable development across the continent. Additionally, international organizations and donors can also be informed about areas needing greater support and investment to facilitate Africa's transition towards a more sustainable and resilient future. Ultimately, the study's findings can play a significant role in advancing the dialogue on green economy and sustainable development in Africa and guiding efforts towards achieving a more prosperous, just, and environmentally sustainable future on the continent.

Study Objectives:

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

- Understand the current circumstances and challenges facing African countries in adopting environmentally friendly economic practices and achieving sustainable development goals.
- Provide valuable insights and recommendations to policymakers to develop effective strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting green growth and enhancing sustainable development across the continent.
- Direct efforts and investments towards areas needing greater support from international organizations and donors to facilitate Africa's transition towards a more sustainable and resilient future.
- Contribute to advancing the dialogue on green economy and sustainable development in Africa.
- Guide efforts towards achieving a future that is more prosperous, just, and environmentally sustainable on the continent.

Study Methodology and Tools:

This study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, which involves presenting and analyzing specific concepts related to the study. Various references have been utilized, including journals, official reports.

Firstly. The Conceptual Framework of green Economy

"Green economy" is considered one of the most important new global trends aimed at achieving sustainable development in countries worldwide, especially those developing or on the path to growth. In general, the green economy is a necessary new direction that forms the foundation for prosperity and development currently in the world.

1. The Concept of green Economy

Concerns over environmental degradation and climate change have spurred the emergence of ideas surrounding the green economy, offering a framework for transitioning toward a more eco-friendly economic model. The UN Environment defines the green economy as being low carbon, resource-efficient, and socially inclusive. It emphasizes economic activities, infrastructure, and assets that lead to reduced carbon emissions and pollution, improved energy and resource

efficiency, and the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services. In essence, it promotes inclusive growth while ensuring environmental sustainability (Ham, M, Hanley, J, & Gázquez, 2020, p. 15). According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), a green economy prioritizes improved human well-being and social equity while simultaneously tackling environmental risks and resource scarcity. It is characterized by minimal carbon emissions, efficient resource use, and inclusive social systems. The goal is to promote a fair transition to ecologically sustainable economies and societies, creating high-quality job opportunities and improving living standards for marginalized communities. (International Labour Organization, 2022, p. 5).

The prevailing economic model, which primarily focuses on GDP growth, differs significantly from the approach advocated here. This model is increasingly seen as unsustainable due to its negative impacts on natural resources and biodiversity, posing serious threats to ecosystem services vital for human well-being, such as food and water provision. Recognizing the pressing need to address environmental issues and climate change, opportunities have emerged within the green economy, promoting businesses and products that prioritize environmental sustainability. These initiatives aim not only to generate profits but also to enhance environmental stewardship. Understanding how to create employment opportunities within the green economy is essential for fostering sustainable economic growth and addressing unemployment and underemployment on a large scale. (Ham, M, Hanley, J, & Gázquez, 2020, p. 16)

2. The principles of a green economy:

There are eight principles of a green economy (Cameron, 2012, p. 8):

- **The Principle of Earth's Integrity:** The Earth, along with its natural communities and ecosystems, inherently possesses the right to thrive, evolve, and perpetuate the essential cycles, structures, functions, and processes vital for all life forms. It is the responsibility of every individual to safeguard this integrity.

- **The Principle of Planetary Boundaries:** This principle underscores that the sustainable development of humanity is contingent upon the preservation of intact ecosystems and acknowledges the finite limits of economic growth. Hence, economic systems must operate within these boundaries, with governments setting clear long-term objectives to ensure a sustainable operational framework.

- **The Principle of Human Dignity:** Ensuring the right to livelihood for every present and future human being is upheld by this principle. Priority should be given to poverty eradication and equitable wealth redistribution, serving as fundamental objectives of governance, measured by their effectiveness in achieving these aims.

- **The Principle of Justice:** Fair distribution of benefits and burdens among all individuals is central to this principle. This encompasses equitable utilization of natural resources, access to essential goods and services, and the obligation to prevent and redress any resulting damages. Institutions, corporations, and decision-makers must be held equally accountable and responsible for their actions.

- **The Precautionary Principle:** The application of this principle is essential to prevent the introduction of new products and technologies that may pose unforeseen or harmful impacts on the environment, society, or human well-being. The burden of proof lies with developers or initiators, and measures must be taken to prevent the shifting of problems elsewhere.

-**The Principle of Resilience:** Diversity and diversification are emphasized by this principle as prerequisites for sustainability and enhancing quality of life. Cultivating a variety of organizational models, governance structures, and economic activities that reduce dependence on single commodities is crucial for long-term sustainability.

- **The Principle of Governance:** Upholding and revitalizing subsidiary democracy, based on the principle of prior informed consent, is central to this principle. Transparent and participatory negotiations involving all affected stakeholders should inform the development of policies, rules, and regulations. Structural transformations should be driven by public investments that ensure equitable sharing of benefits.

-**The Beyond-GDP Principle:** Recognizing the limitations and distortions associated with using GDP as a sole measure of progress and welfare, this principle advocates for integrated measures encompassing environmental, social, human, and economic well-being. Policy formulation and monitoring should be guided by these comprehensive indicators, acknowledging diverse interpretations of human welfare.

3. Benefits of moving to a green economy

The green economy prioritizes investments in natural capital, encompassing areas such as agriculture, freshwater, fisheries, and forestry. Over time, these investments lead to enhancements in soil quality, increased crop yields, and improved overall environmental health. By promoting efficiency across agricultural, industrial, and municipal sectors, the green economy mitigates water demand, thereby relieving pressure on both groundwater and surface water sources in the short and long term. Consequently, it plays a pivotal role in poverty alleviation through the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems. This entails directing the benefits derived from natural capital directly towards impoverished communities, while simultaneously generating new employment opportunities, particularly within agriculture, renewable energy, and transportation sectors. Fundamentally, the green economy entails a decoupling of resource utilization, environmental impact, and economic growth. This paradigm shift involves substantial investments in green sectors, supported by policy reforms aimed at incentivizing sustainable practices in both public and private sectors. By facilitating the redesign of businesses, infrastructure, and institutions, and promoting the adoption of sustainable consumption and production processes, the green economy fosters the growth of green sectors within the economy. This results in an expansion of green and sustainable employment opportunities, alongside reductions in energy and material consumption, waste production, pollution levels, and greenhouse gas emissions. (Suaad Hadi Hassan , 2021, pp. 5-6)

4. Green economy opportunities and challenges

The fundamentals of the green economy encompass underlying assumptions, key sectors, and priority areas. From a business standpoint, the green economy operates on two core assumptions: the detachment of economic growth, driven by clean technologies, from environmental degradation, and its applicability across nations regardless of their economic status. The three main sectors encompassed are: natural capital (which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing, and water), built capital, and enabling conditions such as policy reforms and capacity building. Local governments play a crucial role within these sectors, particularly in densely populated areas where effective service delivery requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) and other governmental entities.

Mandated by the Skills Development Act of 1998, LGSETA is responsible for conducting human resource planning research, a duty further emphasized by the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training, highlighting the necessity of conducting research specific to each sector. Like in many developing economies, current national priorities revolve around sustainable resource utilization, particularly water, energy, and food. Ensuring the sustainable provision of these resources requires skilled labor capable of adapting existing technologies to address region-specific challenges. This context underscores the attainment of the New Growth Path's objectives. (Ochieng, Tumisang, Edward, Benton, Janet, & Boitumelo, 2016, p. 8)

Secondly. Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is no less important than green economy, and it can be said that it is the pathway to building a prosperous, advanced, and more sustainable world.

1.What is Sustainable Development?

The concept of Sustainable Development has evolved significantly over the years, with a pivotal moment occurring in 1983 when the Secretary-General of the United Nations urgently requested Gro Harlem Brundtland, then Prime Minister of Norway, to establish and lead an independent committee. This committee was tasked with formulating a long-term strategy to achieve Sustainable Development by the end of the twentieth century and beyond. After four years of diligent work, the committee submitted its report titled "Our Common Future," which introduced the widely cited definition of Sustainable Development: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The essence of this definition revolves around two key dimensions: the finite nature of resources available for meeting current needs, and the ever-growing needs that must be satisfied. Therefore, it underscores the imperative to develop while simultaneously addressing the reality of dwindling resources that will only become scarcer in the future. One notable aspect of this definition is its emphasis on an intergenerational approach to development. This deliberate ambiguity allows for various stakeholders including governments, NGOs, local and global institutions, civil society organizations, and industries to interpret Sustainable Development in alignment with their own priorities and circumstances. Consequently, it provides them with the flexibility to

express their interests, expectations, and ambitions within the framework of Sustainable Development (Omar , Randa, Mohamed , & Omar H. , 2019, pp. 126).

2. The sustainable development goals

Sustainable development aims to achieve several objectives, including: (Justice , 2019, p. 11)

- Eliminate poverty and hunger, ensuring a healthy life.
- Ensure universal access to essential services such as water, sanitation, and sustainable energy.
- Promote the creation of development opportunities through inclusive education and decent employment.
- Encourage innovation and resilient infrastructure, fostering communities and cities capable of sustainable production and consumption.
- Decrease global inequality, particularly in terms of gender.
- Preserve environmental integrity by combating climate change and safeguarding oceans and land ecosystems.
- Facilitate collaboration among diverse social actors to cultivate a peaceful environment and ensure responsible consumption and production.

3. Governments' efforts to promote sustainable development.

These are some of the key innovations that governments have introduced as part of their shift towards sustainable development. However, there are other notable initiatives, including: (James , 2017 , p. 377)

- Programs aimed at enhancing energy and material efficiency, promoting recycling, and improving waste management. Particularly noteworthy are initiatives focused on significantly increasing factor productivity (such as 'Factor 4' or 'Factor 10'), implementing product life-cycle management from design to disposal, or adopting ecocycle approaches, as seen in the 1993 Swedish Ecocycle legislation.
- Promotion of 'sustainable cities' and initiatives like 'Local Agenda 21', which concentrate on economic and social revitalization while addressing the environmental impacts of urban living.
- A more systematic endeavor to establish institutions for international environmental governance.
- Integration of environmental considerations into international aid through the screening of development assistance programs and projects to ensure they align with sustainable practices.

- Expansion of activities and initiatives associated with the two major international conventions related to sustainable development and the UNCED process: the Climate Change Convention and the Convention on Biodiversity.

4. Relationship between Green economy and sustainable development

Research in the field should prioritize environmental protection, aiming to analyze the impacts and foresee the consequences of irresponsible production behaviors. This focus is crucial due to various factors such as soil degradation, climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, and other activities that pose threats to global sustainability and even survival. It's been emphasized that green economy and sustainable development are not synonymous. In the context presented, sustainable development serves as a tool for implementing a green economy. However, there are overlaps between the two concepts, as ecological initiatives contribute to both simultaneously. Thus, sustainable development forms the foundation for realizing a green economy. Sustainable development is compromised if production or consumption processes have negative environmental impacts or deplete non-renewable resources. Therefore, a green economy isn't just about adopting environmentally friendly business practices; it also involves considering social dimensions, including promoting social equity. It's evident that natural resources, especially non-renewable ones, have finite limits for exploitation. If resources are exploited recklessly and without planning, it will inevitably lead to the collapse of production and society due to resource depletion. Such an outcome contradicts the principles of sustainable development and a green economy. Thus, when these concepts are aligned in this manner, they are equal and fully compatible. (Olja , ovan , & Petar , 2017 , pp. 1470-1471)

Thirdly. An Overview of Sustainable Development and Green Economy in Africa.

The African countries are among those in dire need of sustainable development and transitioning towards a green economy. In this section of the research, we will attempt to provide an overview of the state of sustainable development in Africa in general.

1. How to achieve sustainable development in Africa?

Numerous studies conducted in Africa have highlighted various areas that necessitate attention to achieve successful sustainable development across the continent. These areas encompass (Ozili, 2022 , pp. 9-11):

- Reducing the excessive use of fuelwood.
- Preserving indigenous knowledge and promoting local language literacy.
- Investing in energy-efficient strategies.
- Strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing agriculture.
- Developing improved information and communication technology systems.
- Integrating sustainable development into educational policies in Africa.
- Enhancing financing for education and domestic mobilization of financial resources.
- Recognizing the contribution of religion to sustainable development.
- Promoting local economic development and effective leadership.
- Strengthening tourism governance and fostering cooperation between the private and public sectors in executing sustainable development goals.
- Enhancing the quality of institutional governance.
- Utilizing technology to support sustainable development efforts.
- Improving the capacity to mobilize resources to enhance water, sanitation, and hygiene services.
- Enhancing the role of African scientific research centers in promoting sustainable development.

Despite the identification of these areas for attention, several challenges impede efforts towards sustainable development in Africa, including:

- Inadequate infrastructural support for harnessing renewable resources.
- Population growth and insufficient employment opportunities.
- Low capacity to adapt to climate change.
- Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. (osmond & al, 2021)

Nevertheless, there is a prevailing consensus that sustainable development in Africa should commence at the grassroots level and be driven by local governments. Additionally, policymakers emphasize the necessity for policy coherence and coordination among all levels of

government local, state, and federal to effectively promote sustainable development. (Auriacombe & van der Walt, 2021)

2. The path of African countries towards the green economy

Many African economies heavily rely on natural resources, striving for industrialization and economic diversification while grappling with challenges of poverty and unemployment. Consequently, charting a course towards a green economy necessitates action on three fronts: leveraging Africa's natural capital, seizing opportunities for industrial growth, and establishing supportive policies and institutions. Firstly, it's imperative to acknowledge the economic significance of Africa's natural capital in generating wealth, employment, sustaining livelihoods, and alleviating poverty. Africa's abundant natural resources underpin its social and economic structures, providing a lifeline for the impoverished and most vulnerable populations who rely heavily on nature for sustenance. These assets also play a pivotal role in supporting tourism and related service sectors, which have emerged as vital contributors to external trade, foreign exchange earnings, and job creation across African nations. Secondly, Africa's nascent stage of industrialization presents avenues for development through the adoption of clean, efficient, and resource-conserving technologies. Embracing such technologies can enhance energy and resource efficiency in harnessing the continent's natural wealth, thereby curbing wasteful consumption and mitigating economic costs and risks associated with resource depletion. While the transition to green industrialization demands substantial technological and financial investments, there are promising signs that existing opportunities for leapfrogging could yield significant returns, as demonstrated in the African aluminum industry. Lastly, driving the shift towards a green economy necessitates the formulation of enabling policies and institutions, with a central role assigned to the State. This entails leveraging public investment, fiscal measures, regulatory frameworks, government procurement practices, and market development initiatives at national, regional, and international levels. Moreover, fostering active engagement from non-state actors is vital for effective implementation. (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2012, p. 8)

3. The political directions towards achieving green economy in some African countries

Country	Main green economy policy instrument (post-2005)	Green economy intervention highlight
Cameroon	Although Cameroon lacks a dedicated green economy plan, its green economy interventions are integrated into existing frameworks such as the National Environment Management Plan (PNGE), adopted in 1996 and revised in 2011. Additionally, the country utilizes its National Energy Action Plan for the Reduction of Poverty (PANERP) and implements strategies for ecology waste management and integrated water solutions.	Cameroon implements green economy strategies by utilizing local renewable energy sources like solar and hydro, especially in rural areas, supported by the Rural Energy Fund established in 2009. The country also invests in sustainable forest management, exemplified by the Green Sahel Project initiated in 2007, and undertakes infrastructure improvements to reduce pollution, particularly in rail networks. Additionally, Cameroon designates 30% of its national territory as protected areas to preserve biodiversity and ecosystems.
Morocco	The country has embraced an Inclusive Green Growth Development Policy, ratified the Charter on the Environment and Sustainable Development in 2011, and became a signatory to the OECD's Declaration on Green Growth in 2012.	Enhancing environmental governance, including integrating sustainability principles into interventions across vital sectors like energy, water, tourism, agriculture, and fisheries.
South Africa	The country has established a comprehensive framework for sustainable development, including the National	The nation has implemented a comprehensive sustainable development framework

	Framework on Sustainable Development, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework, the National Climate Change Response, and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.	comprising the National Framework on Sustainable Development, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework, the National Climate Change Response, and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.
Nigeria	Nigeria lacks a single national policy but rather has multiple sectoral policies covering areas such as erosion, flood control, coastal zone management, environmental sanitation, forest policy, biodiversity strategy, and action plans.	The country has implemented measures for both mitigating and adapting to climate change. Additionally, it has introduced national resource accounts to evaluate the economic contribution of environmental resources such as forests, fisheries, wildlife, water, and minerals.

Source: Abdalla Hamdok, The Green Economy and Africa’s Economic Transformation: A Balancing Act, p.94-95.

Conclusion:

Our study yielded several important results, the most prominent of which are:

- The concept of green economy and sustainable development in recent years and their significant importance among researchers in most fields, especially those related to the environment.
- The concept of the green economy aims to improve individuals' living standards and achieve comprehensive sustainable development.
- The green economy encourages reducing pollution and using energy in new ways that preserve natural, human, and material resources.
- Achieving the transition to the green economy is not an easy process for countries in Africa; rather, it is a complex process that requires broad participation from both the government and the people.
- Despite the challenges faced by countries in Africa, they have been striving diligently since 2005 to achieve targeted development and promote the transition towards a green economy
- The green economy is a long-term strategy aimed at achieving economic recovery in Africa.

List of references:

1. Abdalla , H. (2015). *The Green Economy and Africa's Economic Transformation: A Balancing Act*. *Journal of African Transformation*, 1(1), 85–100.
2. Auriacombe, c., & van der Walt, G. (2021). *Fundamental policy challenges influencing sustainable development in Africa*. *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, 9(1), 1-8.
3. Cameron , A. (2012, 11). *A Guidebook to the Green Economy. exploring green economy principles*, 1-23.
4. Ham, C., M, ., Hanley, J, D., & Gázquez, S. (2020). *Growing green:Fostering a green entrepreneurial ecosystem for youth*. Geneva,Switzerland: International Labour Organization.
5. International Labour Organization. (2022). *Guide for young people, job seekers and those who support them. How to work in the green economy?*
6. James , M. (2017). *Sustainable Development: a New(ish) Idea for a New Century?* .*POLITICAL STUDIES*, 48, 370-387.
7. Justice , M. (2019). *Sustainable development: Meaning, history,principles, pillars, and implications for human action: Literature review*. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 1-26.
8. Musa, R., Fadeyi, & Samoil, T. (2021). *Green Entrepreneurship and Employment Generation in a Developing Nation: The Nigerian Case*. *Journal of Humanities*, 5(1), 81-88.
9. Ochieng, A., Tumisang, S., Edward, M., Benton, O., Janet, M., & Boitumelo, M. (2016). *Analysis of the skills required for green economy: The local government sector perspective*. Centre for Renewable Energy and Water, Vaal University of Technology.
10. Olja , M.-I., ovan , Z., & Petar , M. (2017). *RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GREEN ECONOMY - EMPHASIS ON GREEN FINANCE AND BANKING*. *Original scientific paper*, 4(64), 1467-1482.
11. Omar , R., Randa, E., Mohamed , A., & Omar H. , E. (2019). *Sustainable Development & Good Governance*. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 8(2), 125-138.
12. osmond, E., & al. (2021). *Threats of COVID-19 to Achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in Africa*. *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 2(104).

13. Ozili, P. (2022). *Sustainability and sustainable development research around the world*. Munich Personal RePEc Archive, 2-27.
14. Suaad Hadi Hassan , A.-T. (2021). *Green economy and sustainable development*. IOP Conf. Series: Earth and Environmental Science(779), 1-12.
15. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2012). *A Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication: What are the Implications for Africa?* .Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.