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THE CONTROVERSIES OVER THE TERM "EMPOWERMENT" IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE CASE OF TURKEY[*]

SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİR KALKINMANIN UYGULANMASINDA "GÜÇLENDİRME" KAVRAMI ÜZERİNE TARTIŞMALAR VE TÜRKİYE ÖRNEĞİ

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development, being at the centre of today's global and local policies, has led to discussions about its broad content and applicability since the 1980s. In particular, the most emphasized issues have been prioritizing the economic dimension of sustainable development and understanding the environment as the optimal use of natural capital. However, as was underlined at the World Sustainable Development Summit held in 2002, a social dimension also needs to be taken into account. This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore definitions and dimensions of sustainable development and empowerment to understand how their enlarged content affects their application. The dynamic range of empowerment presented as a critical strategy for implementing the social

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dimension of sustainable development, the ambiguities related to the meaning of the concepts, and the discourses transmitted from the global to the local level are being investigated through the Turkish case. To explore different definitions of sustainable development and empowerment, the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti was used. The research sample consists of ten documents on international cooperation initiatives and three Turkish documents on implementing these initiatives. The international and Turkish texts show the fluctuations of empowerment between raising human welfare and increasing production. Thus, the concept of empowerment seems to reflect the contradictions of sustainable development semantically and by the nature of the discourse used.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Social Dimension, Empowerment, Content Analysis, Global Environmental Management, Populist Discourse.

ÖZ

Sürdürülebilir kalkınma, günümüz küresel ve yerel politikalarının merkezinde yer almakla birlikte gündeme geldiği 1980'li yıllardan beri geniş içeriği ve uygulanabilirliği hakkında tartışmalara yol açmaktadır. Özellikle sürdürülebilir kalkınmanın ekonomik boyutuna öncelik verilmesi, çevresel olanın çoğunlukla doğal sermayenin optimal kullanımı olarak anlaşılması üzerinde en çok durulan konular olmuştur. Oysa 2002'de düzenlenen Dünya Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Zirvesi'nde hatırlandığı üzere gözetilmesi gereken bir de toplumsal boyut vardır. Bu çalışmada, özellikle toplumsal boyutun uygulanması için anahtar bir strateji olarak sunulan "güçlendirme"nin -sürdürülebilir kalkınma kavramı gibi- genişleyen içeriğinin küreselden yerele aktarılırken kazandığı/kaybettiği anlamlar Türkiye örneğinde araştırılmaktadır. Atlas.ti programı kullanarak, sürdürülebilir kalkınmanın içeriğinin genişlemesinin uygulamayı nasıl etkilediğini tartışmak ve farklı güçlendirme tanımlarını keşfetmek için nitel bir içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemi, uluslararası işbirliği girişimlerine ilişkin on ve bu girişimlerin Türkiye bağlamında uygulanmasına ilişkin üç belgeden oluşmaktadır. Türkiye'de güçlendirmenin nasıl

algılandığı uluslararası ve ulusal belgelerde karşılaştırmalar yapılarak çözümlenmekte ve bunun uygulamayı nasıl etkileyebileceği incelenmektedir. Bulgular, güçlendirme konusunda uluslararası düzeyde ve Türkiye'nin uygulama anlayışında insan refahını yükseltme ile üretimi artırma arasında gelgitler olduğunu göstermektedir. Böylelikle güçlendirme kavramının sürdürülebilir kalkınma kavramının çelişkilerini hem anlamsal olarak hem de kullanılan söylemin doğası bakımından yansıttığı söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma, Sosyal Boyut, Güçlendirme, İçerik Analizi, Küresel Çevre Yönetimi, Popülist Söylem.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainable development was first mentioned in the World Conservation Strategy. The Conservation of Living Resources for Sustainable Development (1980) prepared under the auspices of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and with the support of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). This first use of the concept was based on the limits of ecosystems' carrying capacity, their capacity to support populations of species, and the need to consider future generations' needs. The "conservation" of living resources was the means of ensuring humankind's sustainable development and the two were strictly linked. (IUCN, 1980: I-IV) In this sense, it was about devoting all national and international efforts to use the environment reasonably; priority was given to maintaining the natural basis of human existence. Sustainable development was a development that integrated conservation. The Global Strategy also listed all the structural, institutional, social and economic obstacles to this required balance between environment and development, which would be repeatedly highlighted in future international cooperation initiatives, ranging from the report Our Common Future (Brundtland Report) from the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) made public in 1987 to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) determined in 2015.

Since the term sustainable development was mentioned in the Brundtland Report, efforts to define it have considerably increased.[1] One of the definitions

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[1] For an overview of the history of sustainable development and how its content evolved, see Sneddon et al., 2006: 253-268; Klarin, 2018: 67-94; Şen et al. 2018: 1-47; Mensah, 2019; Şahinöz,

resulting from this document was accepted as canonical, without forgetting that even in this text, there were different understandings of sustainable development: "Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs" (WCED, 1987). Thus, the concept has substantial content, and this situation has always been a controversial subject for effective implementation. This paper does not intend to clarify the meaning of sustainable development through an extensive literature review but to show the relationships between the extension of its content and controversies created regarding its implementation. Nevertheless, one must notice that the countless publications on the subject reflect a divide: First, a relatively positive approach finds that sustainable development is the necessary strategy that must be adopted despite shortcomings. Secondly, a critical approach highlights the contradictions of the concept and condemns that it serves the interests of growth-hungry capitalism rather than social and environmental justice.

On the relatively positive approach, a pertinent example would be Jeffrey Sachs' analysis: "Sustainable development is a central concept for our age. It is both a way of understanding the world and a method for solving global problems" (Sachs, 2015: 1). In fact, several studies underlining the sustainability paradigm's potential benefits give an important place to criticism. For instance, Aykut Çoban explains five principles (equity, precaution, participation, planning, and integrated policies) that should guide sustainable development as an international, regional and national strategy. However, he also denotes its paradoxes regarding the anthropocentric definition of the "basic needs", the time framing of the "future generations", and the incompatibility of its inclusive approach for all social and economic groups with centrality assigned to growth (Çoban, 2020: 174-192).

From the second perspective, the ambiguity and lack of clarity (Salas-Zapata and Ortiz-Muñoz, 2019: 153-155), oxymoron, or the "self-contradictory" (Johnston et al., 2007: 60) character of sustainable development have remained the basis of observations and criticisms of the concept alongside its contribution to the continuity of capitalism, the centrality of growth, welfare and consumption (Bahçeci and Görmez, 2019: 2311-2315). As Wolfgang Sachs puts it, sustainable development is an "oxymoron" because linking sustainability to development created a "semantic ambiguity". Previously, sustainability concerned natural yields while with the emergence of sustainable development, centrality is given to development at the expense of nature. Sachs points out the lack of concerted development content and makes us understand that the sustainability of an "empty shell" is meaningless. He also asserts that sustainable development is an oxymoron since the objective is to find alternatives to economic development both

2019: 77-101.

in the North and South. If we speak in terms of the sustainability of local livelihoods, the environment suffers rather from an excess of development in the North and not from the problems of access of the populations in the South to resources (Sachs, 1999: 23-41). Thus, there can be no sustainable development since everything happens on a planet with limits.

The way international documents framed social inequalities, starting from the Brundtland Report, has given rise to further critical interpretations of sustainable development around the concepts of equity, social justice, social solidarity (Mengi and Algan, 2003: 7-8, 14) and opened the way for considerations on "environmental justice" (Dobson, 1998: 14-17). On that matter, Agyeman et al. remind us of the perception of Middleton and O'Keefe in their book Redefining Sustainable Development (2001): the problem of sustainability resides above all in social injustice. Therefore, without remedying inequalities, there can be no sustainable development (Agyeman et al., 2003: 2). These observations on the need to ensure equity have a relationship with the social pillar/dimension of sustainable development, one of the main strategies of which is "empowerment". Nevertheless, as we are presenting in this paper, multiple international initiatives that aim to clarify the content and the objectives of sustainable development have tried to contribute to a common understanding without creating a consensus on specific terms, and "empowerment" is one of them.

Repeated use of empowerment, which does not always have equivalence in other languages, including Turkish, opened the way to interpretations that allow countries to associate it with local priorities or to instrumentalize it. A quick discourse analysis of essential documents on sustainable development, the Brundtland Report (Our Common Future-1987), the Rio Declaration (1992), Agenda 21 (1992), the Rio +20 Declaration (the Future We Want), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and finally the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs-Agenda 2030) show that the term empowerment seems to have a somewhat ambiguous meaning. In these texts, used to "strengthen" certain groups, such as women, indigenous people, and young people, this term does not convey information about this process's nature. Starting from this ambiguity, the study focuses on how the participating countries interpreted this term. Through empowerment, we believe we understand the dynamics of transposition or transfer of internationally defined codes to national policies, and we intend to answer the following question: Is this a move away from the senders' original content or enrichment of daily practices by interpreting this term according to the local interests?

Our thesis is that being a practice related to sustainable development, which is also an ambiguous term, empowerment would reflect this ambiguity including all the conflicts. Even being the social side of this policy, it would involve tensions

between human populations' well-being and the demand for productivity. Ultimately, empowerment will be the embodiment of humanity for whom well-being is essential, but productivity is even more.

To realize that, after explaining our methodology, we will first explore the content of the sustainable development concept with its dimensions in official international documents. Then we will carry out an analysis based on existing definitions of the concept of empowerment in international and Turkish documents. Finally, we will show the ambiguity relating to empowerment by putting it into perspective with those of sustainable development.

1. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach by using content analysis to explore definitions and dimensions of sustainable development and empowerment. After detecting the similarities between how the enlarged content of sustainable development limits its implementation and how states' various empowerment strategies divert the term from its initial purpose, we focus on understanding the application of empowerment in the Turkish context. Frequently employed to analyze documents, content analysis is a research technique used to detect relationships between interferences drawn from a text and its production context (Krippendorff, 2004: 18). As Henry and Moscovici (1968: 37) claimed it, the content analysis object is not the text's language but its production conditions. Thus, content analysis permits obtaining information about the context, meaning, intentions, and results (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992: 314). Previous studies on empowerment also used qualitative (Momeni et al., 2021: 236, Mustain et al., 2021: 5-6), alongside quantitative (O'Brien& Butler Flora,1992:97, Tsai et al., 2021: 24-25 and Mora et al., 2022: 347-348) and mixed-methods (Barry and Doherty, 2017: 1055).

As we want to see the relationships between various understandings of empowerment and their effects on its implementation, this study uses content analysis. The choice of a qualitative method can first be explained by the modest number of texts explored. As our sample is too small, in the case of quantitative analysis, it can increase the margin of error, thus rendering the study meaningless and reducing its credibility. Then, although in this paper, we have shown the frequency of themes (meanings of empowerment), our research consists of interpreting the possible relationships between the different empowerment definitions that can influence its implementation. Ten documents of international cooperation initiatives and three Turkish documents on the implementation of these initiatives in the Turkish context form the sample of the study. We carried out an analysis at the actor level. The actors in question are international cooperation initiatives and nation-states. For this reason, we have analyzed the

emblematic documents produced by these entities, which have become benchmarks in the field of sustainable development. Hence the limited number of texts.

Qualitative data on the concept of empowerment was collected between January and June 2019. During that stage, the texts we have referred to on sustainable development were discovered and included in the study. Using Jean M. Bartunek and Gretchen M. Spreitzer's (2006: 255-273) literature review, seventeen definitions of the concept of empowerment were determined. We have coded the data and conducted the qualitative content analysis to explore different definitions of empowerment using the Atlas.ti during June and October 2019. Using this software, we analyzed the international documents as well as the reports and strategies produced in parallel with the stages of international cooperation by the authorities responsible for the Turkish state, namely the Ministry of Development which has given way to the Strategy and Budget Office of the Presidency, the Ministry of Labor, Social Services and the Family, the Ministry of Industry and Technology. The documents were coded according to seventeen definitions in international and national texts to show the ambiguity concerning empowerment. Through the software, the definitions' density and the latter co-occurrence were measured.

In international and Turkish texts whenever the word empowerment occurs, the meaning is coded according to the context, using one or more definitions. Each text is individually coded to see the differences in meanings and the number of appearances of these definitions. After coding, the software measures each definition's number of appearances (frequency or "groundedness"). Even if all the calculations are not necessarily used, the correspondences between each code and the documents and that of the three most cited codes are carried out. After finding the definitions frequently used in the texts, the number of times these definitions are cited together is measured (co-occurrence or density) to show the conflicts. Also, word clouds of the documents on sustainable development were produced using Atlas.ti. The Atlas.ti is a software that facilitates the qualitative research process by making easier the inventory of results and observation of possible code links. The results are exported to Excel, and the graphics are realized. All the word clouds are automatically generated by the software.

Despite the creative nature of our methodology, this study has some limitations. First, even if these texts constitute a turning point in understanding sustainable development and empowerment, the limited number of documents in the sample makes generalization difficult. Future work from a cross-national perspective can remedy this situation. In addition, Turkey's 2nd VNR report was not included in the sample of this work, as we made the selection and coding before the publication of this document by Turkish authorities. Therefore, we have

used this critical document to exemplify and reinforce our observations and draw attention to contradictions. Finally, in-depth interviews with the authors of the texts should supplement the content analysis in order to detect better their intentions and the conception of the world hidden behind them. Therefore, it is a path to explore for future research on empowerment in sustainable development.

2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS THREE DIMENSIONS: MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING?

This part covers the transformation of sustainable development's content by categorizing definitions and themes associated with the concept in official international documents. The international cooperation initiatives that we are studying in this research are the Brundtland Report, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (1992) and the Johannesburg Earth Summit (2002) through their declarations of principles and their action plans (Agenda 21 and Implementation Plan), the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20) (2012) through their final declarations, the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030). The choice of these documents stems from the fact that they have gradually defined sustainable development through its environmental, economic and social pillars and have constituted benchmarks for the participating States to design their own policies.

The canonical definition of the Brundtland Report gave primacy to the needs, particularly of the most deprived, and drew attention to the pressure exerted by society and production techniques on the environment's carrying capacity to satisfy intertemporal needs. More precisely, the consideration of future generations' needs has been added to the requirement of intragenerational equity between generations. Thus, the canonical definition made it clear that sustainable development was above all a social and environmental issue.

Nonetheless, other uses of the term in the report related, inter alia, to economic growth seen as an indispensable factor for satisfying needs. Thus, sustainable development became "compatible" with growth, at least if increasing productivity was accompanied by equality of opportunity and equitable distribution of results. This argument will pave the way for empowerment strategies for the most vulnerable societies and, therefore, effective implementation of sustainable development. These categories are mainly comprised of women, young people, minorities excluded from the sphere of political decision-making, and the global South's poor. However, it is also this concern to defend economic growth that will bring the meaning of sustainable development closer to continuous growth that is more or less respectful of the environment by giving secondary importance to social questions. This

connotation corresponded to the neoclassical models of sustainability in economics: non-decreasing utility over time (WCED, 1987) thanks to the positive effects of technical progress and capital accumulation, which offsets environmental degradation's adverse effects (Faucheux, Pearce and Proops, 1996: 3). Therefore, more than intergenerational equity, intergenerational "efficiency" was at stake (Haley, Shogren and White, 1997: 426). According to this "weak"[2] conception of the sustainable development what mattered for next generations was the "total aggregate stock of 'man-made', human and 'natural' capital', which is considered as 'substitutable'" (Neumayer, 2013: 1, 22-23). The essential purpose of sustainable development was to transmit the level of utility from generation to generation and, more generally, the continuity of an economic system.

In this context, the concept was built around three dimensions, the economic, social and environmental dimensions (Agenda 21, 1992: Chapter 8.6) (in that order), to which were associated problems to be solved and action strategies (areas). The content has been debated and (re) formulated, without ensuring a balanced consideration of these three components by concerned actors. The following summary table (Table.1) may help us to see more closely a broadening of the content of the concept with recurring areas (and therefore unresolved problems over time) in interaction with sustainable development.

Table.1: Definitions of Sustainable Development in the International Texts

Document	Definition ?	Three dimensions specified?	Related domains
Our Common Future (1987)	Yes	No. Rather areas in interaction with the environment: social, economic, political Socially vigorous and environmentally sustainable growth	Economic growth Participative democracy International cooperation Codification of international SD law Energy Cities International peace and security Finance International trade Technologies Managing population growth Health Education Agriculture Industry
Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992)	No	No	Environment Development Participation Legislation International cooperation Women, youth, indigenous populations and local communities Peace and international law

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[2] On the brief economic explanation of weak and strong sustainable development, see also Yeni, 2014: 197-198; Şahinöz, 2019: 92-93.

			Industry
Agenda 21 (1992)	No, but a dissociation: an ecologically rational or "environmentally friendly" and sustainable development	Yes: Social, economic and ecological dimensions	Trade Finance Urban development Energy Transportation Tourism Agriculture and fishing Politics, institutions International cooperation Codification of international SD law Education and science SD indicators Regional priorities: Small island states
Millennium Development Goals (2000)	No	No	Reduction of child mortality Housing Preservation of the environment
Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (2002)	No	Yes: Economic development Social development Environmental Protection	Democracy Fair globalization International and human security Energy SD indicators
Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)	No	Yes: Economic development Social development Environmental Protection The need to strengthen the social dimension underlined	Economic model Good governance International cooperation International security Politics and institutions Public-private partnerships Health Energy Agriculture-Fisheries Transportation Tourism Science and education Regional priorities: Small island states, Africa
Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (2010)	No	Yes: economic, social and environmental issues for sustainable development	Sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth Job intensive recovery Social inclusion Productive employment and decent work for all, including for women, indigenous people, young people Promoting small- and medium-sized enterprises Poverty and hunger eradication Natural disasters Climate change Principle of common but differentiated responsibilities Biodiversity and ecosystem preservation Consumption and production patterns Investments Reliable and disaggregated data Improving national statistical systems Regional priorities: Small island developing states

The Future We Want (Rio+20) (2012)	No	Yes: Economic, social and environmental dimensions	Democracy Good governance Rule of law Inclusive growth Green economy Poverty eradication Public-private partnerships Cultural diversity International cooperation Tourism Agriculture-fisheries Urban development Education Gender equality; women empowerment International peace and security Regional priorities: Small island states, least developed countries, Africa
The Millennium Development Goals Report (2015)	No	No	Health Housing National and international policies Information and communication technologies Statistics system
Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals) (2015)	No	Yes: Economic, social and environmental dimensions But also "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth"	Poverty eradication Zero hunger Health Education Gender equality Water and sanitation Energy Employment Industry and innovation Reduction of inequalities Cities Business model: Responsible production and consumption Climatic changes Biodiversity: Aquatic life and terrestrial life Peace, justice, institutions Global partnerships

First, we see that the economic dimension occupies a preponderant place compared to the others: continuous growth is crucial, the economic model based on production and consumption must be rethought, innovative industry and investments are necessary, multilateral trade development must become an asset for development, investments in renewable energies, the adaptation of the sectors of agriculture and fisheries, transport and tourism are issues of sustainable development. Secondly, the social dimension brings together areas related to improving living conditions, such as health, poverty eradication, the fight against hunger, housing, urban development, education, and gender equality. This dimension attaches particular importance to strengthening the most vulnerable categories and constitutes our object of study. Third, the environmental dimension

is delimited by the initial principle of conservation; to keep the natural basis of human activities. It conditions development. For example, we note in the Johannesburg Declaration that sustainable development is constituted by social development, economic development, and protection of the environment. Therefore, an imbalance to the detriment of the environmental dimension is accepted.

Figure.1: Content Extension of Sustainable Development[3]

Brundtland Report (1987)

Rio Declaration (1992)

Agenda 21 (1992)

MDGs (2000)

Johannesburg Declaration (2002)

Plan of Implementation (2002)

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[3] Word clouds are generated by Atlas.ti software. The bigger and centered words show high frequency. The words in periphery are low frequency.

Keeping the Promise (2010)

The Future We Want (2012)

MDG Report (2015)

Agenda 2030 (2015)

Under these conditions, sustainable development has become an all-embracing concept –a catchphrase– that integrates all the challenges of globalization and the current international disorder's challenges (Figure.1). For some, it is only an instrument at the service of neoliberal globalization, a way of considering the management of social issues and negative environmental externalities in the world economy's governance. In the end, extensive content means, in effect, that there is no operative content.

The changes in the use of the concept also reveal shifts in the meaning of sustainable development. One can detect a shift from development to growth, from improving living conditions –a qualitative process– to increasing GDP –a quantitative process–.[4] (Perroux, 1961; Daly, 1993: 267-268) Thus, already in the Brundtland Report, reference is made to "vigorous growth, socially and environmentally sustainable" as an equivalent to sustainable development. The "inclusive growth", the "green economy" affirmed after the 20 years of the Rio Conference are just as many variations of sustainable development to finally mention in the SDGs "a sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth"[5] (UN, 2015) as the object of sustainable development. At the same time, inclusive

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[4] The distinction in question comes from the writings of François Perroux. Herman Daly also retains it.

[5] Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

growth[6] is a strategy for including the most vulnerable categories in the production and consumption processes to benefit from the fruits of continuous growth. In this sense, it corresponds to the social dimension of intragenerational equity.

We also see that there is a neglected political dimension. Indeed, political issues include equality of opportunity, respect for cultural diversity, the design of national and international public policies, efforts at legal codification, international cooperation, international peace and security. The interpretation of these questions by the international community and its willingness (or not) to act mark the feasibility and effectiveness of sustainable development.[7]

Consequently, if there is a hierarchy of sustainable development dimensions in terms of the importance accorded by the international community, we can conclude that the economic dimension prevails. According to their priorities and temporal requirements, the social and environmental dimensions are secondary and variably important in the actors/interlocutors' eyes. This is why attention to social issues has been slow to come in the context of implementing sustainable development.

The omission of the social dimension was recalled in the implementation plan of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002: "In particular, the social dimension of sustainable development should be strengthened..." (UN, 2002b) This dimension corresponded for the most part to four of the evaluation categories of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Indicators[8] (UNDP, 2018: 20): the fight against poverty in the broad sense, including deprivation and multidimensional inequalities; health; education; housing. Added to this was the desire to integrate the most vulnerable categories into exclusive decision-making spheres at the local and international levels and make them stronger / more resilient economically. It was necessary to "give them powers". The word chosen in English to designate this strategy was empowerment.

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[6] For an extensive perspective on inclusiveness according to the SDGs, see Gupta and Vegelin, 2016: 433-448.

[7] Analyzing the implementation of the SDGs, Jeffrey Sachs pointed out the importance of the political dimension by suggesting that 'good governance' should be the fourth objective to be achieved to reach economic, ecological and social goals: Governments' capacity to carry out 'core functions' and multinational companies' responsible involvement in the making of the public good might enforce societies' well-being (Sachs, 2015: 3-4).

[8] Quality of human development: Quality of health, quality of education, quality of standard of living; Gender inequalities over the life cycle: education, unemployment, employment, rate of parliamentary representation, old age pension; Empowerment of women: Reproductive health, violence, socio-economic empowerment.

3. THE LONG UNDERESTIMATED SOCIAL DIMENSION AND THE EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DEFINITIONS

Appeared in the 1960s in the field of religion, followed by sociology in the 1970s, the concept of empowerment has become a fashionable concept in the social sciences. Following the enthusiasm against it, it becomes a catch-all concept whose definition varies depending on the discipline. However, according to the study by Jean M. Bartunek and Gretchen M. Spreitzer (2006: 259-262) it is possible to indicate 3 clusters/pillars among the swarm of empowerment definitions. The first has a meaning of sharing real power with the following sub-meanings: having power, strengthening the power of the underrepresented, control over destiny, and political participation. This first category corresponds to the years 1960-1970. During these two decades of empowerment, these meanings are mainly used by studies in religion and sociology.

The second group that gives an idea of fostering human welfare (pride in culture, increasing self-worth, increasing knowledge, personal meaning, dignity and respect, providing resources, connectedness, and increasing options) is developed by the contribution of disciplines such as education, psychology and social work.

Finally, the third dimension appeared in the 1990s with the intervention of management sciences[9]. A meaning of fostering productivity (participation in decision making, taking responsibility, enabling others, sense of ownership, and working in teams) is transmitted through this dimension. In other words, "it is a term with a radical left-wing lineage which has been transformed into right-wing managerial discourse" (Lincoln et al. cited by Bartunek and Spreitzer, 2006: 269).

Table.2: Empowerment Definitions and Sub-Definitions

Sharing Real Power	Fostering Human Welfare	Fostering Productivity
Having power	Pride in culture	Participation in decision-making
Strengthen the power of the underrepresented	Increasing self-worth	Taking responsibility
Control over destiny	Increasing knowledge	Enabling others
Political participation	Personal meaning	Sense of ownership
	Dignity and respect	Working in team
	Providing resources	
	Connectedness	
	Increasing options	

[9] On the genealogy of empowerment as a managerial strategy, see Lee and Koh, 2001: 684-695.

This contextualized presentation of the concept makes it possible to better define the emergence and trajectory of empowerment by emphasizing each discipline's interpretation depending on the actors involved. Mainly, a review of the empowerment literature highlights differences in meaning between those who empower and those empowered (Lincoln et al., 2002: 272-274).

As a sustainable development strategy, empowerment entered the vocabulary of international texts in 1987 with Brundtland Report and remained constant in subsequent texts of the international community. The idea of empowering the most vulnerable categories of societies has found its place since the publication of this report (Chapter IV: Population and human resources; II.3.3: Empowering vulnerable groups). Firstly, the vulnerability was fundamentally associated with local communities. However, with the Rio declaration, alongside indigenous communities, strengthening was also requested for women and young people, those far from the spheres of decision making. We must also add the poorest in this category. In The Future We Want, we encounter the use of "major groups" as categories to be included more in decision-making processes. So, the content of "empowerment" is broadened by the increase in the actors concerned and their differentiated contexts: "women, children and young people, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and unions, companies and sectors of activity, scientific and technical world and farmers as well as other stakeholders, including local communities, voluntary groups and foundations, migrants, families, the elderly and people with disabilities" (UN, 2012:8).

Despite the increasing use of the word in international texts, no clear definition of empowerment is made (Hennink et al., 2012: 203). We have to wait for the booklet published following the International Conference on People's Empowerment and Development, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on August 5th 2012, for the following definition: "It is the process of enabling people to increase control over their lives, to gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives, to increase their resources and qualities and to build capacities to gain access, partners, networks, a voice, in order to gain control." (UNSDN, 2012: Introduction).

This definition emphasizes the two sub-definitions specified above: enabling others and providing resources. It also contains other sub-definitions like having power and control over destiny. Even if there is no precise definition, an analysis of the meaning of the word empowerment in international texts points in the same direction. Within these texts, the most used sub-meanings are; enabling others (83), providing resources (83) and having power (55).

Figure.2: The Groundedness[10] of Sub-definitions of the Word Empowerment in International Texts
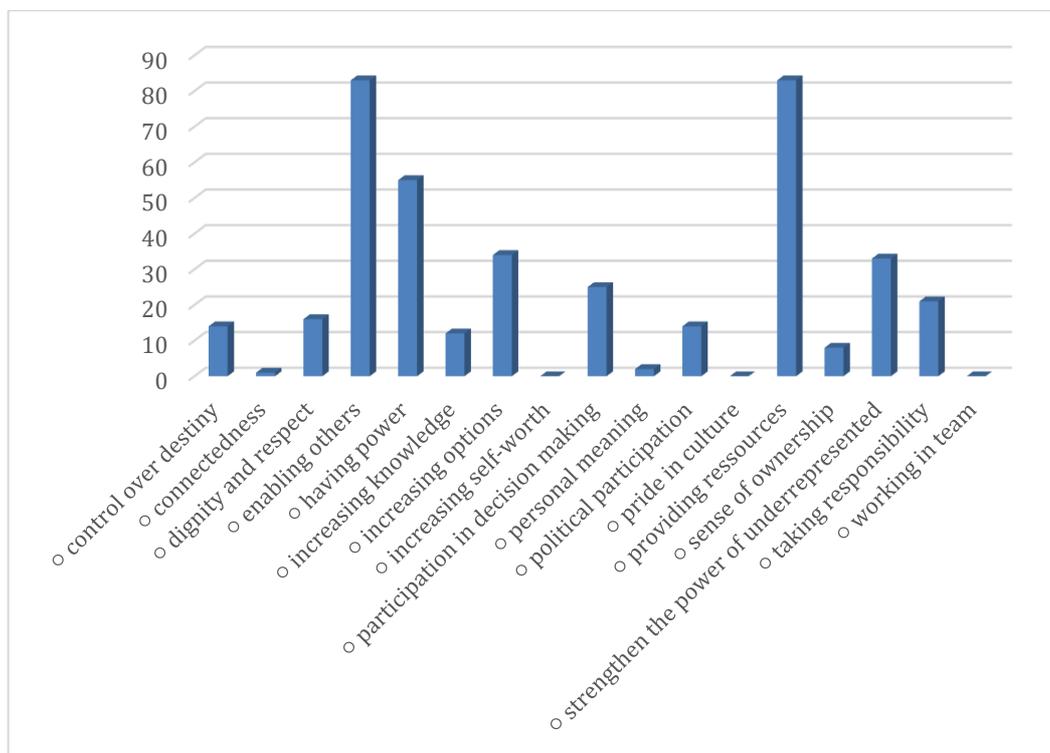
In the light of the classification of empowerment according to decades and disciplines, it is possible to see that the international community has also been influenced by both the "fostering human welfare" approach promoted by education, psychology and social work, and also by that of "fostering productivity" which is a dimension provided by management sciences. To express differently, we can say that the international community hesitates between human welfare and productivity in the empowerment framework, as is the case for sustainable development. The fact that having power that represents sharing real power comes in third place with strengthening the power of the underrepresented shows us a concern for good governance. However, as the density of this definition remains well behind the others, it is possible once again to note the tearing and diverging views and interests within the international community (See Figure 2).

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[10] In this graphic, the groundedness is measured. It shows the frequency of the code.

Figure.3: The Distribution of Three Definition Clusters of the Word Empowerment in International Texts According to the Groundedness and Density[11].
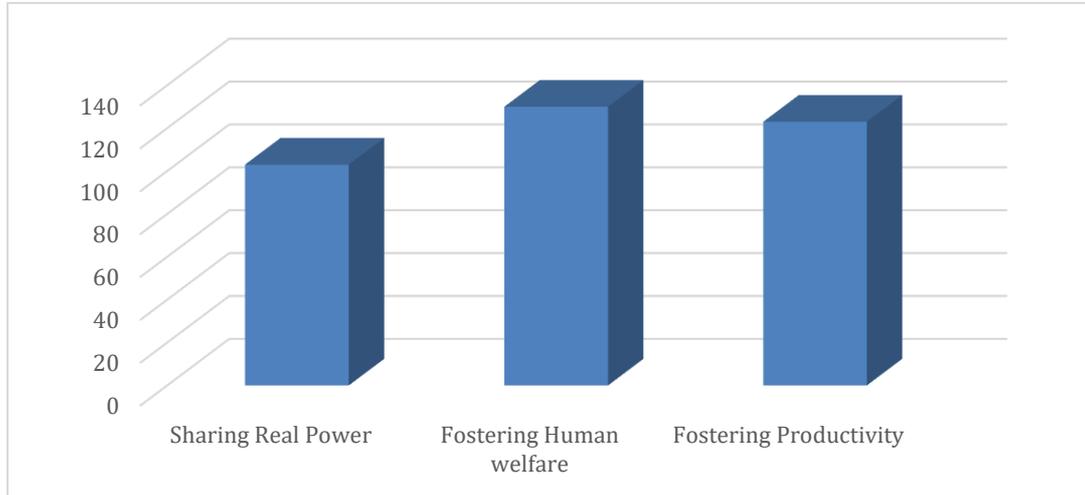
In order to understand local reception and implementation of international texts, it was necessary to work on the texts published by sovereign states. Hence the recourse to texts prepared by the various bodies of the Turkish government. The choice of the texts reflects a need to understand the nuances in the uses of empowerment. That is why Turkish, the native language of the researchers, was privileged in the analysis.

What is the equivalent of empowerment in Turkish? In Turkish, "güçlendirme" has a similar connotation. It also corresponds to giving powers to improve the position of an actor. It is a unilateral and asymmetrical act going from the strong to the weak and denotes a power relationship. However, in the latest publications, Turkey prefers to use "güçlendirme" with "güçlenme," which insists on the role of actors in the empowerment process while giving them an active role and breaking down subsequent meanings (Turkey's Sustainable Development Goals, 2nd VNR, 2019: 39, 69).

The Turkish texts are in the same direction as the international texts but slightly different (See Figures 3-4). The two most dominant meanings are enabling others and providing resources. Thus, Turkey shares the hesitation of international texts between people's well-being and the concern for productivity, human welfare, and management. However, the third most frequent meaning is strengthening the power of the underrepresented versus having power in

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[11] In this graphic the roundedness and density are measured. Groundedness shows the frequency of the code, whereas the density indicates the number of linkages to other codes, in other terms, it measures the co-occurring of codes.

international texts. Turkish writers seem to perceive empowerment from outside and from above, therefore a more vertical power relationship.

In contrast, international texts seem to prefer a perception from within the actors and a relatively horizontal power relationship. In other words, in Turkish texts, the empowerment of women, children, the disabled, or the private sector comes from outside as if the actors have no power over their destinies even if, and no doubt, the editors' intention is good. In international texts, it is possible to imply discovering a power that already exists among the actors cited. In short, this is the difference between government and governance between the two sets of texts.

Figure.4: The Groundedness of Sub-definitions of the Word Empowerment in Turkish Texts
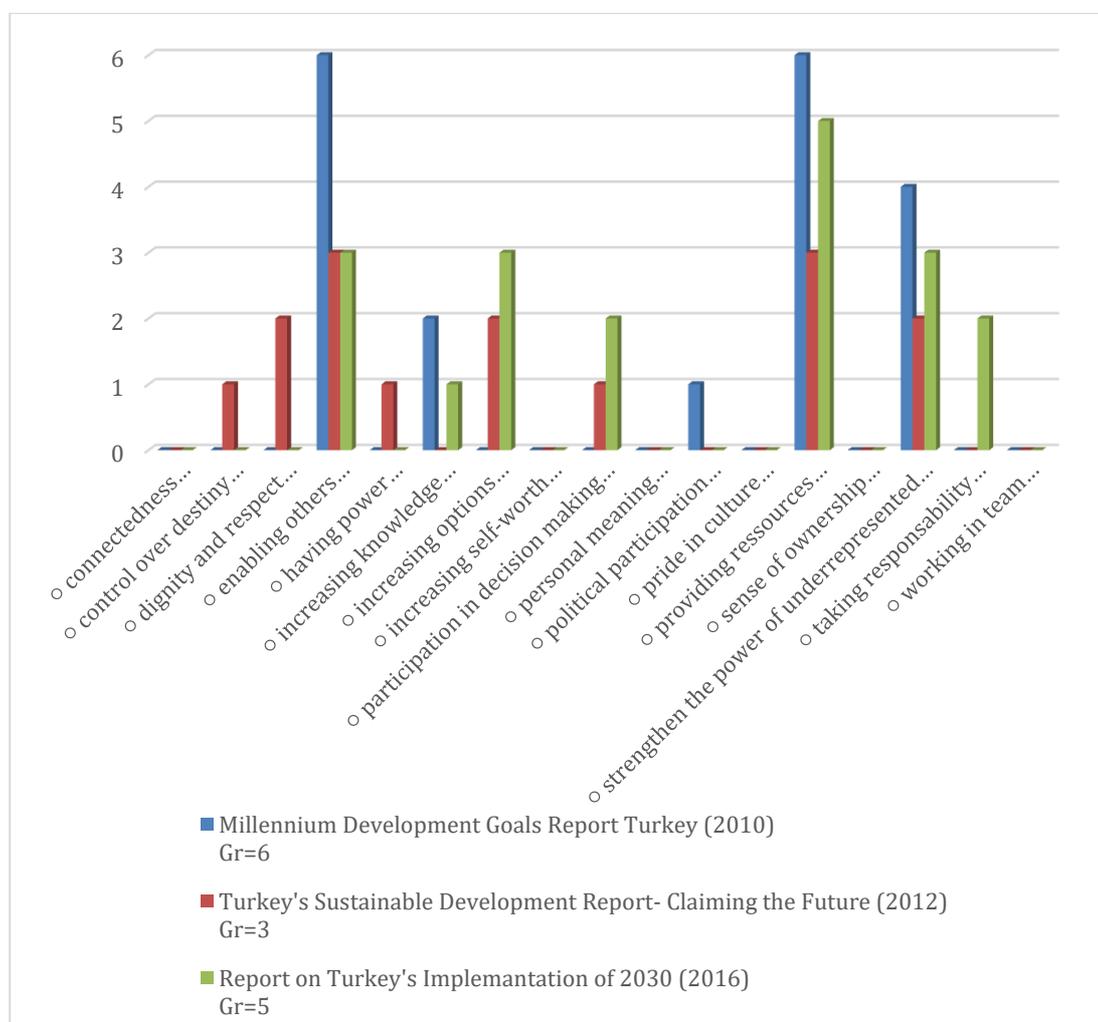
Turkey, which hesitated between human welfare and management in the texts of 2010 and 2012, clearly prefers human welfare in 2016.

Figure.5: The Distribution of Three Definition Clusters of the Word Empowerment in Turkish Texts According to the Groundedness and Density
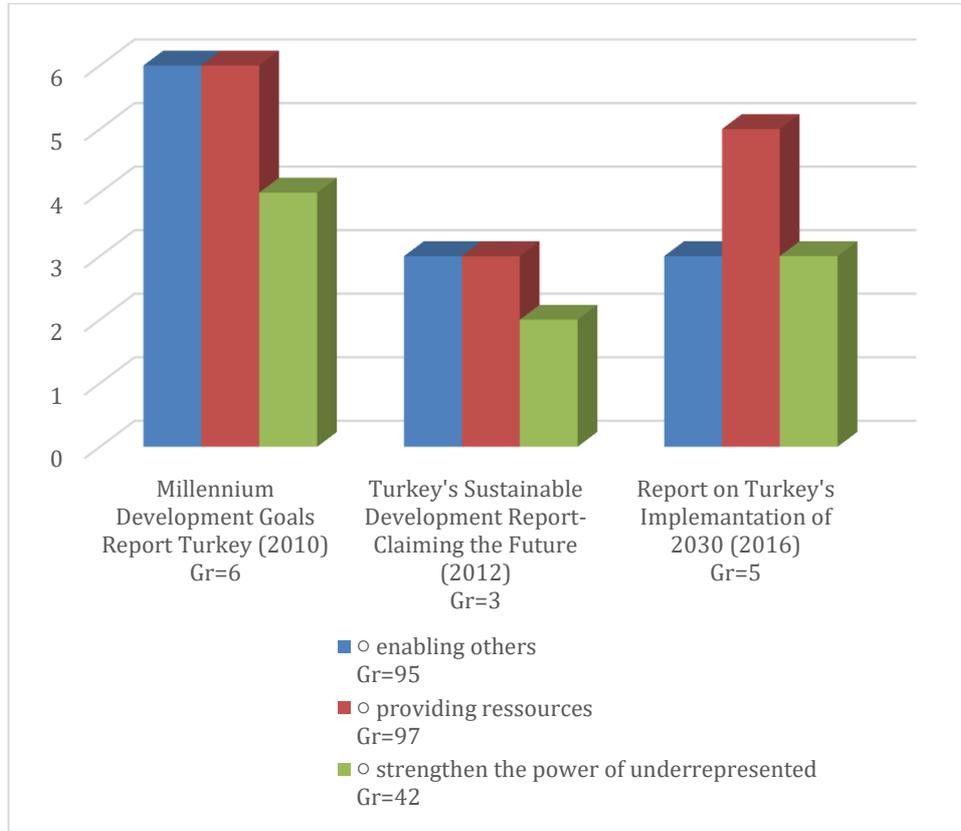
The study of definitions and sub-definitions reveals an ambiguity regarding the concept of empowerment. This ambiguity coincides with the ambiguity regarding sustainable development. Along with the ambiguity of sustainable development, there are two types of ambiguity concerning empowerment: the hesitation between economic growth and ecological awareness and that between global environmental management and a populist discourse that are often antipodes from each other (Dryzek, 1997: 153, Baillat, 2012: 4 Adger et al., 2001: 682). In other words, one is about the concept's meaning while the other focuses on the nature of the discourses on sustainable development.

4. AMBIGUOUS EMPOWERMENT DISCOURSES

The ambiguity regarding sustainable development is visible on two levels. The first is at the semantic level and presents as a hesitation between economic growth and ecological awareness. Semantic ambiguity shifts on the economic and social axis. The second ambiguity focuses on the nature of the discourse on sustainable development. This discursive ambiguity is based on a global-local axis. The two parts are discourses of global environmental management versus a populist discourse.

The first type of ambiguity concerns the meaning of the word. As John S. Dryzek (1997: 153) and Alice Baillat (2012: 4) note about sustainable development, there is a hesitation between economic growth and ecological awareness. The term zigzags between the idea of development (or even progress) and that of protection. The use of the word empowerment is a discursive choice that underlines this hesitation and combines these two antagonistic tendencies. It is either about preserving the state of something, or someone or protecting a group. The expression of vulnerable groups made up of women, indigenous people, children, the elderly, the disabled, and refugees shows this need for protection. Thus, in empowerment, there is a tendency to preserve or protect.

However, the texts also show a desire to develop and improve. The frequent and simultaneous use of empowerment with that of enhancement, meaning the fact of enriching, is a point that illustrates this point. This improvement often concerns women. Women's status needs to be improved in about seven areas: economy, sport, technology, education, decision-making process, environmental programs, and health (See Table 3). These areas relate more to the social dimension of sustainable development. Therefore, in the texts, women as an actor group become the symbol or equivalent of the social dimension.

Table.3: Empowerment of Women According to Areas in International and Turkish Texts

Actors	Areas
International organizations	Economy (rural areas, poor, microfinance and micro-credits, the efforts of developing countries, finance, capacity building) Sport Technology (information and communication) Education The decision-making process (political, social and economic, sustainable development, the UN women's office and the population) Environmental programs (water, desertification, land degradation and flooding) Health (HIV and AIDS)
Turkey	Economy (participation of women in the workforce) Family Social integration The process of decision making

On this point, first of all, it is possible to say that it can be a discursive and rhetorical choice aimed at remaining in the dark to leave more freedom in interpreting the texts to the acceding countries. It should be remembered that these texts are declarations of principles or action plans. So, these texts are in a more or less deliberative framework. Within this framework, writers must convey ideas

without going into detail to "cast a wide net". It seems that this is a deliberate choice to win countries' support to the authors' cause. Therefore, they must consider the audience. As the audience is multiple and consists of different actors (states, non-governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations), discursive and argumentative strategies must create support around the proposed principles. In this context, the word empowerment can be considered an indicator of this dynamic at play.

Second, starting from J.L. Austin's theory of speech acts (1962:12), it is possible to advance that the words and speech expressions used in the policy statements and action plans analyzed are actions. Through these texts, the international community draws a world vision and an action line for states and their citizens. The texts indicate how this vision will be realized and the main actors achieving the precise objectives. More precisely, these texts will answer the following questions: What to do? How to do it? Who will do it? In other words, within the framework of these texts, empowerment, despite the ambiguity of its content, becomes one of the most critical means in the action repertoire of countries to achieve the objectives.

Interestingly, the word empowerment is strongly linked to the main actors, who will become the driving force of this action. As we have already clarified, the emphasis is clearly placed on women in international texts. For the international community, "We acknowledge the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, because women are agents of development. We call for action to ensure that women and girls have equal access to education, essential services, health care and economic opportunities and are involved in decisions at all levels. We stress that investing in improving women and girls' status has a multiplier effect on productivity and efficiency and promotes sustained economic growth" (A/RES/65/1, 2010:11). Of course, the international community favours the economic dimension; however, it chooses the strengthening of women and therefore the social dimension as "the" means to achieve this.

For Turkey, this role falls to the private sector even if the second actors to be strengthened remain women and girls. The Turkish authors are clear on the subject: "The vision and responsibilities of the private sector (as the primary producer of goods and services) to enrich (enhance again!) Sustainable development is of vital importance to all levels" (The report on Turkey's initial steps towards the implementation of the 2030, 2016: 33). By emphasizing the private sector, Turkey shows its preference for the economic dimension of sustainable development (see Figure 5). It places women and the social dimension in the second position, deviating slightly from the international community trend. In the final analysis, Turkey seems to opt for the meaning of development to the

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detriment of protecting the word "sustainable development" while the international community shows a preference for the side of its protection.

Figure.6: Turkish Texts' Word Clouds[12]

Turkey's Millennium Development Goals Report (2010)

Turkey's Sustainability Report (2012)

The Report on Turkey's initial steps towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016)

The second type of ambiguity observed on sustainable development that can be seen from empowerment concerns discourse types. According to Adger et al. 2001: 682) two categories of discourse can be observed on environmental problems: a discourse of global environmental management and populist discourse. The discourse of global environmental management is clearly managerial. Focusing on the global level, this discourse is "held mainly by international organizations and governments and conveys a technocratic vision" (Adger et al., 2001: 701). It offers "solutions imposed from the outside on local actors and supposed to resolve the global environmental crisis" (Adger et al., 2001:702). The populist discourse at odds with the former is advanced by non-governmental organizations, interest groups and some states. The populist discourse at odds with the former is advanced by non-governmental organizations, interest groups and some states. This speech accuses the former and emphasizes that local populations are the victims of the first discourse's producers. On the contrary, the latter aggravates the same problems and causes local exploitation by trying to solve environmental problems through external intervention.

These two contradictory approaches (top-down and bottom-up) are formed around the global-local axis. Dominique Pestre (2011: 32) shares the same idea by

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[12] The clouds are generated by Atlas.ti software. The bigger and centered words show high frequency. The words in periphery are low frequency.

showing the ideal of society and common life in this concept. According to him, the concept of sustainable development is not politically neutral. It represents a project for a society based on social democracy that has become ecological "in that it believes it necessary to think about common life and to deliberate about it, which it believes useful to also apprehend it by collective thought, by reason and exchange" (Pestre, 2011: 32). It is also a Keynesian way of thinking in the sense that it views the environment as a new partner. This ideal of social democracy represented by the Brundtland report changes tone and becomes a neo-liberal ideal with Agenda 21 by granting the market a regulatory role.

As in the idea of sustainable development, there is a tension between these two tendencies in the idea and the word empowerment. On the one hand, declarations of principles and action plans have a general tone imbued with comprehensive environmental management discourse, which emphasizes external intervention to improve a lot of vulnerable groups or major groups. While sentences using the word empowerment show a preference for bottom-up actions for these groups or actors, as Adler et al. note, "the populist discourse emphasizes rights, justice, self-determination and the empowerment by which environmental groups can be resolved in the long term" (Adger et al., 2001: 705). In international texts, this tension can be seen through the passive and active conjugation of the verb "empower". The verb is conjugated eight times actively (empower and empowering) and seven times passively (being empowered, must be empowered). The not-too-distant numbers for active and passive use show the authors' hesitation.

Once again, this can be a deliberate choice to cast a wide net to let the acceding countries manage the tension at the global and local levels as they see fit without, however, deviating from principles and action plans. In this regard, Turkey seems to be siding with the discourse of global environmental management and economic growth by favouring the private sector and strengthening women through state reforms. It favors intervention from outside and at the top of the State and national and multinational companies. The reference to the national development plan in Turkish texts illustrates this point well (see Table 4).

Table.4: Empowerment in International Documents

Document	How many times the word empowerment and other forms are mentioned	Associated Groups
Our Common Future (1987)	5	Women Vulnerable groups Local governments Coastal states

Document	Count	Associated Groups
Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992)	2	The underprivileged, especially women, youth and indigenous people
Agenda 21 (1992)	11	Local groups Communities Women People NGOs Pollution control agencies Women's Office in the UN NGOs specializing in the issue of women Local populations including women, youth, children and indigenous people
Millennium Development Goals (2000)	1	Women
Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (2002)	1	Women
Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (2010)	15	Women
Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)	2	People living in poverty and their organizations Women producers
The Future We Want (Rio+20) (2012)	21	Women Poor and people in vulnerable situations Everybody The UN environment program Peasants, fishers and forest guards
The Millennium Development Goals Report (2015)	0	-
Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals) (2015)	14	Women and girls Vulnerable people Youth Communities People
TOTAL	72	

Table.5: Empowerment in Turkish Documents

Document	How many times the word empowerment and other forms are mentioned	Associated Groups
Turkey's Millennium Development Goals Report (2010)	6	Women
Turkey's Sustainability Report (2012)	3	The private sector The disadvantaged
The report on Turkey's initial steps towards the	6	Women and girls The business environment

implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016)		National Development Plan
TOTAL	15	

Empowerment is marked by these ambiguities as shown above by its hesitation between fostering human welfare and productivity. Thus, the conflicts around the axes global (society, companies)-local (individual) and economic (productivity)-social (welfare) is re-generated within the framework of the definitions of empowerment, the discourses, and empowerment. It will not be surprising to see the same conflicts in the implementation examples other than Turkey.

These two types of ambiguity create tension between the realities of implementation, and the concept becomes an oxymoron, which no doubt facilitates its sloganization (Pestre, 2011: 34). Thus, just like sustainable development, empowerment being a vague and flexible concept, becomes "the" slogan, the measure to say well to look good in the public space, whether national or international. In the international and Turkish texts, such instrumental use is easily visible. In the form of "Empower women and girls", the concept is increasingly becoming a slogan. However, this slogan fails to hide the significant gap between promises and words on the one hand and accomplishments and things on the other. The limits of the progress made and the advice given to companies to be environmentally conscious on paper to make the right impression but not necessarily respect it in practice clearly show the existence of this gap. The empowerment that becomes a slogan is embodied by institutionalization in everyday life. In other words, the passage from the abstract register to the concrete passage occurs via the institutions and their practices. Legal practices and institutional arrangements take shape through the UN bodies, regional structures like the European Union and finally, the sovereign states.

In the Turkish case, the empowerment strategy seems to include everyone: empowerment in Turkey is that of women, children, and the disabled. Nevertheless, also the private sector (in Turkey's Sustainability Report [2012]) or the business environment (in the report on Turkey's initial steps towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016) and the migrants (in the 2nd Voluntary National Review (2019) are among the actors to be empowered. However, emphasizing the "leaving no one behind" principle, the 2019 report's editors affirm that according to the Turkish Statistical Institute, the rate of individuals living on less than $ 1.25 per day is 0.06 (6 in ten thousand) as of 2015, which is negligible (2019: 38). Therefore, a part of the people is left behind.

Second, in Turkey, becoming more and more instrumentalized, empowerment has become a strategy for many things since 2010, with the publication of the National Millennium Development Goals report. In the Turkish case, empowerment is a tool used to justify or polish economic plans, strategies, and legal modifications. Especially in the 2nd VNR, in a discursive way, constitutional amendments, the "macroeconomic stability, economic growth, and the increase in social transfer" (2019: 52) for ending poverty; amendment to the Labour Law in 2016 (2019: 39) as a policy for women employment; are presented as empowerment strategies that helped Turkey go beyond what was expected in the implementation of Agenda 2030 until now. According to the decision-makers, the same elements or arguments may also justify the country's political stability and relative power and criticize other political actors and social groups. We can add to these observations Aykut Çoban's criticism of Turkey's 2nd VNR 4th chapter, "Leaving No One Behind", in the section on policies for women: The report finds that Turkey's success in gender equality is above the world average (Turkey's Sustainable Development Goals, 2nd VNR, 2019: 9). However, although the report presents the National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) (by reminding that Turkey was the first country to sign and ratify although the country withdrew from it by the presidential decision 3718 in 2021 (Resmi Gazete, 20.03.2021)) as the means of "preventing abuse and violence against women" (Turkey's Sustainable Development Goals, 2019: 69-70), the considerable increase in femicides [13] show another reality. Thus, Çoban believes there are two possibilities: either the States might present policies far from what sustainable development should be like sustainable development or this is due to the very paradoxes of the concept (Çoban, 2020: 188).

Third, although the eradication of absolute poverty, gender equality, and integration of migrants under temporary protection to the workforce are presented as achieved or mainly achieved, these facts must be corroborated by independent scientific work.

5. CONCLUSION

As part of this work, we first explored the concept content of sustainable development and its components, namely the economic, environmental, and social dimensions. International bodies have implemented the empowerment concept and strategies to strengthen the social dimension of sustainable development. Secondly, we showed the different meanings given to empowerment

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[13] Almost 3200 homicides between 2011-2021, according to the numbers estimated by NGOs in Turkey (Şirin, 2022).

and their weight in international and Turkish texts. Finally, identifying these meanings gave rise to the third step of analyzing the ambiguity of the concept of empowerment.

The study of definitions and sub-definitions reveals an ambiguity regarding the concept of empowerment. This ambiguity coincides with the ambiguity regarding sustainable development that indicates a hesitation between economic growth and ecological awareness and that between global environmental management and populist discourse. In the light of the classification of empowerment according to decades and disciplines, it is possible to see that the international community has also been influenced by both the "fostering human welfare" approach promoted by education, psychology, and social work, and also by that of "fostering productivity" which is a dimension provided by management sciences. Thus, the side that prioritizes "fostering productivity" in empowerment ranks alongside approaches that defend economic growth and global environmental management discourse, while the defenders of the "fostering human welfare" approach align with the ecological awareness and populist discourse. The analysis also draws attention to the fact that empowerment indicates internal and horizontal power relations in international texts. However, Turkish texts refer to external and vertical power relations.

The tension created by the clusters of ambiguity facilitates its sloganization. Although the formulation of these practices, often in the form of sloganization, cannot force the actors to do something, they nevertheless encourage them to adopt practices and devices favorable to sustainable development. Following the speech-act theory, the way concerns are formulated, the change in the framing of questions (the shift from gender equality to parity, for example) makes specific questions visible and changes the way to think and act on these questions (Pestre, 2011: 36). As Pestre rightly points out, "Of course, concrete achievements can differ profoundly from words, that is obvious, but having to express one's concern and repeat one's commitments is not without effect on the practices of the actors, on the public space and consciences" (Pestre, 2011: 36). Pestre's observations are valid in the case of empowerment.

Empowerment becomes an empty slogan, but this does not mean it does not affect societies. The framing of empowerment as enabling others and providing resources, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, indigenous people, the disabled, etc. in international texts gives an indication for nation-states. As it can be seen in the Turkish example, this framework is often reproduced (the importance given to enabling others and providing resources, the privileged place of women in empowerment policies, etc.). The Turkish government is taking measures to improve the living conditions of the populations concerned. For example, Turkey's Program for the Protection of the Family and Dynamic

Population Structure tries to promote women's empowerment. The program promotes "maternity gift" payments, the right to work part-time when children start primary school, and measures to increase affordable and quality childcare (Munoz Boudet & Wiseman, 2015: 2-3) And also, the First Action Plan on Women's Employment in Turkey developed to support women in the professional area was launched on May 17th, 2016 (ILO, 2016). Framing a word thus changes the allocation of resources to women[14] in Turkey's case.

The ambiguity of sustainable development, as well as empowerment, is often mentioned in various scientific articles. The analysis of the meanings of the word empowerment clearly shows the conflicting tendencies. Indeed, the conscious or unconscious lack of clarity of sustainable development is visible in a fairly symmetrical way and with much coherence in empowerment, the social pillar of the latter. The liberty to apply the term empowerment to the Turkish private sector illustrates the trajectory of a concept: born from a concern for the liberation of vulnerable populations and the improvement of their living conditions towards the unbridled concern for productivity.

The demonstration of these latent conflicts can, however, push international bodies to create more precise indicators for implementing empowerment strategies. This is already the case for the empowerment of women and girls. In this way, without stifling all the richness of the concept, "words can become policies" more effectively and for the sake of the common good.

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[14] However, the growing literature on women's empowerment in Turkey questions the effectiveness of these initiatives. According to this literature, non-formal education helps to realize women's psychological empowerment, but collective and political empowerment still needs development. Thus, empowerment allows women an individual transformation but does not turn into a social change to create gender parity (Ortaköylü Uysallı, 2017:242-243.) In this line of thought, women's empowerment is generally limited in the private sphere and significantly fails to change engendered power relations (Akyüz et al., 2018:19-20).

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