RECLAIMING ‘SUSTAINABILITY’
‘SUSTAINABABBLE’ 1

Sustainable Golf: “Golf can be a leader in sustainable sport and business universally valued for good environmental and social contributions. The Golf Environment Organization is dedicated to that potential.”
‘SUSTAINABABBLE’ 2

Sustainable Las Vegas: “For the city of Las Vegas, Sustainability is more than just being “green” — it is a way to ensure that current and future generations will enjoy the quality of life we have all worked so hard to achieve. It includes every aspect of our lives and it takes the whole community to make it work.”
`When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, `it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less.‘

`The question is,' said Alice, `whether you can make words mean so many different things.'

`The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, `which is to be master - that's all.'
SD in NPPF

• ‘When taken as a whole, the policies in this Framework set out the Government's view of what constitutes sustainable development’ – draft National Planning Policy Framework 2011

• ‘The UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future set out five ‘guiding principles’ of sustainable development: living within the planet’s environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.’

- final NPPF 2012
SD in Rio + 20 Resolution

1. We, the Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives, having met at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, with the full participation of civil society, renew our commitment to sustainable development and to ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations.

4. We also reaffirm the need to achieve sustainable development by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth.

10. We acknowledge that democracy, good governance and the rule of law, at the national and international levels, as well as an enabling environment, are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger.
The three archaeological layers of ‘sustainability’:

1. Contemporary (established c. 1962–1987)

2. First use of modern term (1713), and its development through the Enlightenment

3. Pre-Enlightenment concepts of ‘conservatio’ and ‘Providentia Dei’ (and pre- and non-Christian concepts of ‘sustainability’)
The Brundtland Commission definition of sustainability

Development is sustainable if it ‘meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

The three pillars of sustainability

- Social
- Environment
- Economic

- Bearable
- Sustainable
- Viable
- Equitable
‘Blue Marble’

taken from Apollo 17, December 1972

- ‘In the middle of the 20th century, we saw our planet from space for the first time. Historians may eventually find that this vision had a greater impact on thought than did the Copernican revolution of the 16th century, which upset the human self-image by revealing that the Earth is not the centre of the universe. From space, we see a small and fragile ball dominated not by human activity and edifice but by a pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery, and soils. Humanity's inability to fit its activities into that pattern is changing planetary systems, fundamentally. Many such changes are accompanied by life-threatening hazards. This new reality, from which there is no escape, must be recognized - and managed.’
The man who invented ‘sustainability’

Hans Carl von Carlowitz
1645-1714

Author of ‘Sylvicultura oeconomica’ or “A guide to the cultivation of native trees” (1713), in which he coins the term ‘nachhaltig’.
Sustained yield forestry

Eucalypt plantation, Southern China

(C) Anders Malteser
SYLVA,
Or a Discourse of
FOREST-TREES,
AND THE
Propagation of Timber
In His MAJESTIES Dominions,
By J. E. Esq:
As it was Deliver'd in the ROYAL SOCIETY the xvth of
October, 1621, upon Occasion of certain Queries
Propounded to that illustrious Assembly, by the Honorable the Principal
Officers, and Commissioners of the Navy.
To which is annexed
POMONA Or An Appendix concerning Fruit-Trees in relation to CIDER;
The Making and several ways of Ordering it.
Published by express Order of the ROYAL SOCIETY.
Also
KALENDARIUM HORTENSES; Or, Gardeners Almanac;
Directing when he it is to be Made at all through the Year.
London, Printed by J. Martyn, and J. Allestry, Printers to the ROYAL
SOCIETY, and are to be sold at their Shop at the Red in St. Paul's Church-yard.
M.D.LXXIV.
The diverging paths of the Enlightenment

René Descartes  
1596-1650

“Je pense, donc je suis”
We are: “maîtres et possesseurs de la nature”

Baruch Spinoza  
1632-1677

“Suum esse conservare”
“Deus sive natura”
“Man is a part of nature”
The unsustainable interruption
The 9 ‘planetary boundaries’
The cycle of human understanding of sustainability

Gaia
("Providentia planetae")

Conservatio
(<Providentia Dei)

Revenge of Nature?

Conservatio sui
(> human co-responsibility)

Mastery over nature
Any questions?
German sustainability governance

The Case of German Fed. Institutions

- Federal Statistical Office
- Council for SD
- Parliamentary Advisory Council for SD
- German states
- Municipal umbrella organisations

Where appropriate: invited to take part in meetings/to report

- Fed Government, Comm of State Sec
  - Chief of FedCh, FedMin Pofalla

Reporting and decision making

- Dep

Legislative Impact Assessment

Plus NGO governance and corporate governance
First UK SD strategy published 1999. SDC set up in 2000 as official “watchdog” –

• providing policy advice
• scrutinising progress on implementation of the Government sustainable development strategy
• monitoring sustainable management of Government estate and procurement

Abolished March 2011 in ‘mainstreaming’ strategy. DEFRA and DECC now to provide ‘leadership in ‘the Greenest government ever’. 
Germany: ‘Vorsprung durch Kultur’?

*Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung* established in 2001

First international peer review of German sustainability strategy commissioned by Chancellery Office and published 2009

Second published September 2013:

‘In our talks this year, we have been reminded that the principle of sustainability was first developed in Germany by Carlowitz three hundred years ago in order to change unsustainable practices in forestry. **Building both on deep cultural roots and seizing on the market opportunities for greener products and technologies today, Germany is well placed to make a successful transition to a more sustainably managed economy and society** and to overcome deficits and weaknesses in this regard. We hope that our report may help everyone concerned with advancing the sustainability transition in Germany to accelerate and deepen that fundamental change and to maintain Germany’s position as one of the key world leaders in this crucial area.’
• It appears that German society and many of its leaders have been able to maintain this commitment to sustainability because moving towards more sustainable production and consumption in itself has proven to be a factor in Germany’s comparatively strong economic and social performance in recent years.

• The Energiewende is the largest collective transformational endeavour in Germany since its reunification. It is of great significance for the country at a number of levels but particularly for its sustainability performance and its credibility as a global pacemaker for the sustainability transition. Its ambitious objectives are impressive: to phase out nuclear energy by 2022 without compromising climate policy goals, people’s willingness to pay and industry’s competitiveness, and to run the economy on a lowcarbon mode (80–95% reduction of GHGs below 1990 levels) by 2050 with 80% of its electricity demand generated by renewable energy.
‘Sustainability: A cultural history’
Cover designs for the German and English editions
‘Nachhaltig’ and ‘sustainable’ – etymology and interaction

- **NACHHALTIG**
  - Both “nachhaltig” and “Nachhaltigkeit” reasonably common in German from C16 onward, but not specific to agriculture or forestry.
  - Carlowitz took forms from this semantic field and applied them with an extended and specific meaning to forestry
  - *Nachhaltige Forstwirtschaft* became the guiding principle in forest management, first in Germany, and then world-wide as “sustained yield forestry”.

- **SUSTAINABLE**
  - Historically, the word sustainable (from the verb “sustain” of Latin origin: sustinere), meaning “maintainable” or “capable of being upheld”, was used only seldom in the English language and then only in a general sense, e.g. “sustainable economic growth”. The noun “sustainability” was not used at all.
  - The words were applied first in the expanded, ecological sense in the 1980’s, for example, in the Report *World Conservation Strategy* (IUCN, 1980) and the Brundlandt Report, in 1987.