

What means sustainability in practical work and how can contradictory interests in a process of sustainable development be balanced?

Reinhold Priewasser, Johannes Kepler University of Linz/Austria

From the ecological point of view a fulfilling of the sustainability approach requires

- ➔ using natural resources according to their regeneration capacity respectively in compliance with the possibilities of substituting their functions;
- ➔ adapting the emissions of substances corresponding to the organisms`, ecosystems` and natural cycles` carrying capacity or their ability of assimilation.

Guiding principle of the sustainability

„Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs“

The 2 bases of sustainability approach

- The study of the World Commission on Environment and Development “Our Common Future” (WCED, 1987) as the scientific base
- The declarations of the 2nd United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 as the political base politically on the results and the.

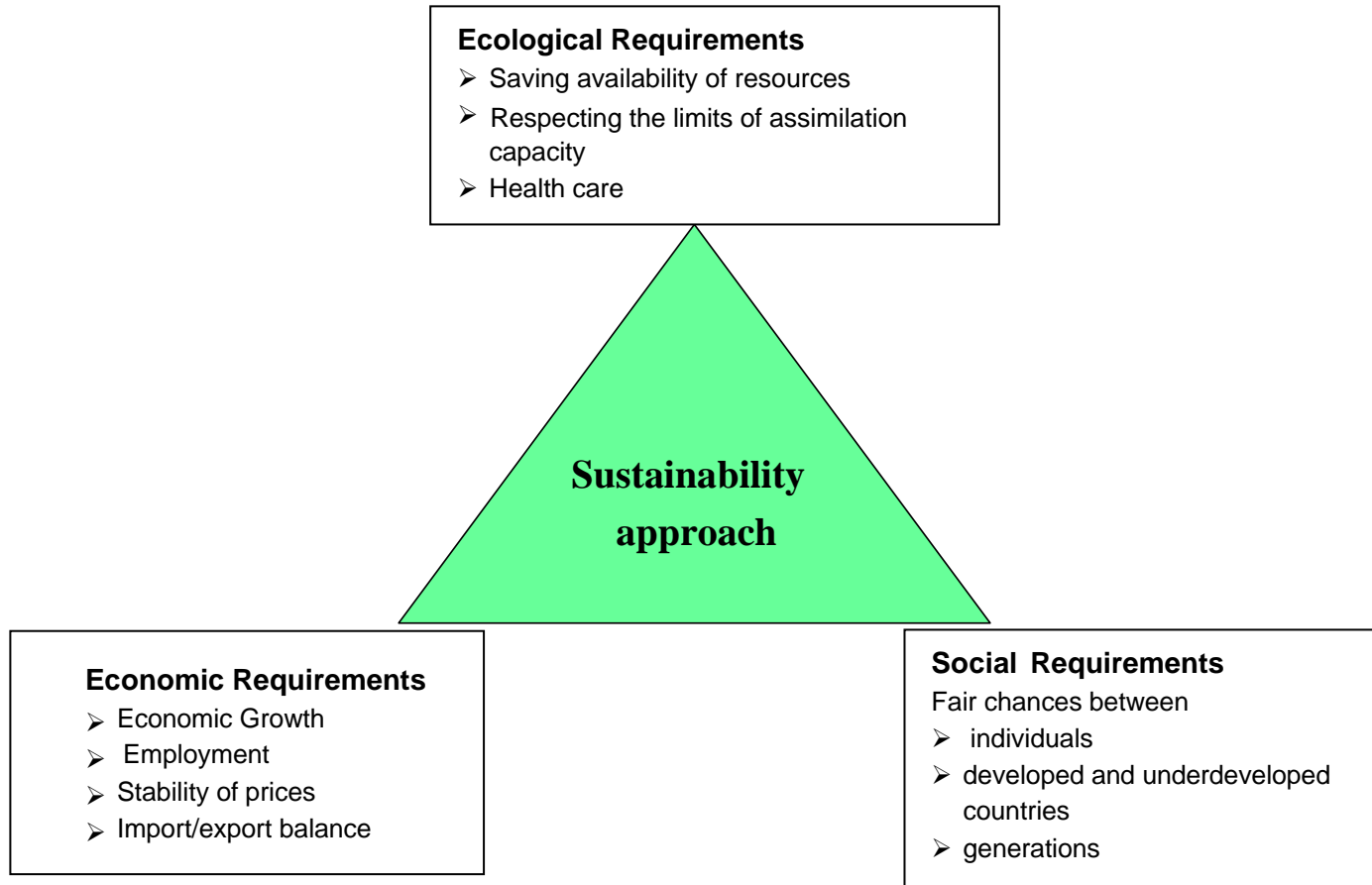
Focussed on the issue of soil use sustainability means

....a longterm guarantee of the human soil functions to a sufficient
extent in particular including

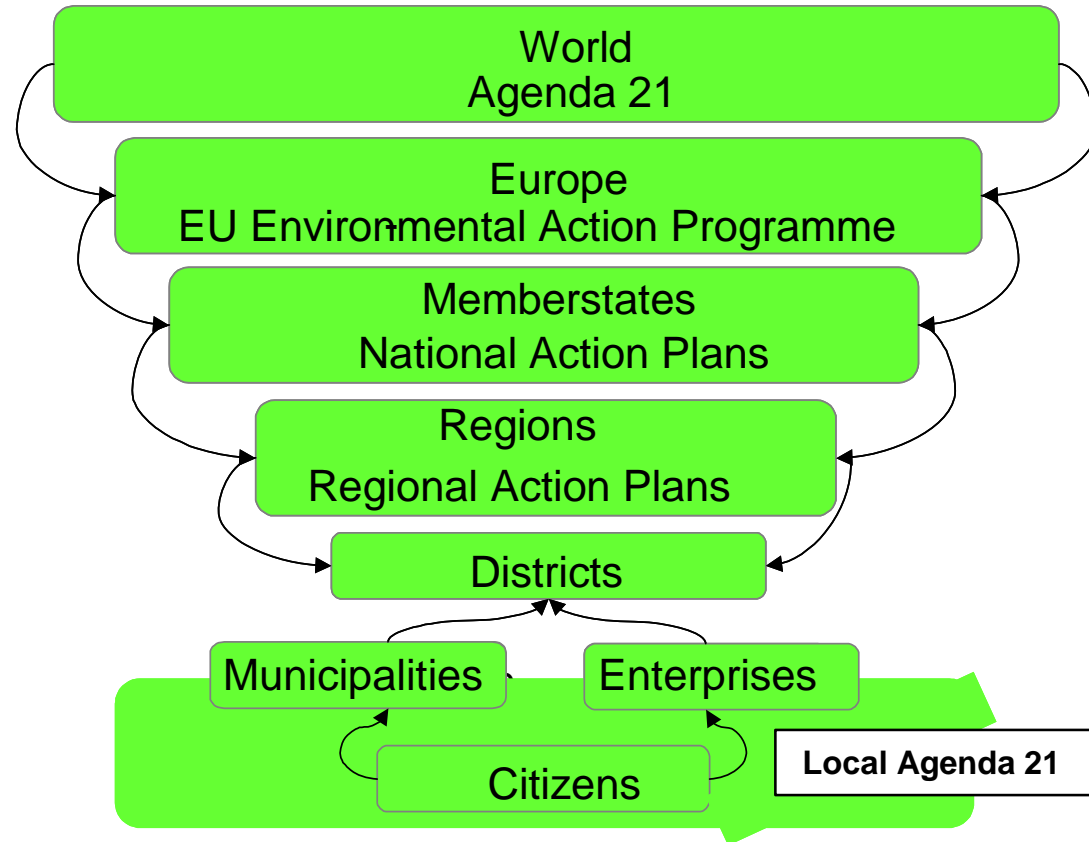
- ❖ production (food, wood, renewable energies),
- ❖ medium of buffering, filtering and transformation,
- ❖ physical basis for infrastructure,
- ❖ cultural heritage

Necessity of elaborating quality indicators

Dimensions of the Sustainability Approach



Political levels of the sustainability approach



LA 21-processes running

Worldwide: 6400 in 113 states;

Europe: about 5000

Germany: 1270

Austria: 160

Characteristics

- ***political decision making by participating intensively citizens, entrepreneurs and other group***
- ***being more than only an environmental action programme - an instrument of local future design in general***

Base of LA 21-Processes is a “**Road map**” with strategic objectives for significant areas of future development, such as

→ ***Nature and landscape***

with subjects such as preservation of valuable natural sites; sewage and waste management ***protection of soil and its functions***

→ ***Citizens and cultural life***

developing special programmes for families, young people, seniors, cultural initiatives etc.

→ ***Business und jobs***

development of the local/regional trade and industry, agriculture, tourism etc.

→ ***Living quality und recreation***

with topics such as building and residing, infrastructure and leisure, traffic etc.

Basic elements of regional sustainability processes

Initial phase

- forming of a coordination team to manage the process
- giving primary informations about the to essential target groups and “local players”
- fixing first topics and a corresponding number of working groups

Phase of information, structuring and orientation

- a widespread information for the public e.g. in a kind of citizens´ conference
- installation of working groups for several development fields
- inventory of the recent situation in the community; creating first ideas for the future.
- All citizens are invited to contribute to this task

Programme phase

- discussing a draft of the road map in the public at large
- decision by the municipal council
- determine indicators for measuring the LA 21-progress

Realization phase

- realization of concrete measures and projects
- evaluation

Participation in political processes or in public projects

- **Public Information**

Characteristics: convincing the persons concerned as main motivation; information only; no codetermination

- **Planning dialogue**

Characteristics: convincing the persons concerned as main motivation; primarily information but also objections raised taken into consideration

- **Consensus by Mediation**

Characteristics: joint elaboration of a solution by all of the persons concerned

Three levels of learning

being important for consensual problems solving

➤ ***Individual learning***

process of knowledge enlargement = addition of new knowledge or changing of existing knowledge that subsequently lead to changed behaviour patterns

➤ ***Social learning or group learning***

learning process, where an number of person is learning together. It leads to a sum of personal changes in knowledge and behavior. It can be more effective because of getting acceptance (feeling of success) and emotional feedback (support).

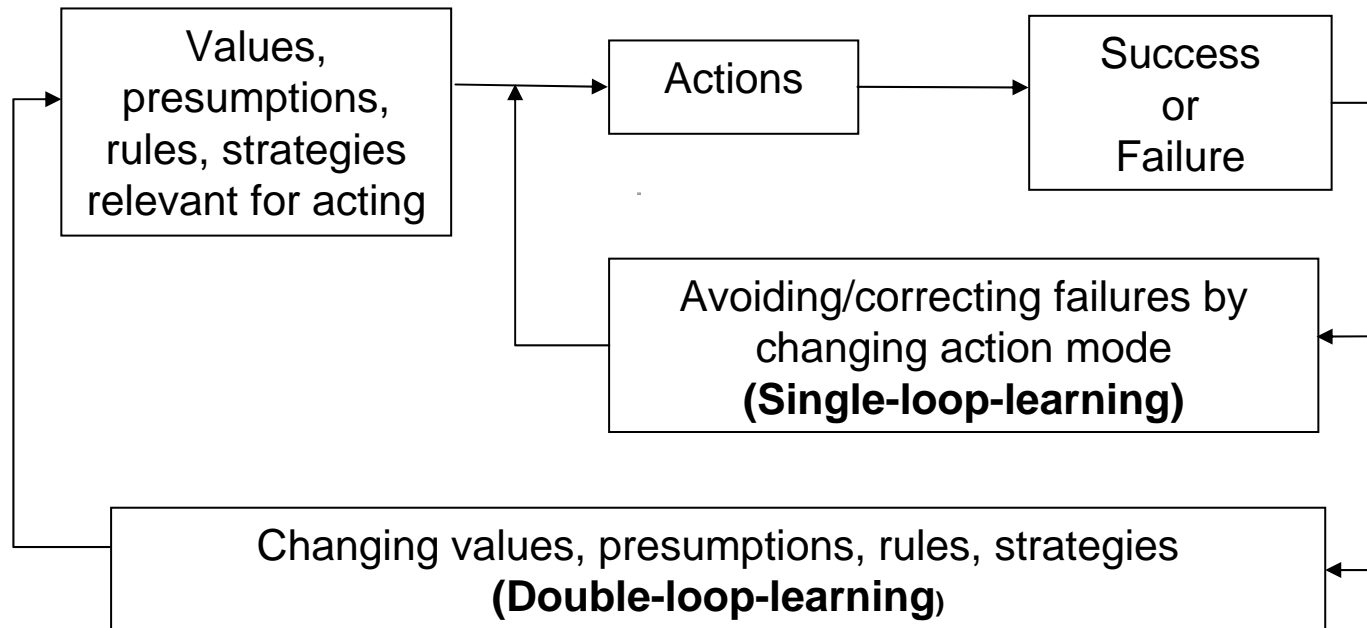
➤ ***Organizational learning***

Organizational learning represents more than the sum of the learning results of individual members in a group or organisation.

By organizational learning the basis of values and knowledge change itself. That encreases the acting competence of the group and changes the common framework of acting.

Contrasting to individual learning, where anyone pursues his own personal interests and aims organizational learning intends to make the members of a hetergenious group learn to develop a joint idea and common objectives in spite of varied personal interests and goals, furthermore to change their personal values and attitudes and to understand as well as to accept the positions of the other participants.

“single loop learning“ and „double loop learning“ (Argyris&Schön)



Preconditions of Organizational learning (Kluge,1999)

- ➔ a culture of critically analysing of the recent structures and presumptions
- ➔ a general openness and interest in new ideas and perspectives
- ➔ a mutual respect and a cooperative atmosphere

As an **impulse for organizational learning** it might be useful to notice differences between (Klimecki/Lassleben, 1998)

- ➔ *expectations and results*
- ➔ *visions and the reality*
- ➔ *the recent situation and existing real utopias(benchmarking)*
- ➔ *the varying mental models of the participants (try to understand also opposite ways of thinking)*

Meditation as an instrument and basic element of participative strategies

Mediation represents a procedure where

- ❖ *opponents are recognized as partners* and further
- ❖ *the conflict is seen as a joint problem with different points of views, including readiness to consensus* instead of confrontation.

The mediation procedure embraces 6 phases

1. getting knowledge about the other parties
2. collecting the relevant topics
3. making visible the different interests
4. collecting a number of options
5. joint valuation of the options
6. negotiations, agreements and realization

Phase 1: Getting knowledge about the other parties

- ❖ **preliminary dialogs between the participants and mediators**
(getting knowledge of the conflict in detail as well as of the interests and expectations of the persons or groups involved)
- ❖ **determination of the number of persons and groups finally taking part in the process.**
- ❖ **elaborating a contract**
including subjects like the ***aim of the process***,
the ***cooperation of the participants***,
the ***cost sharing*** and
the ***appointment of the mediators***

Very important is a clearly declared consensus about the mediators` selection

Phase 2: Collecting the relevant topics

= Creating the „table of content” of the process. It results from a common determination of the subjects that will be later on discussed and negotiated

Aspects to be considered

- ❖ **topics should be expressed strictly neutral.**
(Avoidance of personal positions or attitudes)
- ❖ **topics should be phrased precisely enough.**
- ❖ **installation of commonly determined working groups**
(based on the topics)
- ❖ **The list of subjects should be kept open**

Phase 3: Declaration of interests

Main task in that phase is to illuminate the real interests behind the individual positions

- ❖ ***Positions = points of view or desired results, not negotiable in this form.***
- ❖ ***Interests lying behind the positions have a good chance to get accepted also by the other parties.***
- ❖ ***Interests of the one party have not to become also interests of other party.***

The decisive point is that interests of the opponent are respected as valid interests=„mutual problem understanding“

The opposite of this procedure:

Trial of getting ones position through by convincing or by power struggle

Phase 4: Collecting options

This phase embraces the developing of options as ideas for solving the problem concerned.

- ❖ *At first **every idea is received without any judgement**, even those which evidently make no sense for the problem solving.*
- ❖ *So ideas might be found out that are very useful for one party without bringing significant costs or restrictions for the others.*
- ❖ *paradox or evidently senseless solutions may demonstrate what all of the parties involved would not like to happen.*

The intention of this phase is

- ✓ ***to get ideas of what could be a practicable way***
- ✓ ***to make clear what´s not possible***
- ✓ ***to mix up single ideas to new solving approaches***

Result of Phase 4: Collecting options

To come to an **agreement about objective criteria** in the following are used in order to value the ideas collected.

(Usually external sources, such as guidelines, specific literature and experts respectively expert opinions)

*It is also possible to get an agreement about a **general framework of valuation** like the principle of sustainability represents one*

Phase 5: Joint evaluation of the options

Judging the ideas collected with regard to their usefulness

In particular the following questions should be answered

- ❖ Which of the options ***immediately get a common acceptance?***
- ❖ Which of the options ***have no chance*** because significant interests of groups involved or single participants are not respected?
- ❖ Which of the options ***can be connected?***
- ❖ Which of the options ***need additional informations*** to be obtained?
- ❖ How should the ***sequence of the options treatment*** look like?

Phase 6: Negotiations, agreements and realization

Being supported by the mediators the options valuated in the step above become negotiated now among the participating parties.

The result will be fixed in an agreement, which can be a verbal agreement, a joint memorandum or a legal contract.

Even a monitoring of the realization ought to be provided, executed either by all of the participants or by delegates or by external persons.

