

Summary

Rural Development, Preservation of People's Identity and Ecological Balance in the Era of Globalization

Dr. Christoph Stückelberger

General Secretary of the Swiss Development Organisation "Bread for all",

Associate Professor of Ethics at Basel University,

President of the Consultative WTO-Commission of the Swiss Government

1. The concept of sustainable development is the basis of balanced land settlement

1.1 Definition of sustainable development

A sustainable development allows a life in dignity for the present generations, without threatening the life in dignity of the future generations and of nature.

1.2 Five dimensions of sustainable development

Sustainable development inseparably includes the ecological, economic und social dimension. So far, the cultural and religious dimension of sustainability has not yet been considered enough, although both ought to be inseparably included.

1.3 Interdependence of the five dimensions

No biodiversity without cultural diversity. No economic sustainability without respect of religious diversity. No social and political sustainability without cultural and religious sustainability.

2. Different Speeds of Development are a Source of Tension

Tension is created by the great differences of speed in the globalization of the five dimensions of sustainability. The fast-moving economic globalization needs to be slowed down, the relative slow political, ecological, ethical and in particular the cultural and religious globalization needs to be speeded up, in order to enable a sustainable development and a balanced land settlement.

3. We need Multilateral Social, Cultural and Religious Policies

The multilateral institutions have to complement their globalised economic policy with their global social, cultural and religious policy.

4. Globalisation and Contextualisation are two sides of the same

Balanced land settlement seeks to establish a balance between a globalised form of ethics and a contextualised form of ethics. Sustainability in a globalised world requires basic values globally agreed upon and at the same time a manifold differentiation of these basic values depending on the particular context and region.

5. Balanced land settlement needs strong legal instruments and good governance

Land settlement in developing countries is often a question of illegal situations. Legal instruments are necessary in the equal distribution of land, land rights also in oral traditions, an International Soil Convention for sustainable land use, legal security and reduction of violence and programmes to combat corruption.

6. The role of the private sector, especially transnational companies

The private sector, especially the transnational companies, can and should play an important role for balanced land settlement, preservation of peoples rights and sustainability. Instruments are: to include more cultural and social aspects in their business ethics, codes of conduct for companies and to include ethical criteria of sustainability in the financial sector.

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1. The concept of sustainable development as the basis of balanced land settlement

At the end of the 20th century, freedom has become the primary guiding principle for development. Yet, this freedom is understood as the economic freedom by way of liberalization of the global markets. Since the UN-Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992, the principle of sustainability has been „promoted“ to the second most important guiding principle. Since then, various concepts for a Sustainable Development have been elaborated on international, national and local level (local Agenda 21).i[1] Everybody favours sustainability, however, there are many interpretations of what it really means. Balanced land settlement in the era of global trade must hence be judged by the goals of sustainable development.

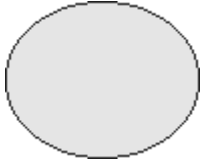
1.1 Definition of sustainable development

A sustainable development allows a life in dignity for the present generations, without threatening the life in dignity of the future generations and of nature.

This is my definition of sustainable development. It is similar to the one of the global Brundlandt report 1987ii[2] and the Rio-conference 1992, but having two important differences: What has been called „human needs“ by the Brundtland report, I propose to be changed into „life in dignity“. It includes our basic necessities like food, clothing, shelter, education, but it respects the local understanding more of what a dignified life might mean: Depending on the context it can include respecting the freedom of opinion, cultural or religious diversity, democratic participation. Life in dignity must include human rights! In addition, my definition includes life in dignity also for the animals and plants, the non-human creation. They have their own dignity being different from human dignity, but nevertheless it needs to be respected.iii[3]

1.2 Five dimensions of sustainable development

Sustainable development inseparably includes the ecological, economic und social dimension. The point is that a general agreement exists on this point in theory - even on international level; but no agreement exists in practical terms. **So far, the cultural and religious dimension of sustainability has not yet been considered enough, although both ought to be inseparably included.**

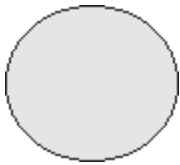
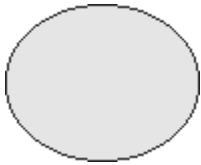


Economic

dimension

Ecological

dimension

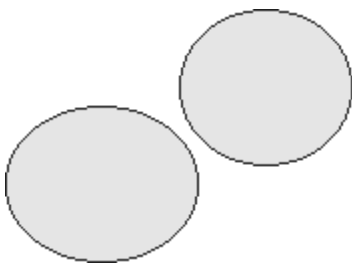


Social/political

dimension

cultural

dimension



religious

dimension

The economic dimension of sustainable development includes the production and (just) distribution of goods and services for a life in dignity for the present and future generation and for nature.

The ecological dimension of sustainable development includes the preservation of the necessities of life, of resources and of the ecosystem for a life in dignity for the present and future generation and for nature.

The social and political dimension of sustainable development include the just balance of interests through participation by everybody in all decisions essential for a life in dignity for the present and future generation and for nature.

The cultural dimension of sustainable development includes the functions of culture that create identity and community for a life in dignity for the present and future generation and for nature.

The religious dimension of sustainable development includes the functions of religion that create identity, community and a meaningful existence for a life in dignity for the present and future generation and for nature.

Whenever there are conflicts because of mining resources on indigenous land in rural areas or because of growing religious fundamentalism in the case when development strategies neglect the religious dimension, we can interpret them as signals, that sustainability cannot work if apart from the economic, ecologic and social dimensions the cultural and religious dimensions are not included.^{iv}[4]

The social dimension of sustainable development includes in particular social freedom, as well. If we discuss with multinational corporations, the concept of sustainability is usually reduced to ecology and economy. However, we cannot talk about ecology and economy without touching upon the threat to and the promotion of peace, upon social freedom and the potential of conflicts emerging of a non-sustainable way of life. I remember the famous sentence of C. F. von Weizäcker: „There is no peace with nature without peace among people“ - and the other way round. In many concepts of sustainability there is no clear picture of this kind of sustainability. If I may come back to the example of Indonesia during the Suharto regime: The riots that broke out, because trade union rights and freedoms were demanded, clearly show that sustainability in such a context of Indonesian realities cannot be effective as long as social peace and a change in the forced relocation policies are not tackled at the same time.

1.3 Interdependence of the five dimensions

No biodiversity without cultural diversity. No economic sustainability without respect of religious diversity. No social and political sustainability without cultural and religious sustainability.

The five mentioned dimensions of sustainability are inseparably connected to each other and interdependent. Development cannot be sustainable if one of the dimensions is missing or is not linked up to the others. This relationship - this interdependence between the dimensions - could be easily shown for all relational versions between the five dimensions in question. Two examples are enough to illustrate the mutuality of matters:

There is a correlation between the decline of the biologic diversity of species and the decline of the cultural diversity of languagesv[5]: Globalization threatens both diversities, if misunderstood as a system of simple rules of action that are accepted worldwide and if complex diversities are reduced to the rules of mainstream society.

A second example of interdependence of the five dimensions of sustainability: No economic sustainability without religious sustainability through respect of religious diversity. If development is forced by one-sided economic modernization strategies they keep failing or undergo severe setbacks, whenever these strategies do not include the deep-rooted religious value systems of the respective society and whenever no effort is made to implement a careful, appropriate transformation and to seek a dialogue between the different religions. Iran's one-sided modernization pushed through by the Shah, superseded by the Islamic fundamentalists; the seizure of power of the Hindu party and the aggravation of religious conflicts in India; the increasing potential of religious conflicts in Indonesia that has been exemplary for the co-existence of different religions ð these are only three examples of how economic development (being a vital dimension of sustainability) suffers from setbacks, because the religious and cultural dimensions are not adequately considered. Just an example: On the Indonesian island of Kalimantan, its surface doubling the size of France, the outburst of forest fires triggered off an environmental disaster of global extent in 1997. At the same time churches were set on fire and Chinese shops pillaged. Sustainability understood as balanced land settlement is simply impossible to be realized under such circumstances, unless the cultural, religious, social and political conflicts are also taken into account. Hence, it is not possible to extinguish the burning forests of Indonesia, if the people are not allowed to discuss the issues of the burning churches, the government policy of forced relocation and the rights of the Dayak, the indigenous people of Kalimantan.

2. Different Speeds of Development – a Source of Tension

Tension is created by the great differences of speed in the globalization of the five dimensions of sustainability. The fast-moving economic globalization needs to be slowed down, the relative slow political, ecological, ethical and in particular the cultural and religious globalization needs to be speeded up, in order to enable a sustainable development and a balanced land settlement.

In liberalized and globalized markets, economic development processes linked to the technological developments move extremely fast. Biological development and transformation processes happen much slower by nature and can only be speeded up under certain limited conditions. Political development processes, that are supported by democratic participation of the population, also need a lot of time: Conscientization and education programmes are the key to such processes and they move forward in a slow pace, even if democratic reforms of the governmental system allow to accelerate the process. Still, it needs several generations until cultural identities and ethical values of a society are transformed.

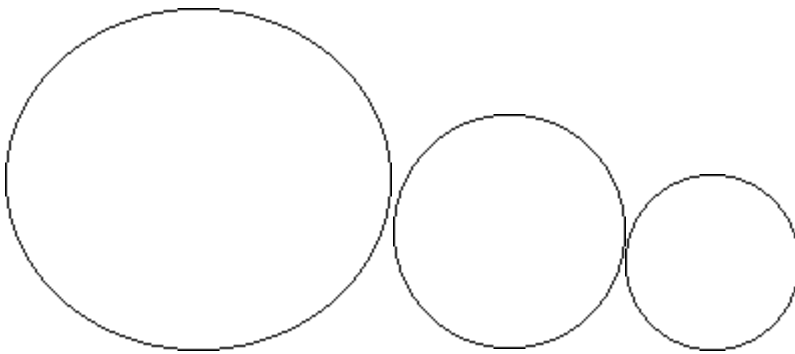
Sustainability is threatened by dangerous tensions due to these different speeds of development. These tensions should be released (chart): The technological and economic development has to be slowed down in a way that the ecological, social, cultural and religious development can take place on equal terms and in a similar rhythm. Hence, before the start of the next WTO-negotiation round, the governments should have to ask themselves the question whether not to take seriously the signs of overstrain and increasing resistance against the globalization and liberalization speed; and whether it would not make sense to reduce this speed for the benefit of respect and innovation of ecological, social, cultural and religious aspects of world trade. The respect of the cultural and socio-political dimension in the Multilateral Investment Agreement MAI is another example for this interdependence of sustainability.

Ethically as well as ecologically, the man-made development speed and all possible changes need to consider the weakest. Nature and the people of rural areas are thus to be included in all decision-making processes.

But on the contrary, the ecological, socio-political, cultural and religious developments need to be speeded up in order to release tensions in the technological and economical development. This means to extend global governance by strengthening the UN-system and other multilateral political institutions, by intensifying regional and global cultural and ethical dialogues and exchanges, etc.

Chart: The necessity to adapt the speed of development

Today

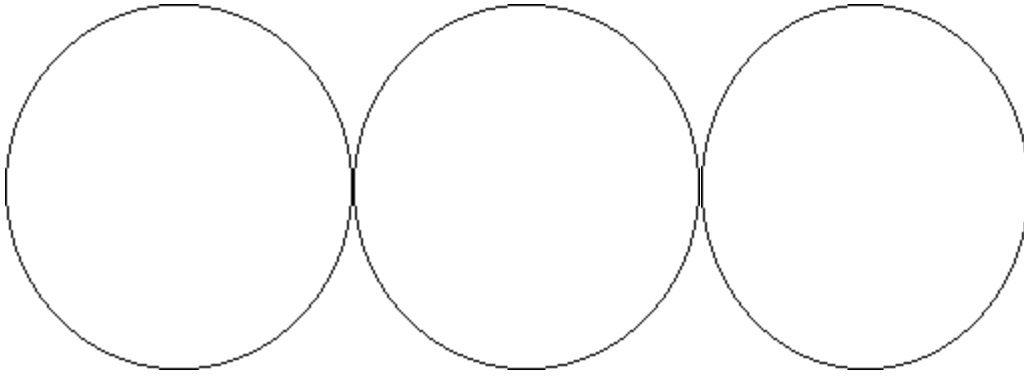


Global economy

global politics

global ethics

Vision



Global economy

global politics

global ethics

No world government, no world culture, no world religion, but unity in diversity through: global human rights standards, international law, equal participation of all countries in multilateral institutions, respect of cultures and religions

3. Multilateral Social, Cultural and Religious Policies

The multilateral institutions have to complement their globalised economic policy with their global social, cultural and religious policy.

One of the consequences of the third thesis is the fact that the multilateral organisations (e.g. IMF, WB, WTO, OECD) have to include a social, cultural and religious policy into their globalised economic policy (which increasingly includes good governance-elements, as well; ex. OECD). Only in so doing the multilateral organisations take seriously the principle of sustainability which they have themselves consented to. The dimension of a global environmental policy must now be fully implemented, even more as its concept has already been generally accepted.

At the UN-Social Summit of 1995 in Copenhagen, a sound approach to a global social policy was formulated. Yet, its results need to be consistently implemented in the national development policies^{vi}[6] and in the strategies of multilateral institutions. In the field of culture, the UNESCO-Conference of 1998 in Stockholm represents an important step of a growing consideration of this particular dimension of sustainability. The discussion about cultural development within the structures of globalisation has however only started and is of essential importance for the rural development.^{vii}[7] Here, cultural rights are included as part of human rights^{viii}[8].

Yet, there is no prospect of a global religious policy. Although we find some endeavors for building up a world ethic concept including the active participation of the world religions, as well as for a dialogue between the different religions, all these efforts are usually still undertaken by non-governmental bodies. Governments may deal with this matter within human rights' issues (the right to religious freedom), however only within the UN-Human Rights' Commission and hardly within the multilateral institutions mentioned before and hardly in relation to trade and economic policies. The growing religious fundamentalism with its economic effects should give enough reasons for economists and government representatives to deal with this matter. Most probably, the enlightened, secular understanding of a state system that is inherent to Western nations needs to be revised and further developed in the light of today's global communication.

4. Globalisation and Contextualisation

Balanced land settlement seeks to establish a balance between a globalised form of ethics and a contextualised form of ethics. Sustainability in a globalised world requires basic values globally agreed upon and at the same time a manifold differentiation of these basic values depending on the particular context and region.

No generation before ours existed with such an extensive worldwide integration as we today. Just to mention two examples to illustrate the times of change we live in: At the beginning of the nineties, almost all the countries of the world entered into the global market as it was formed after overcoming the polarising two block-model of international policy; world communication seems to be unlimited in its functions and tools. This integration of humanity into one world community is essential for world peace. In addition, it could serve the global increase of wealth and the just distribution of goods. Also from the ecological point of view it would make sense to consider the earth as one common living space of human kind (eg. the issue of global warming). On the other hand, global integration leads to gigantic ecological destructions, in particular in rural areas, due to excessive mobility, for example.

The question arises whether isolation or self-sufficiency should be pursued as ethical and ecological guiding principles. Apart from the tendencies to more integration we cannot fail to see an upcoming of regionalisation: Together with the European integration we hear the call to a „Europe of the regions“ and we witness the mushrooming of new forms of nationalism and ethnocentrism. The so-called bio-regionalism, as eg. in depth ecology and as supported by many environmental movements in the US, pursues the „rootedness of living in place“ by taking into account the distinct ecological, cultural and economic features of a particular regionix[9].

Global integration is ambivalent in ethical terms. From the point of view of peace ethics and of the principle of just distribution global integration may seem to be desirable. However, if we judge global integration by what it has caused to the environment and how the question of justice has been treated so far, then it is rather questionable. Yet, bio-regionalism is also ambivalent in ethical terms: From the point of view of environmental issues, it is desirable, but there is a danger of a global disintegration of solidarity and the upcoming of new forms of ethnocentrism. Thus, when we talk about Sustainable Development we talk about „searching a new balance between global market and region“x[10], between globality and contextuality, about solidarity between urbanisation and rural development.

The balance between globality and contextuality lies in the principle of subsidiarity, which is rooted in ethics. It means that as much as possible should be decided, produced and culturally embedded as close to the people concerned as possible. The most important tool to reach this goal is certainly the fixing of sales prices: If products would reflect the ecological input of the manufacturing process Ð i.e. transport costs would cost four times as much as today Ð, then automatically as many goods as possible would be produced as close to the place of consumption as possible. Hence, rural development would be promoted by control mechanisms of market economy.

5. Balanced land settlement needs strong legal instruments and good governance

Land settlement in developing countries is often a question of illegal situations.

5.1 Land rights: The unequal distribution of land among the population is a source of conflicts and instability for a socially, ecologically and culturally sustainable land settlement. In Brazil, 60% of the land is in the hand of 1% of the population! The result is that 70% of the population live in towns bigger than 50'000 people.

5.2 Land rights in traditional societies are often based on oral tradition as I have seen in Cameroon or other countries. To legalize oral land rights in modern societies by written legal decisions (Notariate und Gerichte) is very costly and many people or institutions cannot afford it. Balanced land settlement therefore needs funds for legal procedures and competent advise.

5.3 The ecological aspect of soil fertility is very important for a balanced land settlement. To avoid the rapid soil destruction the proposal of an **International Soil Convention** is a very helpful step forward. It could bring forward the awareness and internationally coordinated efforts for the preservation of soils which is a condition for balanced land settlement.

5.4 In instable countries with civil wars or heavy internal tensions between different population groups or social classes, people often are affected by violence in the countryside and they go to town not only to look for jobs but also for security and protection. **Legal security and reduction of violence** is therefore an important part for rural development.

5.5 Corruption: In many countries the legal basis for the right to use forests are quite satisfactory but reality is much worse: In many countries (for example Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines) studies have shown that the clearcutting of tropical forests mostly happens illegally and is dominated by a vast system of Mafia and corruption. Therefore, internationally coordinated programs to combat corruption are essential for balanced land settlement and especially for sustainable forestry. The OECD-Convention about corruption (December 1997) and activities of Transparency International with so called "Island of Integrity" are concrete steps in this direction.

6. The role of the private sector, especially transnational companies

The private sector, especially the transnational companies, can and should play an important role for balanced land settlement, preservation of peoples rights and sustainability.

The national and transnational corporations play a key role in balanced land settlement. With their economic power they can weaken or they can strengthen the governmental plans for balanced land settlement.

6.1 Business ethics already includes in a broad way ecological aspects of sustainability. But it is very much necessary to include more **cultural and social aspects**. Especially transnational corporations with their common strategies for a company throughout the world need to respect cultural values, ethnic and religious diversity.xi[11]

6.2 These aspects should be included in **codes of conduct for companies** which already exist and which should be modified in the above sense including also anti-corruption clauses. The code of conduct of Shell as a result of the conflict with the OGONI in Nigeria are an example for that.

6.3 An important instrument for balanced land settlement could be the **financial sector** including the fast growing ethical investments and ethical funds as ETHOS in Geneva or the Sustainability Fund in Zurich are examples which could include criteria for balanced land settlement.

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i[1] See: Christoph Stückelberger: Umwelt und Entwicklung, Stuttgart 1996; idem: Lingkungan dan Pembangunan, Suatu Orientasi Etika-Sosial, Yogyakarta 1998, 122 p.; idem: Ethics of Global Trade, Geneva/London 2002.

ii[2] Unsere gemeinsame Zukunft. The Brundtlandt-Report of the World Commission for Environment and Development, Greven 1987, 46.

iii[3] As discussed in Stückelberger, Ch.: Umwelt und Entwicklung, see above, 263-273.

iv[4] Refer e.g. Parwati Soepangat: The Impact of Globalization on the social and cultural life in Indonesia and the Asia Pacific Region, Manuskript, Yogyakarta April 1998, 12 S.

v[5] Zum Recht auf seine Sprache als kulturellem Menschenrecht cf. Verdoodt, A.: Logique d'un droit culturel: Le droit de la langue, in: Meyer-Bisch, P.: (Hrsg.): Les droits culturels. Une catégorie sous-développée de droits de l'homme. VIIIe colloque interdisciplinaire sur les droits de l'homme à l'université de Fribourg 1991. Actes et documents de suivi, Fribourg 1993, 139-146.

v[5] German NGO-Forum Weltsozialgipfel (UN-Social Summit), Arbeitsgruppe 20:20 (Hrsg.): Priorität für menschliche Entwicklung. Soziale Grunddienste als neuer Schwerpunkt der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, Münster 1998; - Direktion für Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit (DEZA) - the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC of the Ministry of Exterior Affairs: DEZA-Strategie für soziale Entwicklung, Bern 1998.

vii[7] Cf: Kramer, D.: Eine Ressource für Zukunftsfähigkeit. Die Debatte um Kultur und Entwicklung nach der Stockholmer UNESCO-Konferenz, epd-Entwicklungspolitik 12/98, 29-32; Stefan Krotz: Die Eine Welt und die vielen Kulturen, in: Brieskorn, N. (Hrsg.): Globale Solidarität. Die verschiedenen Kulturen und die Eine Welt, Stuttgart 1997, 41-88;

viii[8] An interesting overview is written by Schulze-Engler, F.: McDonald's und die fremden Völker. Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven der Globalisierungsdebatte, epd-Entwicklungspolitik 22/97, d7-d11; The presentations of an interdisciplinary colloquium are very valuable: - Meyer-Bisch, P.: (Hrsg.): Les droits culturels. Une catégorie sous-développée de droits de l'homme. VIIIe colloque interdisciplinaire sur les droits de l'homme à l'université de Fribourg 1991. Actes et documents de suivi, Fribourg 1993, 139-146.

ix[9] As mentioned by Spretnak, Ch.: Postmodern Directions, in: Griffin, D. (ed.): Spirituality and Society, New York 1988, 33-40 (37). Vgl. auch Sale, K.: Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision, San Francisco 1985.

x[10] As is the title of a future scenario by Jans Pirmin, Basel, one of many models developed in der region of Basel, in: Arras, H./ Bierter, W. (Hg.): Welche Zukunft wollen wir? Drei Szenarien im Gespräch. Ein Beitrag des Basler Regio Forum, Liestal/Basel 1989, 211-217.

xi[11] Lange, H. et al (Hrsg.): Working across Cultures. Ethical Perspectives for Intercultural Management, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1998; Spicher, Ph.: Les droits de l'homme dans les chartes d'éthique économique, Bern/Fribourg 1996.