

# The Environment and the Conflicts of the Sustainable Development

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**Abstract:** The general environment protection and its economic, ecological, social and cultural function represent a preliminary condition for the approach of the main ecological challenges at the international level.

The role of the environment in satisfying primary, vital needs is generally well-known, but the concrete possibilities to interfere for modeling social processes in such way that they contribute to the harmonization of this relation are less obvious or hardly accepted.

The paper aims to systemize the harmonizing dimensions of the human-environment relation and the causes of a dysfunction of such a relation. There are analyzed the intervention directions at the European level in order to decrease conflicts and their effects.

"The most dangerous things are the victories.  
And the victories against Nature,  
cautiously prepared, included  
in the economic theories  
do not make an exception."  
Paul Bran

Our study about conflicts between man, economy, education and environment, about the right of the environment and the right to the existence of a healthy environment, about the protection of the natural environment, about environment politics and strategies is a possible approach for our future, a sign of rationality and hope from the perspective of the health of all our common alive in which a plead for the human life is as important as the plead for the life of the air and water, plants and animals, relief etc.

Among numerous arguments which we have taken into account, three of them can be considered more important:

- The scientific profs demonstrate that the environment matters represent a serious threat at a global level, the costs generated and the associated risks to the climate changes could rise up to 20% of the GDP, while the services assured by the planetary ecosystem have deteriorated or have been over-used, and the ecological pattern of the humanity over-passes currently with about 25% the regenerating capacity of the planet (Angelescu & Popa, 2009);
- The reason for which the UNO has declared the year 2010 The International Year of the Biodiversity is the decline of the ecosystems. An alert-report presented by the UNO illustrates the devastating state of the present-day environment;
- The world population ignores the notion of sustainable development and the sense of the theme of the 21 Agenda (Rouxel, 2000).

Under the conditions in which the three sustainers of the sustainable development - *environment, economy and society*, are sometimes in a conflict, defined by pressures upon the environment, pressures

which become more and more concerning, we may ask ourselves "What the environment is?", "Why do these pressures exist?", "What can we do for a sustainable development?"

#### 1. What is environment?

We have chosen many answers to this question by analyzing the definitions given by personalities (P), dictionaries (D) or legislation (L).

- **P1**- "Terra is a spaceship which carry mankind into history". (Alexandru Rosu)
- **P2**- The environment is "a lively machine, enormous and very complex, which constitutes a dynamic layer, thin upon the surface of the Earth". (Barry Commoner - "The circle that closes itself")
- **P3** - The environment is made of "physical one (climate, ground water, air natural resources etc) + ecological processes - lively environment". (Mihajlo Mesarovici & Eduard Pestel, "Mankind at crossroads")
- **P4** - The environment is an assembly existing at a certain moment, of physical chemical and biological agents and of social factors, susceptible to have a direct or indirect effect, an immediate or in time, upon the organisms and human activity" (definition given in 1972 at the International Colloquy "Development and Environment", France).
- **P5** - The environment represents "the total energetic, physical, chemical and biological conditions that are around a human being and with which these are in permanent exchange relation." (Ștefan Vancea)
- **D1** - The environment represent "The totality of physical conditions of Terra or of a part of it, affected by the human activity." (Oxford Dictionary)
- **D2** - The environment is "the space and the conditions affected the people's existence." (English Dictionary)
- **D3** - The environment represents "the assembly of natural and artificial elements situated around a human individual, an animal or vegetal species." (Le Petite Larousse)
- **D4** - The environment- "The totality of conditions (relief, climate, other alive species etc) where organisms make their living. A complex territorial where combine the elements of relief, geological structure and the sub-soil resources, waters and climate conditions, soil, vegetation and fauna and which constitute the natural framework for the developing of the material life of the mankind society, represents the material bases of the production process and of the social division of work, favoring or making a break for the society development, without having a determinant role in this development." (The Romanian Encyclopedic Dictionary, edition 2001)
- **L1** - The environment represents "the assembly of conditions and natural elements of the Terra: the air, water, soil, sub-soil aspects characteristic to the scenery, all atmosphere layers, all the organic and non-organic material, and also the alive species, the inter-active natural systems, including some material and spiritual values, the quality of life and the conditions that can influence the human being health and welfare." (OU no.195/2005 regarding the environment protection)
- **L2** - The environment is the "space in which it function an organization and which includes air, water, soil, sub-soil, natural resources, flora and fauna, human beings and their relations." (ISO 14050:2002 - Environment management. Vocabulary)

By analyzing these definitions it results the following:

1. All definitions refer to the relation human-environment as an exchange relation mutually in advantage.
2. The environment is reach, offering numerous resources, unfortunately, some are exhaustible.
3. Definition D1 is the only making a direct reference to the action of man upon the environment, to the equilibrium that man must keep.
4. Definition L1 introduces a relation more complex environment-man-health.
5. Definition L2 makes reference to the organization environment policy.
6. All these definitions give a double acceptance of the term environment:
  - \*Life framework of the individual (created by him/herself) - social environment;
  - \*The assembly of conditions suspected to act upon the alive organisms and of human activity - natural environment.
7. Implicitly, the majority of the definitions presented here refer to the complex equilibrium of the relation between man and nature, between environment and education, between industry, agriculture and environment, between environment and research/technology.

There exists, thus an interdependence man-natural environment, an insoluble unit having a complex and dynamic character with deep implications upon the economic-social development that mankind started to understand.

## The approaching dimensions

Although the problematic of environment currently represents a theme intensely approached, from the local level up to the international one, the definitions and the senses of the environment concept are very varied, fact that obviously, has consequences and implications referring to the clarification of the dimension of the environment. Hereinafter we will prefer the definition given to environment by the international standard ISO 14040:2002. We must also take into consideration when we speak about the environment protection, *the eight dimensions under which the environment and its protection are approached* as follows:

- *the social dimension* (culture, education leading to responsibility) present by the engagement of some large spheres of the population in activity of protection of environment, by creating a public opinion and by initiations of an administrative nature (e.g. The World Environment Day, The World Water Day, The Forest Month etc);
- *the governmental dimension* (institutional) present through the organisms and international, national, zonal, local authorities aiming inspection activities, supervising activities, analyses activities, monitoring, coordination, research, regulation and even administration of the environment protection.
- *the economic-technical dimension* present through the orientation of the organizations within the framework of the economic branches in order to introduce accurate technologies, programs for creating efficiency and reducing the consume of raw material and natural resources and not in the last instance, in order to create funds and financial resources designated to the environment protection (e.g. the importance of eco-innovation is recognized within the Lisbon EU Strategy, within the sixth Action Program for the Environment PAM 6 for 2002-2012 of the EU and within the Action Plan for non-polluting technologies ETAP - 2004)
- *the educational-information dimension* - the description of the environment and of its protection within the school and higher education curricula, by organizing sessions, seminars, conferences, exhibitions, parks, programs, TV. shows, reports, enquiries etc;
- *the juridical dimension* present by the creation of the legal and juridical framework necessary to define the environment law, of its protection and pollution (under the form of laws, decisions, ordinances, orders, norms, standards or other necessary regulations);
- *the international dimension of the relations and collaborations* present by understandings, treaties, conventions, protocols signed between states (bilateral or multilateral), communities, conventions or international organizations, through conferences and symposia taking place on this theme, and also through mixed commissions aiming research, development and monitoring divers aspects linked to the environment;
- the political dimension, present through parties and organizations militating for the environment protection and for the creation of some trends favorable for the amelioration of the environment quality.

The environment problematic are today global ones and belong to the responsibility of some international institutions having as main objective the elaboration of some programs for the rational exploitation and the preservation of the natural capital.

This multidimensional approach makes the environment problems, of pollution and respectively of its protection be complex enough.

What is gratifying is the fact that the most important organisms of the world take to serious the environment problems.

## The sustainable development

In 1989, Time named Terra as "the character of the year" thanks to the visibility of the environment problems. What is Terra without man? And especially what is man without Terra? There exists interdependence between man and nature of which we often have the tendency to abuse. We forget that the environment is equally common sink and common pool. In other words, for the whole mankind nature is both the place in which we overflow the waste of our style of life, and also the place from which we extract our vital resources. Nature must not be submitted ... It must be understood.

The **sustainable development** is, according to the Bruntland report, **the development that satisfies the needs of the present without compromising the future of the generations to come and their proper needs**. The third principle of the Rio Declarations (1992) specifies "The right to development should be exercised in such a way in order to be satisfied in a fair way the needs for development and environment of the present and future generations". From this definition it results three elements that make together the sustainable development: Environment, Equity, Future.

The global alarms of this start of millennium oblige to the promotion of new alliances (first of all Economy - Ecology) as components of the sustainable development.

*Economy* means "taking into possession the things utile for the world through good administration and citizen collaboration" (George-Roengen, 1994), and ecology means wise and harmonious cohabitation

with nature, partnership between people and natural environment, economic growth under conditions of fair ecologic administration, an administration that should become priority and responsibility.

Generally, *the theme of sustainability* refers to the natural sources renewable, i.e. those having the capacity to reproduce or regenerate themselves: oceanic fauna, forest, soil and subsoil reserves etc. The administration of a resource defines as sustainable if, being known its capacity of renewal, does not exaggerate in its exploitation over a certain threshold.

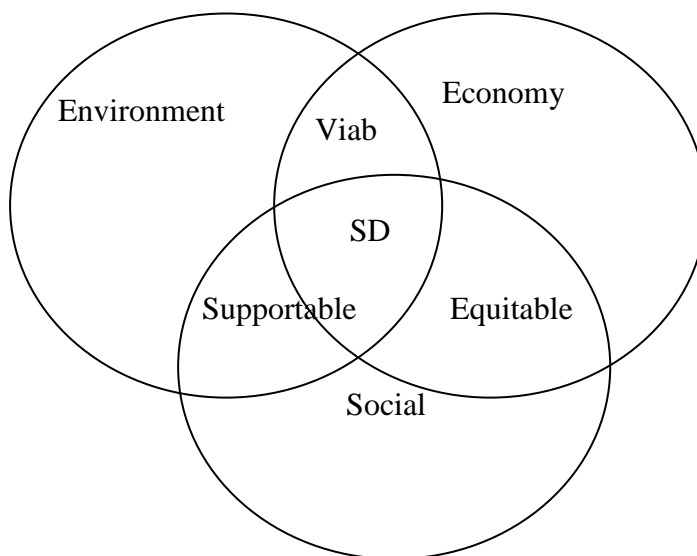
This type of sustainable development emphasizes the requirement of the simulation approach of the imperatives of the economic development and of those of environment protection.

The important climatic changes, the acid rains, the management of toxic waste, the destroy of the ozone layer, the extinction of some species are major problems which preoccupy the world at the beginning of the third millennium and oblige to actions and convergent strategies in solving them.

The integrate character of the sustainable development relies in the reality according to which any economic system is included in a social system, which at its turn is included within a biologic-physic system (eco-system, planet) (Gidding et al., 2002).

The **sustainable development** comprises three fundamental elements, respectively three simultaneous objectives (Figure 1):

- **Life quality** .....**social objective;**
- **Economic development** .....**economic objective;**
- **The environment protection** .....**environment objective;**



**Figure 1.** The fundamental support of the sustainable development  
Source: Gidding et al

The applying of the concept of sustainable development supposes a proper management based upon the Integrated Management System (SIM) which include:

- The **economic** component - economic sustainability;
- The **ecologic** component - environment sustainability
- The **social** component (**education, health**) - social sustainability;
- The **legal** sustainability;
- The **education**, information component;
- The **scientific research** component.

It results that the new Sustainable Management has a very complex problematic: *relational, financial - accounting, contractual, regulating, economic, social, educational, ethical, political, internal, external ... and constantly in evolution.*

### **The sustainable development conflicts**

According to the specialists, the three supporters of the sustainable development are the environment, the economy and the society. The introduction and the acceptance of the sustainable development concept is a consequence of the appearance of "conflicts" between these supporters.

An analysis of the existing conflicts can be made through a diagram of the Euler type (Figure 2) where there are put into light at least three situations of the relation man-environment according to : the people's requirements (needs, necessities - circle A), the environment requirements (conservation, regeneration - circle B), the environment strategy (policies, regulations - circle C). The ideal would be that the

three circles overlap. In reality, the sources for the appearance of the de-functionalities are numerous and manifest themselves through pressures upon the environment or even conflicts.

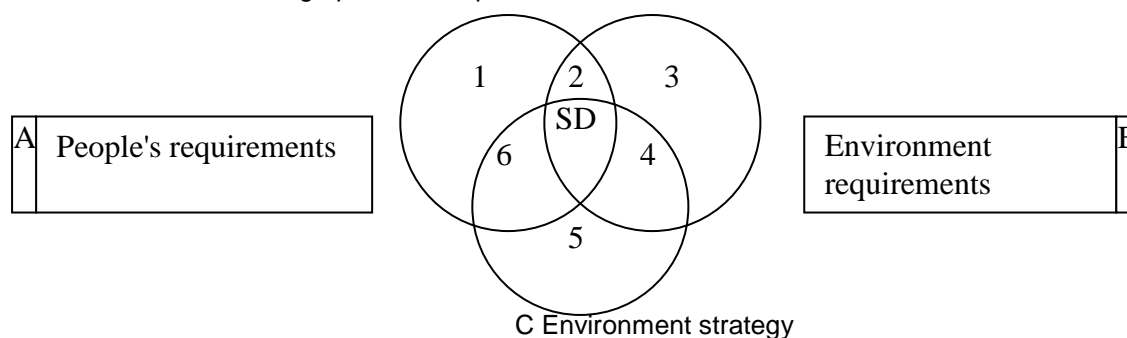


Figure 2. *The requirements of the sustainable development*

These de-functionalities can be discovered in the figure, where can be delimited 7 spaces (among which 6 are corresponding to the main conflicts):

- *Space 1* - the zone of *indifference* from the part of the *citizens*, a part of the environment requirements has not been taken into consideration (*over-exploitation, waste, pollution*);
- *Space 2* - the environment requirements are partially respected, but without a long-term strategy;
- *Space 3* - *pretended performance* (the projection of the environment actions has been done without taking into account the clients' requirements and without the existence of a strategy);
- *Space 4* - *inefficient action*, environment indicators projected, achieved but not asked from the part of the client;
- *Space 5* - unrealistic strategy, non-adequate to the existing conflicts;
- *Space 6* - not having an environment performance, *expected performance* from the part of the citizens, practically achieved, but not mentioned in specifications. It is not sure that this performance will be maintained long time.
- *Space DD* - *sustainable development* achieved and maintained under control, the citizens are satisfied, the environment is protected.

Reducing the discrepancies would determine the enlargement of the common crossing zone of the three circles (space DD) and implicitly the development of the process of improving the environment quality by *centering the concept activities and achieving according to the requirements all the crossing parts*.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the sustainable development models can not be based upon an irrational use of the resources and upon the deterioration of the environment, there being necessary, first of all a reconciliation of the two parts, in order to improve the welfare of the present and future generations. The objectives of the sustainable development should include:

1. Collective participation (eco-responsibility);
2. The preservation of the resources;
3. A balanced development;
4. The environment quality;
5. Reducing the waste of resources (eco-efficiency).

These objectives suppose a complex, economical, ecological, socio-cultural approach from the part of all interested parties and in a very short period of time.

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