

Conference ‚Education for Sustainable Development‘

Workshop: ‘The Contribution of Social Capital to Sustainable Development, Prof.Gehmacher, Dr. Palt; Rapporteur: C. Affolter

1. Glimpses out of the entrance speech of Prof. Gehmacher

Historical view on the theory of Social Capital:

- Sustainability as fundamental idea of human development and cultural development. The idea came under pressure by the evolution of the society. Via religious rules societies tried to solve sustainability (often too late and too weak).
- The new technologies had catastrophic side effects: One is/was the destruction of all native cultures. The dominance of European culture brought the belief of self fulfilling progress. The main theses said, that Society will develop itself a sustainable living concept. All big social development on the political level promised this type of ‘final solutions’.
- But ideologies do not work, nature is too complex. The new idea is to have flexibility; the society has to be reacting flexible. So two strong extreme tendencies arose: The concept of demands for strong political actions versus the concept of the self regulation the society.

Reasons to develop Social Capital

- Driving force to generate social capital is the human search for happiness: To avoid suffering and to win action competence in the own life. Sustainability is a concept also on the global level (micro, meso, macro level).

Actual points of interest:

- An actual question is: Which are soft regulations who work to develop a sustainable development? Research show that emotional forces are a strong force to develop social ‘revolutions’. This power has to be channeled to bring sustainable development to a success.

Some focus points on Social Capital theory:

1. Permanent learning means experimenting (trial and error)
Teach new ideas in new forms
2. Social capital development is asking for an early accompanying system as well to show successful as well dangerous processes.

3. It's impossible to measure action itself only its results. Action has its own rules, is working with beliefs. Action and measurement need to be separated.
4. Only persons with social capital are able to live a sustainable culture. But only groups with a positive (sustainable) social capital are able to profit from education for Sustainability. Negative social capital develops an active action against Sustainable Development (destructive habits). Learning itself is a process which is to be seen in context of the level of social capital.
5. Social capital is generated on three levels:
 - Micro-level: Level of intimate relationship as love, family, peer group and friendship
 - Meso-level: People you know personally and own environment.
 - Macro-level: Level of a common idea so as a religion or political philosophy (with symbolic persons as heads of the idea) Participation is organized in structures.

2. Questions and answers (Morning session)

Q: Which is the relation between social capital and Sustainable Development?

G: Social capital can be used for anything, and can be used to build up anything. It is one of the driving forces to build up a future leading concept as Sustainable Development.

Q: How do we overcome/enlarge the limits of time and space?

Don't we need a completely different way to look at the environment? We *are* the environment and we are not looking *at* the environment.

G: There is a basic need for emotional knowledge and for a belief-system. Sustainability is a fundamental part of a belief-system.

Q: How can we channel the power of good social capital for Sustainable Development? Is it possible to identify the difference between the different levels of social capital?

G: Bonding or bridging is the question. Bonding means evoke fear and deny or translate suffering. This is only possible in a close system which brings 'security'. Bonding is inside 'the wall'.

Bridging means to bring people with different point of views together. Bridging (For example between school-classes and peer-groups) means cooperation. Bridging opens 'the wall'.

Q: Is the concept of social capital an effective policy instrument?

G: Social capital is no instrument, it is an energy within the processes.

Q: Few reflections on the word 'capital'.

Investment into Social Capital could bring effects in health, social welfare, quality.

Where is the nation which will invest into the global dimension of social capital?

G: Research shows the binding forces on the meso-level, it shows also that social capital is often generated in the community. Research shows mostly the social capital of individuals (until now).

Q: Belief-systems come from reward-systems: How do we develop a reward-system?

G: The reward has to be connected to a well being/personal happiness feeling. Only sustainable living brings personal well being.

Q: I have problems with the term of Social capital: What are the elements of social capital? Which elements of Social Capital are important for sustainable development?

G: The precise term brings already an answer: We need sustainable social capital to invest it into sustainability.

Q: Would the concept of SD on the base of Social Capital work only in regional context? Sustainable Development is a global concept and it has to work worldwide. How to manage the concept of Social Capital in this world wide movement?

G: Sustainable Development is not yet a global concept. We have to develop a common language first.

Q: Children of our days are building social capital on a global way (Getting real users of the possibilities of the World Wide Web): How is Social Capital embedded in the concept of sustainable development?

G: Bridging from schools to outside schools organizations is an important form to develop a sustainable world. It is important to value as well the old and the new forms of building up Social Capital (means: bridging from the old structure into the new structures). There will be more research on ways how to bridge and develop new conditions for teaching and learning.

3. Main Questions in the 'Social Capital World Café':

1. What is a sustainability culture concerning behavior in a sustainable way?

Sustainability Culture its behavior components (Lifestyle consumption, waste collection, energy saving) what does the individual do to live in a sustainable way?

Informal and formal education:

- Question yourself (but: are we capable to reflect ourselves?)
- Inform yourself
- Act accordingly
- Try to convince others
- Build relations

Development of Action Competence

There is no process and development without values

Participative processes

Take responsibility

Respect cultural background

Respect for animals and nature, conservation of natural resources

Culture of respect

Creative and innovative acting

Be open minded, use bridging and bonding

Create and promote values

‘Responsibly’ behavior

Develop global identification

Sustainable social capital as ‘medium for creating and providing values’.

Top down processes:

- Rules
- Information
- Values (education)
- ‘Guide lines’

There should be a balance between Top-down and Bottom-up processes:

Top down – Bottom up:

- Imposed norms
- Voluntary change

Good practices:

Local Agenda 21

Other processes (see regional development)

Teachers education skills, with database/Global info

2. What are the ethic values of Sustainability? What does belong to it (Fair trade, blood donation, goodpartenthood, etc)

Arranged results under the two pillars ‘citizenship and knowledge skills’

Responsibility

Justice

Respecting diversity

Equal distribution, equal needs fulfillment

Local and global solidarity with excluded groups

Participation

Students companies for discussion of ethical dilemmas

Critical thinking

Respect for human rights

Respect for animals and nature, conservation of natural resources

Non violent conflict resolution

Project learning in contact with local communities

Example: Democratic and participative structures in school organization

Students companies for discussion of ethical dilemmas

Knowledge skills

Interactions between schools/educational institutions and civil society

3. How can Sustainability values and behaviour be created (School, Social Capital, within families, networks)

Different kind of steering toward sustainable values and behavior

(Central question: How and when are we steering?)

How: Collective information as a steering mechanism
 Providing information as a steering mechanism
 Education and training
 Creating framework conditions
 Providing financial resources
 Providing capacities for facilitation processes in different target
 groups (organization of self-organization)

Who is steering:

Myself

Family, school, media, peer group

Communities, government (central and local)

Where: within myself

School, street, public place, at home, at work, shops

When: Now and forever,

Future scenarios:

Micro: students exchange

Meso: being aware of creating meaningful 'steering' processes

Macro: bridging international SD-processes

4. Final session: Policy recommendations

When discussing sustainable Development it is important to speak about knowledge and values instead of competence and values, because competence has to be defined, without other definition it could be understood as against the spirit of open learning.

Balance of top down and bottom up is very important
Constant interactions are characteristic for Sustainable Development

Needs for a fruitful work on Sustainable Development: Room, space and time.

Cooperation between partners is important, bridging over different levels, bridging national and international developments

Important is as well self reflection and habit and education for it.

Social capital is a by-product of sustainable Development

Micro: students exchange

Future scenarios:

Meso: being aware of creating meaningful 'steering' processes

Macro: bridging international SD-processes

Final answer to the question: How and when can we create Sustainable Development?

Now and forever!