ABSTRACT Sustainable development is popular, but also indeterminate concept, with many meanings and interpretations. This complex and vague idea seems more difficult to implement on the local basis then on the national level. It is therefore surprising that such an abstract concept has rather high mobilizing power. One of the explanations lies in its positive image. When one compares the “optimistic” concept of sustainability with the “pessimistic” concept of entropia, it is possible to hypothesize that its popularity is the result of its utopistic potential, i.e. its ability to visualize the reconciliation of the eternal fight between man (society), and nature. Comparing attitudes and statements with the actual behavior makes it possible to conclude that sustainability is just as popular as declaration, which is in strong contrast with the everyday reality. It is quite understandable that sustainability, as a radical concept, is difficult to implement in the real life. A lot has to be done in coordinating the measures on the local level in order to prevent shocks which would destabilize communities. But just the fact that the concept is provocative makes it effective in stimulating the discussion on numerous questions considering sound, sustainable...
development. This paper tries to structure the concept of sustainability in order to clarify its social potential.

KEY WORDS sustainability, utopia, development

Introduction: Sustainability, Postmodern “Big Story”?

Both the seductiveness and radicalness of the concept of “sustainable development” have given rise to an astonishing abundance of discussions and writings. It has become hard to come across a “policy” document or discussion on development, which does not claim to have “sustainable” goals and principles. How pandemic this rhetoric has grown may easily be established by using an internet search engine. Such extensive and widespread discussions should please us, were it not for the frequently loose, indiscriminate, and undefined use of the concept. Even a cursory analysis shows that “sustainable development” has become a magic word, an incantation, which many “politically correct” participants in the discussions deem unnecessary to define in detail. Not that this is particularly surprising in the discussions about complex social themes, which are initiated and reproduced by the media. What does surprise, however, is that even in expert circles the discussions about sustainable development are often far from accurate and as such do not lead to clear definitions. As if, even in these circles, the real determination does not exist to reach more tangible definitions of this radical and complex developmental concept. Although the concept first appeared already long time ago, it is obviously still in its initial, embryonic stage. Its inflationary use, on the other hand, provides compelling evidence that the undefined, open nature and inclusiveness of the concept quite effectively refutes the thesis about boredom following the alleged “end of history”.

Searching for new options, the construction of new utopias or utopistics – “as serious assessment of historical alternatives, the exercise of our judgment as the substantive rationality of alternative possible historical systems” (Wallerstein, 1998: 1) seems essential, in particular since it is obvious, at the levels of both common sense and analytic thinking, that the lifestyle of the developed Western countries cannot become a global developmental target. Given the Earth’s carrying capacity, the Western model is evidently not sustainable. And that is about all that has been clear and relatively substantiated about sustainable development, but even at this point there is no unanimous consensus and it would not be hard to list a range of influential skeptics. The enlightenment ideology of progress is particularly popular with technology fans who continue to believe that science will eventually invent less polluting and energy consuming technologies. The real danger, however, lies less in this optimistic attitude than in the cynical and cold attitude of the present-day privileged groups, who are hardly bothered by the unequal and unjust exploitation of the Earth’s resources, because they count on their dominant position in the distribution and use of increasingly scarce natural resources.
The others, i.e. those who agree with the assessment that the principle of sustainability requires our urgent reduction in the dynamics of the natural resources’ exploitation, should dedicate themselves earnestly and intensively considering the real options, i.e. the “utopistics” (Wallerstein) of sustainable development, and commit themselves to the slow progress in the implementation of the politically and economically complex and radical task presented by sustainable development. Taking account of Becker’s tripartite methodology, sociology, or indeed all social sciences, should tackle the reasons and consequences of the wide gap between the analytical and normative assessments of the alternatives to sustainable development, because this gap has a crucial hampering effect on the implementation of analytically and theoretically well-conceived sustainable projects. An answer must be found to the paramount question, to what degree a concrete “sustainable” idea is feasible and, if it is feasible, when, where, and in what way. Reading and listening to numerous discussions pertaining to development, it seems that the prevalent understanding of sustainable development is still that of a universally “versatile magic formula” (Becker, 1998), and that in the absence of “grand stories”, it is a very neat concept to use in the introductory chapters of various general development strategies and in particular in the programmatic speeches and documents of political parties.

In the real, empirical social processes and decisions, the magic of “nomen est omen” does not work and this erodes the implementation drive of politically, economically and socially balanced development. The gap between a declaratory, nominally formalist use of the concepts of sustainable development and substantial, real progress in the introduction of new sustainable development ideas has a strongly demotivating impact. Even the most enthusiastic environmentalists who are convinced that we are running out of time in implementing sensible development alternatives, are already showing signs of impatience. Nevertheless, or precisely because of this attitude, it is crucial to tackle – in every discussion on sustainable development – the fundamental question of what a sustainable development orientation really is. And it is equally vital to verify the concrete local options for sustainable development, i.e. to verify the feasibility of localized variants of sustainable behavior. If we are left with “ideals with contents and myths without substance “ (Cioran, 1995: 16), we risk to profane and banalize the only real existing alternative developmental concept.

Optimistic Eschatological Concept

There are certainly other reasons for the popularity of the concept of sustainable development. As late as in the 1980s, discussions in environmentalist circles frequently focused on the law of entropy, which no human activity, however perfect, can escape. But unlike sustainable development later, the discussions about entropy never really became popular. They just never made it beyond expert
environmentally conscious circles, to reach the populist or political level. It is probably not unusual that the “catastrophic entropic environmental discourse” never gained significant mobilizing momentum. The inevitable entropic death of every living thing is hardly a suitable starting-point for wider mobilization, even though it is based on irrefutable second law of thermodynamics. The vague, and from the scientific viewpoint completely unfeasible “sustainability” concept, on the other hand, obviously promises to have a much higher mobilizing potential. Its optimistic premise of reconciling the relationship between “nature and culture” seems to be a much more suitable basis for mobilizing people. Such an eschatological construct seems to at least temporarily fill the void left by the absence of "grand narrative" (Lyotard 1979). Political discourse, which by definition “must” construct positive, bright developmental visions, gratefully grabbed the opportunity provided by “sustainable development”.

Many writings and statements about the “inevitability” of sustainable development strongly suggest that that the concept is (ab)used instrumentally, pragmatically and for populist purposes (Redclift, 1987, Elliot, 1994, Becker 1997, Furedi, 2005). Many writings discuss “sustainable development” without even trying to operationalize the concept, as if it was totally clear and unambiguous, and all we have to do is to put it into practice. Given that quite the opposite is true, one cannot but assume that this rhetoric is merely conformist, that it is a politically correct lip service to the current, trendy jargon that spread in the past decade. What causes major problems is, of course, the lack of analytical approach shown by presumably sincere advocates “of sustainable development”, because it leads to unacceptable misjudgments about the radicalness of the “sustainable development” turn. In the discussions on sustainable development, a critical and analytical approach is vital, if we wish to generate a credible and operative consensus about feasible alternatives to this exciting, but undoubtedly radical developmental concept. The inflationary and vague “wishful thinking” of many discussions leads to banalization and decline of this potentially promising concept.

The concept's popularity owes much to the very simple initial definition by the Brundtland Commission. Beside its apparent simplicity, the essential feature and quality of the definition lies in that it calls for direct solidarity with the coming generations. In principle, one can hardly object to intergenerational fairness; on the contrary, it is probably the most proven way to stimulate mass solidarity. Neither can one object to the second fundamental principle put forward by the Brundtland

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2 An exemplary case of such a pessimist entropic environment discourse is e.g. J. Rifkin's Entropy – a New World View (1981).

3 This refers to a wide range of European and Slovene development papers. Though basically rigid and outdated in its approaches, the Slovene administration has even come to use the notion of “sustainable development management“ (Bogataj, T. 2004).

4 “Sustainable development” means satisfying the needs of the present generation without compromising the capacity of future generations to satisfy their needs “ (WCED, 1987: 14).
Commission: that local and global development should be planned so as to balance three basic components: a) environmental protection, b) economic growth, and c) social equality. However, beyond this principle level, sustainable development becomes an increasingly mysterious and enigmatic idea, which, as it was mentioned above, easily falls a victim to the various more or less simplified interpretations.

**Temporal Dilemma**

Every concrete elaboration of the sustainable development concept is disputable and its temporal dimension is undoubtedly the hardest to define. While there is nearly unanimous consensus about the idea that we are running out of resources, fierce disagreement exists as to for how long the developed and developing world can maintain its wasteful, unsustainable consumption of natural resources. The answer largely depends on how we interpret the individual elements of sustainable development; the chosen timeframe in particular determines how radical or urgent the implementation of consensually accepted principles is. How important and, at the same time, difficult to define the temporal dimension really is, has been quite clear since the publication of the Club of Rome’s report, *Limits to Growth*, which four decades ago (1972) dramatically drew attention to the necessity of sustainable, balanced development of mankind. The crucial point made by the report actually drew attention to the fact that mankind was running out of time to avoid exceeding the carrying capacity of the environment. The experience of the report, however, also shows how uncertain predictions are and how unstable any rhetoric about stability or sustainable stability can be. In the final section of the report the authors clearly state: “We can say very little at this point about the practical, day by-day steps that might be taken to reach a desirable, sustainable state of global equilibrium. Neither the world model nor our own thoughts have been developed in sufficient detail to understand all the implications of the transition from growth to equilibrium. Before any part of the world's society embarks deliberately on such a transition, there must be much more discussion, more extensive analysis, and many new ideas contributed by many different people (Limits to Growth, 1972).

These guidelines certainly apply to the present discussions on sustainable development. In spite of the report’s determinist concept, the authors were aware that the implementation of their ideas, i.e. the implementation of sustainable balance, strongly or indeed decisively depends on hardly definable and measurable social relations of power and interests. Thus any interpretation of sustainable development must, in addition to empirical facts about the condition of the environment about reaching and exceeding the carrying capacity of the environment, also take into

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5 In hindsight, the report to the Club of Rome might be called the first global sustainable development document.
account the motivational capacity of mankind, which includes a cognitive as well as a value dimension. In the implementation of “sustainable development”, it is therefore vital to: 1) structure very complex ideas, and 2) reach a consensus about the dynamics of introducing necessary, as well as unpopular measures. Or, in other words: a precondition for the implementation of sustainable development is individual and institutional reflectiveness, i.e. constant observation of and responses to the interdependent environmental, economic and social components of development at local, national and global levels.

**Common Communicative Field**

It is therefore clear how highly complex the conditions, which have to be taken into the account and responded to, are, if we wish to achieve the high objective. The task is all the more demanding, since sustainable development is a cybernetic integral concept, which means that we have to simultaneously deal with numerous individual components and their interdependence. The standard division of labor between numerous relevant disciplines and specialist discussions on sustainable development is rather questionable in methodological terms. The simultaneity of disciplinary specialization and integral treatment is one of the key conditions for an expert approach to sustainable development. This means that we have to simultaneously observe environmental (spatial) and social aspects in their interdependence. Such an “integral methodology”, however, first needs to be developed and asserted, since in spite of the in principle agreement on the necessity of interdisciplinary treatment, we are still in the embryonic stage, in this aspect too. We are still far from reaching an agreement on what would be the most suitable measures for rehabilitation and preservation of natural resources.

In these circumstances, a promising approach would be to constantly confront the individual issues with general social value contexts, which largely determine our capacity to act, that is, the capacity to operationalize the principles which lead to agreed goals. This refers to the key elements of a working definition of sustainable development, which adequately covers the complexity of the concept and maintains the necessary information feedback. From this viewpoint, it makes sense to observe sustainable development at three levels: a) analytical, b) normative, and c) strategic (Becker et al., 1997).

**Ad a)** At the initial, analytical level, we try to establish and empirically measure the environmental consequences of the production and reproduction of modern societies, which have already reached a previously unseen level of utilization and consumption of natural resources. Basically, this is about an objective as a possible selection of sustainable and non-sustainable behavior. An essential element is the assessment of the carrying capacity of the environment and a realistic prediction of possible (technological) innovations, which will bring about more
economical use of natural resources. At first glance, it is obvious that the analytical level is primarily related to the field of natural and technical sciences and that, therefore, at least in principle, the results of these analyses mainly depend on the capacity to carry out the empirical measurements and assessments of the individual actions’ environmental effects as accurately as possible. The analytical phase is thus mainly dedicated to the technical assessment of the impact on the environment, caused by the “operation” of the consumption intensive modern societies. The gathered data should give us a clear idea as to how to timely introduce rational restrictions, or even abolish effects which would exceed the environment’s carrying capacity.

Because of the complexity and interconnectedness of environmental effects and consequences, and because many of the cause-and-effect connections are still unknown, this relatively clearly defined analytical task turns out to be quite demanding. This means that the information generated by expert systems is often not coordinated and transparent enough to have a mobilizing impact. The expert evaluation of environmental effects is a plural undertaking, and this means that the expert assessments of one and the same effect often disagree. This issue might be addressed by the sociology of science. For the discussions on the implementing options of sustainable development, these disagreements produce a highly important side effect – a decline in credibility and social legitimacy of the specialist assessments.

The analytical level is thus expected to contribute as credible as possible information about whether and when the carrying capacity of the environment will be reached or exceeded. In order to act timely and gradually, trends will have to be extrapolated to establish when, in the given circumstances, the critical phase of overburdening the environment will be reached. Even at this analytical level, social and demographic trends must be observed, because they have a major impact on the intensity of the effects on the environment. Essential information at the analytical level is certainly connected with the temporal dimension, that is, with the assessment on the amount of time we have left, in the given conditions, to prevent irreversible damage to the environment. If the assessment includes information on the possible changes in social trends, then the normative level of sustainable development is reached.

Ad b) At the normative level, the gap between analytical findings on a realistically established use of natural resources and the way society responds to these findings should be evaluated. We may theoretically expect a wide range of responses – from indifference to a major surge in the motivation for the concrete changes in behavior, from non-sustainable to sustainable. Though analytical methods can be used at the normative level too, so many diverse factors are involved that we do not have available accurate determinist forecasts at this level. What we can try to establish are the concrete connections between the degree ofeconomic
development, social inequality, and the willingness to an environmentally motivated change. Useful information for the assessments of sustainable behavior identifies social groups who are aware of the analytical findings and willing and capable to respond actively to these findings. It is hardly necessary to emphasize the differences in expectations in these terms, at the global level. Never before in history were the differences between societies as huge as they are now, nor were the societies as diverse in the extent to which they use natural resources and pollute the environment, as today. For that reason, widely divergent responses are normal and to be expected. And this is, of course, a very important condition in the efforts for sustainable development.

The differences are also very big within relatively homogenous societies. Even in such circumstances, there is a wide range of attitudes – from indifference to energetic engagement; the key issue is, of course, at what point our environmental awareness motivates us strongly enough to change questionable behavior and become actively engaged. An important finding is that the differences may largely depend on the degree of environmental pollution. And this fact directly underpins the thesis that norms, i.e. values which influence behavior, are not directly related to non-sustainable practices. Behavior is obviously influenced by a wide variety of interest, economic, cultural, psychological, and even accidental factors. A model, which would take into account the correlation between the degree of environmental pollution and the willingness to change one’s behavior, would be highly reductionist. And this is what actually occurs when we observe only the analytical level, that is, when we assume that by merely announcing the expert findings on pollution will bring about changes in behavior. To introduce sustainable principles to social practices, it is very important to assess the cause and way in which major or minor differences are generated between analytical findings and normative responses to them. If we do not take into account the essential contextual influences, our assessment may turn to be totally wrong and remain far from the principles of sustainable development. Thus, one of the essential features of this concept is “calibration”, that is, the assessment of (non)environmental behavior in the context of concrete, economic, and cultural characteristics. If, for instance, someone by catching a fish does not go hungry, this is from normative viewpoint quite different from fishing for fun. To relativize “equal acts” may be completely justified in terms of values, but it is highly demanding in terms of methodology. The normative assessment of (non)sustainable behavior is therefore hard to standardize and this of course causes difficulties in making comparisons. This is particularly true of isolated assessments of individual environmentally questionable behavior. At the aggregate statistical level, the assessment is easier, but even there it is hard to avoid relativizing.

Ad c) The differences between the analytical and normative level make it very hard or nearly impossible to implement a uniform strategy in achieving sustainable development. The management, regulation, stimulation, and conduct of various
policies must be adapted to the highly diverse conditions at all levels, from local to global. To elaborate and legitimize policies of sustainable development proves therefore a demanding expert task, which places a high burden on management capacities. Without wanting to underestimate the existing structures, it must be said that such a task is beyond the management skills, capacities, and motivation of existing scientific and political institutions. This is one of the principal reasons for the reliance on across-the-board patterns, as well as for the inability to go beyond the merely self-serving or fashionable declarative level of leading texts in favor of sustainable development. The strategic level of sustainable development can produce good quality results only when based on competently performed previous phases, that is, analytical and normative assessments of the situation at hand. Key information for the construction and implementation of a successful strategy must certainly include an estimate of the gap between analytical findings and their evaluation by different social groups. And it is hardly less important to establish the reasons for the differences in evaluation of environmentally questionable practices. Only such diverse information will allow us to obtain a clear enough idea as to how to elaborate an operational strategy for sustainable development.

The Backer’s concept of a tripartite structure for sustainable development clearly shows how complex and radical the concept is. It is also clear that these ideas are only a basic outline and that an operative program for achieving sustainable development will have to be much more elaborate. However, it seems sensible for an operative implementing program to preserve this tripartite structure, because it allows for continuous integration of a wide variety of information. The approach encourages the exchange of information between the analytical, normative, and strategic levels, and at the same time it is transparent and flexible enough to contribute to the establishment of a dynamic balance between environmental, social, and economic components of sustainable development. Such an approach would contribute to finally achieving the indispensable interdisciplinary cooperation between the numerous involved natural, technical, and social sciences. It would also make it possible to take account of the local specifics through concrete “sustainability” measures.

The crucial quality of such an approach lies in the incorporated feedback between analytical findings and legitimizing conditions, as well as in the strategy deriving from it – one of a long-term operation of key stakeholders at different levels of social behavior. Precisely because of the legitimizing condition, it is necessary to adapt general sustainability principles to the concrete regional, national or local social conditions. It is only when we are able to establish such localized approach, that we will be capable of achieving an operational level. Only then will we be able to move to the active phase of implementing sustainable development. And this is in fact an outline of how to overcome the fundamental weaknesses in the management of modern societies, weaknesses that led to a condition in which every individual department has a go at its own sustainability strategy.
To assess the real range of concrete sustainable projects implies that we are capable of picking out – from an abundance of “sustainable” utopistic and instrumental writings and ideas – those discourses or proposals which merely formally adhere to the politically correct newspeak, and thus abuse the motivational potential of sustainable development’s fundamental ideas. At first sight, it does not seem very hard to identify examples where the discussion about sustainable development merely follows the trendy jargon. But even in cases where “people listen without understanding” (Cioran, 1995: 114), we should ask ourselves how it is possible that presumably rational people and institutions “swallow” discourses that are obviously short on logic and arguments. Before distancing ourselves from this widespread practice, we should analyze the context in which logically obviously flawed discussions about sustainable development have become part of standard public political discourse. An ideological address, which functions and which is at least in part perceived as legitimate, cannot be waved aside. Although it may quite soon become evident that the eloquent address has no directly applicable value and that it cannot be translated into social practice or at least a developmental policy, this does not mean that it has no practical value at all. The production and reproduction of such discourses is possible because they obviously originate in the utopian potential of sustainable development. Beside the religious discourse, the sustainability is the only contemporary debate which keeps alive our utopian imagination and dreams about a potentially better world. The discussion about sustainable development should therefore in principle start at this point, because it is one of the rare programs which still promises “real” utopian constructions, i.e. utopistics according to Wallerstein. And for this reason, we should be tolerant even of the ill-defined discussions about sustainable development, because utopian fantasies “presume a certain degree of naivety and foolishness“ (Cioran, 1995: 94), but they do represent the “renewal potential of institutions and peoples” (ibidem: 15).6

However, even if we appreciate that sustainable development is a utopia or some kind of civil religion, this does not mean that there is no point in continuously refining the arguments that constitute the basis for assessing and choosing more or less sustainable behaviors. Because if we do not, there is a real danger that the discussion on sustainable development will turn into a post-modern variant of religious discourse, a sort of “scientology”, driven primarily by fear or by the more or less urgent wish to avoid a catastrophe. We cannot ignore the apocalyptic dimensions in the discourse on sustainable development, and even though it is not explicit, it is one of the discourse’s crucial motivational elements.

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6 A society, which is not able to generate utopias and dedicate itself to them, exposes itself to sclerosis and destruction (Cioran, 1995: 93).
A “Perpetuum mobile” Project?

In this context, we have to ask ourselves whether the real questionable issue is perhaps the Becker’s tripartite rationalist, methodological and well-considered method of assessing the feasibility of sustainable behavior. The assumption that we can analytically select and gauge more or less sustainable practices, and then try to legitimize them based on these more or less sovereign assessments, disregards the utopian dimension of the reflections and discussions on sustainable development. It is true that a consistent, rationalist approach cannot ignore the fact that the idea of sustainable development is in complete contradiction with entropy – life’s fundamental energy constant. If we accept the absolute validity of the second law of thermodynamics, we can hardly talk of sustainable practices in closed systems. In fact, it is only a metaphor for environmentally, socially and economically most prudent and least polluting behavior, because the absolute validity of the second law of thermodynamics means that sustainable development is as impossible an idea as the construction of a “perpetuum mobile”. This proves that even an exceptionally rationalist method of discourse cannot steer clear of utopian dimensions, since from the physical aspect, sustainable development is merely a utopian goal which we can come close to but never really achieve. Perhaps, this is precisely what makes the idea so attractive.

It is thus obvious that an exhaustive discussion on sustainable development opens up many basic eschatological and existential questions, which elude rational and theoretically consistent consideration. Resorting to a superficial, formalist utopian discourse may therefore be the result of our confusion and incapacity when we try to substantially get hold of and practically apply the “impossible” radical principles of sustainable development. And because even a methodologically perfect analytical approach cannot always achieve this consistently, the expert discourse may change into a messianic, utopian or even vulgar ideology. Nevertheless, we have no better option than to intensify rational and analytical verification of the environment-friendly options and socially acceptable exchange of society with nature, that is, of production and consumption. The result cannot be determinist certainty, but merely the basis for possible social legitimization of such procedures, which will lead to more balanced environmental, social and economic development. It is therefore highly sensible to carry out “the exercise of our judgment regarding the substantive rationality of possible alternative historical systems” (Wallerstein, 1998: 65). The exercise should be primarily aimed at verifying feasible sustainable practices and in particular at evaluating society’s support for alternative, environmentally acceptable options for social local and global development. Because of the many negative past experiences with the “operationalisation” of utopias, it is recommendable to lower the expectations and to remain, as does

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7 Ideologies are a crude expression of messianic or utopian visions (Cioran 1995: 105).
Wallerstein, at the level of mental exercise and limited practical experiments (case studies). Consistent theoretical and practical exercises may be the only way to preserve the distinction between messianic sustainability discourses and real, operationally feasible ideas. In short, it is sound to utilize the utopian mobilization potential of sustainable development to strengthen the rational, argumentative logic in the assessment and implementation of “utopian” ideas.

Thus, what we strive for is a productive synergic connection between utopian dreams which remain the most important mobilization potential, and pragmatic, analytical implementation of locally verifiable sustainable practices. Domination of the first principle would lead to a huge disappointment, banalisation, and even abuse of possibly sound and feasible ideas. But merely pragmatically instrumental interpretation of sustainable ideas would find it harder to avoid conflicts in the confrontation of individual, localized ideas (fantasies) about the proper use of natural resources with concrete interventions in nature. There are many examples of such arguments, and the reasons for most of them are precisely the different interpretations of and ideas about sustainable environmental, social, and economic behavior. A relative agreement, at least about the premises of sustainable development, is undoubtedly a prerequisite for finding solutions to later complications, which can never be avoided when implementing such a complex idea.

Since the formalist, ideological and mythological use of the sustainable discourse exploits the idea’s mobilizing utopian potential, it has - in spite of some alleviating circumstances – a detrimental effect on the viability of the social implementation of new environmentally acceptable projects. First of all, we must draw attention to the practice of conscious or unconscious “double accounting”, which is in fact a component of the formalist discourse. These are situations in which it is evident to anyone with common sense that a concrete practice is in contradiction with the principles and provisions of sustainable development, but those involved (and responsible) somehow “fail” to notice this discrepancy.

To sum up, the differences between “theory” and “practice” cannot be hidden, but the official, i.e. formally politically correct discourse, has no problem covering them up. This dualism, which in some cases is quite genuine, spontaneous, and unconscious mimicry, is obviously not an accidental or random phenomenon, but a locally specific response to the great gap between the objectives of sustainable development and the real attitude to the environment and nature. The official policy of sustainable development, now in force and “a key development strategy in the future too”, sets the standards so high that in many areas they differ from real life and development trends to such an extent that it hardly makes sense to evaluate the policy’s achievements. All one has to do is turn a blind eye and formally, i.e.

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8 The variant of “attitude-behavior split” (Kraus, 1995).
verbally and declaratorily, persevere with the planned sustainable development actions.

**Conclusion**

In spite of some short-term achievements and the relative peace that now exists, it will soon become evident that this formalist practice is damaging, because it causes huge problems and conflicts even in the cases where concrete sustainable development projects are carried out in practice. Even sound and technologically ingenious projects meet with enormous problems of legitimization, because the declaratory, formalist discourse manages to cover up the difficulties, which the radical concept inevitable brings about. This situation manifests itself most clearly in directly affected locations, but the wider public, too, is badly prepared for presumably sustainable projects because of the prevalent decorative and declaratory sustainability discourse. The discrepancies between analytical (expert) and normative (value-oriented) public opinion assessments are increased by the shock which occurs when it becomes evident that the introduction of sustainable development projects affects the concrete interests of those who are indirectly or directly involved. At that moment, interest groups are quickly set up and it is only then that the process of confronting the principles of sustainable development with real life starts. The shock is all the worse since the (local) public is usually unprepared and unused to pragmatic, rational evaluation of sustainable projects. The confrontation of declaratory, ideological (mythological) naive logic with pragmatic sustainable development is necessarily fraught with conflict. And since even environmentally motivated groups do not carry out any “theoretical or practical exercise in assessing options for alternative sustainable projects”, it often occurs that sustainability oriented environment projects face huge opposition even among those from which one would expect the strongest support.

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