

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IN COMMUNITIES' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *The work brings to the fore a number of issues regarding sustainable development at local level and the role of the local authorities in this area. It discusses the concepts, features and principles of sustainable development. Also, it analyzes aspects regarding the actors involved in local sustainable development and the components of a sustainable community. The objective of the research was achieved by analyzing and interpreting approaches, concepts and definitions found in the literature and in the practice of local government.*

Key words: *sustainable development, local government, public management, sustainable communities*

JEL: *Q01, H79*

1. Introduction

In recent years, the local and regional communities should reconsider their role to face challenges and such profound transformations, as globalization, decentralization, environmental degradation, uncontrolled expansion of urbanization, uncertainty for a job; removing traditional values, inflation, unemployment. According to these changes, the main problem is the need to harmonize the economic, social and environmental problems, to ensure a proper future for the generations to come. Hence, the

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sustainable development is an objective as important as respecting human rights, education, the right to work and all the other values that create the modern society. Taking into consideration the aspects outlined above, this paper provides an overview of the main issues regarding the sustainable development of the local communities and the role of public management in this area.

2. The context of the sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development expresses the expansion of opportunities that present and future generations have and can fully manifest in any field – economic, social, cultural or political; man was placed in the centre of action for development (Brundtland Report, 1987). It supposes an optimum interaction of economic problems, social problems and environmental problems without compromising the possibility of the future generations to satisfy their own needs. (fig.1).

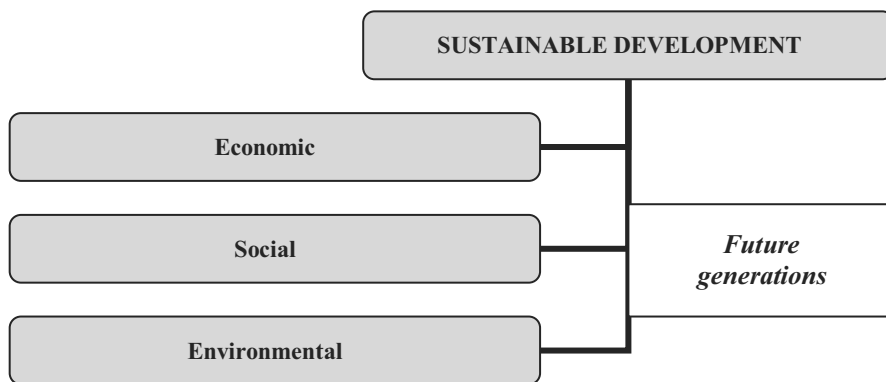


Fig. 1. The components of sustainable development

In the systemic trynom „environment – economic – social” the sustainable development emphasises the interdependence of the elements and highlights the necessity of achieving the equality and impartiality of the people who are being called „universal citizen” (Câmpeanu, V., 2006, p. 11). The overall objective of sustainable development is to find an optimum compatibility and interaction of these systems in a dynamic and flexible service. For this reason, for each country the construction of efficient

models of sustainable development should be a priority. Also, it should be noted that sustainable development is not an end in itself, but a means to stimulate economic, social and technical progress, a more equitable distribution through its effects on present and future generations (Panzaru, S., Dragomir, C., 2012, p. 104). Multiple aspects of sustainable development from economic growth and employment population by gender equality, environmental protection and individual freedoms are treated in an integrative vision, the emphasis being placed on broadening opportunities for the expressions of the people's choice. Seen from this perspective, the strategies for sustainability in the 21st century provide options for creating a favourable and friendly business environment in relation with the natural environment, combating the deterioration of land, air and water, whilst conserving communities and their diversity. These strategies become operational by appropriate national policies, in a position to encourage compatibility of systems that are conditioned in time and space, with regional collaboration and cooperation, internationally and globally.

3. Actors involved in local sustainable development

The values of the sustainable development are common to efficient European models of public government (Dragomir, C., 2014, p.129). The governments, businesses and citizens should be involved in the reduction of environmentally and socially detrimental processes, but within a framework which allows economic success. In this context, we are talking about the reconsideration of the public policies on the local and regional sustainability. These policies represent an ensemble of planned and promoted measures by the central and local public administration authorities, together with diverse actors (private, public, voluntary), with the purpose of ensuring an economic growth sustainably and dynamically, through the efficient valuation of the regional and local potential, with the purpose of improving the living conditions. In other words, the sustainable development at a local community level is an expression of partnership between all the actors involved in order to support and generate economic and social growth.

A community that is to function over the long term and to remain competitive in an increasingly globalized world must develop policies and strategies for sustainability. At local level, public management is based on a community of “public interests” of the citizens belonging to a territorial-

administrative unit, “recognizing the local community and the right to solve its problems” (Matei, L., 2009, p.13). A competitive public management has to be focused on the values of participatory democracy, the efficient and prudent use of resources, a dynamic local economy that provides access to employment without harming the environment. Local government is the element which supports the sustainability of local and regional community „by strategic, tactical and daily decisions, by the human resource quality and its behaviour and efficacy, by the administrative mechanisms, rules and procedures” (Nicolescu, O., Nicolescu, C., 2013, pp. 107).

The objective of a public institution is to be at the service of its citizens. Therefore, local authorities play a decisive role in informing and mobilizing the public opinion to initiate a dialogue with the citizens, the local organizations, financial institutions and private businesses to obtain sustainable development strategies. They are closer to the citizen and must be more responsive to their needs to raise the quality of the administrative act through the application of an advanced public management, with emphasis the participatory component, leading to an orientation towards the citizen, in conditions of efficiency and promptness. This responsibility transfer takes place in dynamic conditions, and the local authorities’ capacity to adapt to the new processes is significantly different from a region to another. In other words, development involves equal opportunities for all persons to participate and influence the decisions affecting their lives (figure no.2).

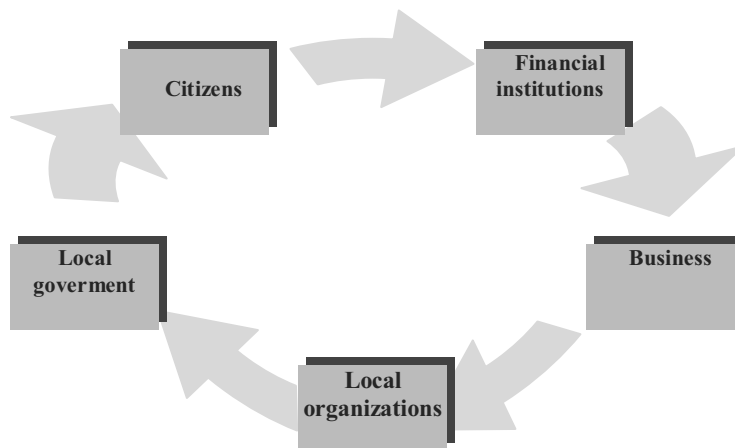


Fig. 2. Actors involved in local sustainable development

In fact, the community development is an expression of local solidarity, the will of the inhabitants of micro-regions to build on local wealth for economic and social prosperity. From this perspective, the local authorities get increased responsibilities concerning the economic growth, the finances and the local services administration, mainly the social care ones, social protection, learning-educational and health care ones. In addition, there is a strong need for new projects to be implemented for the regional development, based on communities as the society cells.

4. The components of a sustainable community

The management of public administration has to be focused on the values of effectiveness, responsibility and commitment to the public good and to provide options for a dynamic local economy that provides access to employment without harming the environment. In other words, public administration must contribute to generate and develop numerous sustainable opportunities for the local and regional community, namely: job creation; innovation stimuli; low bureaucracy and corruption.

The main domains to be considered in local sustainable development are: economic development, environmental protection, improving the infrastructure, health, education, learning, culture. The Institute for Sustainable Communities identified the components of a sustainable community:

Ecologic integrity

- satisfying basic human necessities of air, water and uncontaminated, clean, nutritious food;
- protecting and developing the local and regional eco-systems and biologic diversity;
- conservation of water, soil, energy and non-regenerative resources, including the maximum use of waste;
- applying preventive strategies and modern technologies for minimizing pollution;
- the use of regenerative resources according to their regenerative rate.

Economic security

- a diverse and financially viable economic basis;

- re-investing resources in local economy;
- active participation of local business environment to the development of economy;
- hiring opportunities for citizens;
- necessary instruction and education for adjusting to the hiring requirements in future.

Responsibility and authorization

- equal opportunities for all persons to participate and influence the decisions affecting their lives;
- access to public information;
- a viable sector of NGOs;
- an atmosphere of respect and tolerance for different points of view, values and traditions;
- political stability;
- encouragement for persons of all ages, sexes, ethnics, religions and physical abilities to assume responsibility in the process of community development;
- non-compromising the sustainable development of other communities.

Social welfare

- relevant medical services, safe and sound lodging, quality education institutions for all members of community;
- ensured security;
- stimulating creation by arts;
- protecting and ensuring public spaces and historic resources;
- a healthy surrounding environment;
- adaptation to changes and extreme provocations.

According to these components, the main problem is the creation of a strategy able to positively affect each domain and every moment of a community's life. In this context, we consider that it is necessary a huge volume of work, a healthy surrounding environment, learning the new methods and practices of public management in order to increase the economic and socio-cultural prosperity of the community.

Conclusions

Sustainable development is an obligation of present generations to ensure a future for the generations to come, at ecological, social and economic levels. In the last years, there has been progress in all areas and significant changes can be seen at the level of local and regional development. These issues will still be the governments' concerns mainly due to the discrepancies between recognizing the theoretical importance and the concrete results achieved so far. A common problem to all the communities, sustainable development should be addressed taking into account the existing regional unbalances in the today world, dividing the regions into rich and poor. At this stage, we should accurately evaluate the consequences of this process on the life of local communities, due to the existence of some disparities between the development levels of different territorial administration units. A balance between the environment, society and economy is hard to achieve and to maintain and has to be preceded by a new mentality at the local public administration level for the implementation of the best public management practices with an accent on sustainable development at local level. In fact, local authorities should be more independent; this can give local communities the right of jurisdiction over public affairs that are of local importance. We consider that, the results of this study may be helpful for upcoming research in the area of sustainable development of the local and regional communities.

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