

Solution to Internalize the Sustainability in a Spa Company

Marian NĂSTASE¹
Cosmin DEMETRIAN²

Abstract

Our research views the sustainability of the company as a way to support the sustainable development of the local community. In turn, the local community developed sustainably has a positive impact on the sustainable development at society's level.

Local communities develop sustainably when companies intend to bring their contribution to a partnership relation between the local community and companies. Such partnership helps companies to choose solutions to mitigate threats and to support the local community to develop sustainably.

Local community-company partnership does not allow the stakeholders to adopt a win-win attitude. In this context, stakeholders build strategies according to their own visions; the local community builds strategically a sustainable development whereas companies have strategies to increase the sustainability of the business.

Keywords: *sustainability, sustainable development, viable local development, partnership, local community profile, company's operational profile.*

JEL classification: A13, F64, I15, O44, R11.

Introduction

According to Vaida and Căndea (2010, p.2), the sustainable development of a company is “a solution to the problem regarding the sustainable development of the human society.” This consideration leads to an important classification in the conceptual delimitation of the terms: “sustainable development” and “sustainability”.

Starting with this conceptual delimitation, we agree with those who consider sustainable development a desideratum of the humankind and sustainability an ideal for companies.

For the sustainable development of the family SPA company, wellness-SPA company and medical-SPA company, the solution is the elaboration of a global strategy including the responsibilities arising from the company-local community partnership and the company's own requirements of sustainable development.

¹ **Marian NĂSTASE**, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania,
E-mail: nastasemarian@yahoo.com

² **Cosmin DEMETRIAN**, The University of Craiova, Romania, E-mail: cosmindemetrian@yahoo.com

The partnership and the global strategy become fruitful instruments in the sustainable development of the SPA company when the understanding of the relation between the sustainable development of the local community and the sustainability of the SPA business is deep and clear. The relation between the two parts is of the “cause-effect” type. The sustainable development of the local community is considered a desideratum/ is a desire and the sustainable development of the company is a way to reach that desideratum.

The stakeholder partnership, promoting the attitude win-win, creates a favorable context for a correct assessment of the local community profile and of the company’s operational profile. The profile of the local community helps in constructing the interaction pattern in the stakeholder partnership. The company’s operational profile offers suggestions regarding its procedural and structural reconfiguration.

The global strategy of the SPA company contains terms specific to the sustainable development if the company’s strategy takes into consideration the requirements deriving from the directions of the sustainable development of the local community to be found in the subheading of its strategy: “The sustainable development of the local community.”

1. Sustainability versus durable development

Nowadays, many events mark the emergence of the sustainable development concept. In its classical acceptance formulated in the Brundland report (1987), this concept consists in “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Giddens, 2006, p. 942). As one may observe, even after a brief analysis, sustainable development is macroeconomic concept that can be applied at the level of the society or, more narrowly, at human community level.

The four above statements bring two terms to the fore. sustainability and durability. Concerning these terms, there can be many questions, two of which are essential for us: are sustainability and durability similar terms? Is there a certain relation between sustainability and durability?

Regarding the first question, we will specify that after the publication of the Meadows report in 1972, the conjunction “or” was encountered between the two terms for a long period of time. Yet, as time passed by, the controversies multiplied and cleared the confusion. First, it was cleared that the terms are not synonyms, because “durable” refers to the idea of continuity, permanence and infinity, while “sustainable” is concerned with the viability measured by admissibility, acceptability and tolerability. The similarity of the terms was supported by the fact that both terms are based on identical dimensions: economic, social and ecological. The confusion generated by the presence of the three identical dimensions was classified when finding the answer to the second question.

In order to answer the second question, we will relate to three researchers: the French Professor Fabrice Hatem, the Romanian Professor Dan Căndeia and the Engineer Adrian Vaida.

In one of his studies*, F. Hatem suggested a classification ordered around the finalities of sustainable development. He distinguishes two concepts in this classification: one that favours the “human prosperity” and another that “protects life”. From the point of view of human prosperity, the French researches distinguishes three approaches:

- The economic approach implements the economic means of sustainability.
- The ecological approach protects the human resources base.
- The social approach creates the social-ecological conditions of human prosperity.

From this classification, it results that sustainability in business is seen at the level of the process performed by one company, as only the process (by its economic function) is the creator of value. Therefore, sustainability is an endogenous factor of the company that contributes to meeting a requirement of sustainable development, an exogenous factor of the company.

Vaida and Căndeia (2010) consider that sustainable development is a macroeconomic concept concerning the objectives at the level of the society and human communities. Sustainable development is characterised by criteria that must be met. By analysing the definition of sustainable development, the two researchers observe that durability is a goal of human development and also that there is no indication that it could transpose the development into reality. Logically, it results that sustainability is the way to achieve sustainable development. The need to transpose sustainable development into reality can be covered through sustainability. Vaida and Căndeia (2010, p.2) mention that: “The transformation of current organisations into sustainable organisations is actually part of the solution to the problem of sustainable development”. Compared to the concept of sustainability, although they say it is the concept in a simplified manner, the two researchers consider that: “A sustainable organisation is that growing and developing without a negative environmental impact but with a positive impact on the society” (Vaida and Căndeia, 2010, p. 4).

Therefore, sustainable development is a global concept that has meaning for all the whole economic and social system of the world (population, activities and territories) and in its evolution in time. Sustainability is a concept that addresses certain components of the economic and social system of the world, seen as economical-social entities, as organisations. The relation between the sustainable development and companies’ sustainability is of the “cause-effect” type, as only sustainable companies contribute to the company’s and human communities’ sustainable development, through their finalities. This understanding of the differences between the concepts and particularly of the relation between them has guided us to correctly formulate one of the challenges of those companies of the second decade in the 21st Century.

2. The partnership need between SPA company and local community

Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs requires the company to respond to certain sustainable development requirements of the company and human community. Naturally, a company will be interested by its geographical vicinity. Obviously, the company's vicinity is the territory where it performs its processes. A company's territory is part of the territory of a city hall. Therefore, the company primarily achieves a bivalent relationship with the city hall and with many institutions in its geographical proximity. It results that most economical, social and ecological requirements the company should meet result from this geographical proximity. On the other hand, the city hall and the other institutions located in the company's proximity are also interested in the company's sustainability level. In this case, the need for the company – local community partnership occurs. Naturally, the need for partnership also acts in the sense that a company cannot design its sustainability anymore outside the local community it is part of. The company – local community partnership occupies a central position in the company's collaboration relationships.

According to Langerin (2007, p. 416-417), partnership is more than a list of objectives and procedures, it is a state of mind, a philosophy on how to do businesses with other organisations. Partnership is a form of collaboration where all participants in the partnership process are committed to prove respect and trust. Partnership requires that the parties have sufficient joint objectives that would justify a collaboration relationship. This means that the joint objectives result from the relationship with the closest partners. The company must primarily respond to the sustainable development needs of the local community they are part of. The company must know well the objectives of sustainable development of the local community.

The company's initiatives on sustainability will be included in its global strategy. That company that has good knowledge of the local community's sustainable development orientations evokes the sustainability requirements in the global strategy under the subtitle "Sustainable Development of Local Community".

Browsing the websites of some city halls (Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Pitesti, Slatina, Targu-Jiu, Timisoara) enabled us to observe that all these public institutions announce the strategy for sustainable development. The strengths of the strategy are:

- it initiates inter-institutional and inter-sectoral partnerships;
- it integrates the social, economic and territorial development aspects into the strategic approach;
- it shows a real interest for the protection of the national and cultural patrimony;
- it announces programs to train the partners in the spirit of sustainable development.

We have also identified a few weaknesses, but will only name one: A modest scientific handling, in compliance with the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21. The city hall of Slatine provides a signal with a notable scientific content about the actual implementation of the sustainable development concept. The accuracy of establishing the objectives and strategic directions is impressive. The strategy is accompanied by an action plan that provides actual actions and achievement deadlines.

The local communities and institutions interested in partnerships in the field of sustainable development, as well as the companies concerned with sustainability will gain knowledge by consulting the works of the Canadian Council of Research for Environmental Evaluation (CCREE). Using this source of documentation, we suggest that the strategy for the sustainable development of a municipality would take into account the following:

- the identification of the most appropriate principles that influence the decision-making process in the field of environmental evaluation;
- the approach of sustainable development based on combining the selected principles;
- the implementation of sustainable development at local scale;
- understanding the procedure to evaluate the environmental impacts;
- the supervision of the environmental impacts.

3. Durable development implementation at local scale

A report of CCREE, presented by Julia Garden, recommends the local communities to select 6-8 principles out of the 27 specified in the Rio Declaration (1992). The national principles are based on values and suggest purposes in the field of decision-making. They are the fundamental objectives of these evaluations, planning and management the own resources of sustainable development. The application principles describe the structure, context and process related to decision-making. Analysing the 8 principles recommended by CCREE, we consider they are a potential change in the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and ecological. Specifically, we will support that the potential change may be materialized in: a) a qualitative leap in knowing the requirements of the three dimensions of sustainable development and b) recognising the values in the evolution of the sustainable development of a local community.

The researches appeared in the Canadian literature (Dubet, 1994; Limoges 1993; Waaub, 1993; Garipey s.a., 1990) recommend two approaches of sustainable development, by combining the principles selected from the list of the Rio Declaration (1992); an approach considers the local community as a differentiated system and another a modern system.

Methodologically, the first approach consists in rejecting the obsolete research to bring the dimensions of sustainable development to a common denominator, by assigning a monetary value. By this rejection, the logic of the

action to deal with sustainable development upstream and not downstream can be reversed. The researchers Garipey, s.a (1990, p.9) say that the originality of approaching the sustainable development does not lie anymore in the nature of its (economical, social and ecological) dimensions, but rather in the strategy of examination. In its turn, Limoges (1993, p. 12) considers that monitoring the results of sustainable development is done according to the normal sequence of the current activities.

The second approach considers the local community to be a modern system. In his PhD thesis, Waaub (1993, p.21) states that a "particularity of the paradigm of sustainable development is that the system of values is specific to a given cultural and historical context". The opinion of Dubet (1994, p.42), who completes Waaub (1993), is that "sociology has a part related to evolutionism and, from this point of view, local communities have the capacity to redraw the genealogy to be ranked according to their degree of modernity".

In essence, it may be said that the two approaches are a step of investigating the sustainable development that integrates the economic, social and ecological dimensions, in their spatial combination. The dimensions of sustainable development are considered to be specific to each environmental element and closely related to the evolution in time. Thus, by their participation in the decision-making process, local communities can define better any objective of the sustainable development.

The implementation of sustainable development at local scale is based on two concepts: viable urban development and viable local development.

Viable urban development is used to distinguish the application of sustainable development from the management and arrangement of urban environments (Garipey, s.a., 1990; Gaudreau and Hamel, 1990; Richardson, 1989). Richardson (1989, p.16) defined the viable urban development as "a process of environmental transformation in order to favour the development that preserves the natural resources and promotes the health of the individuals, community and ecosystem".

The concept of viable local development makes the connections between the sustainable development and local development concepts. Gagnon (1993, p. 390) considers that "sustainable local development takes into account the differentiated action of the communities regarding the ecological resources, at the social, cultural and economical context". This means that the stake of sustainable development must be located in defending the social and cultural connections uniting the communities with the affiliation territory.

To understand the procedure of assessing the environmental impacts, we bring to attention the regulations of NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act), a US body, and those of the jurisdiction of Quebec, Canada.

In 1970, NEPA has introduced the environmental evaluation, setting the obligation for the US federal agencies to undergo the projects they undertake to an environmental evaluation process. NEPA has authorised the implementation of a procedure to evaluate the environmental impacts. After NEPA adopted this

obligation, more than 100 countries and – public and private – organisations implemented a process of environmental evaluation.

In Canada, in several jurisdictions, such as Quebec, the environmental evaluation process was integrated into the overall environmental protection regime.

In compliance with the overall environmental protection regulations established, the - public and private - promoters of activities likely to change the environment are bound to request an authorisation. In the Quebec jurisdiction, both an environmental evaluation, and an evaluation of the impacts on the environment are performed. Sadler (1999, p.15) provides the definitions of the two forms of evaluation.

“The environmental evaluation is a systematic process consisting in assessing and documenting the possibilities, capabilities and operations of the resources and natural systems in order to facilitate planning the sustainable development and decision-making, so that the negative impacts and the consequences to propose the arrangements would be provided and managed”.

"Assessing the environmental impacts is a process that consists in defining, providing, evaluating and mitigating the biophysical, social repercussions and other development projects and physical activities before the decisions and major arrangements are made”.

Regarding the two forms of evaluation, the evaluation process also refers to (André, s.a., 1999):

- “studies and strategies on the environment;
- evaluation of the strategic environment;
- evaluation of the lifecycle of materials, products and services;
- evaluation of the internal environment;
- audit of the environment”.

Supervising or monitoring the impacts on the environment is a generic terms designating several types of supervision.

“Supervision of parameters: it designates a systemic and interactive measurement of the environmental parameters that starts before achieving the project and enables their natural variation to be determined.

“Supervision of impacts: it describes the measurements performed when achieving the project in order to detect all changes caused by the project.

Supervision of compliance: it is a periodic sampling or a measurement of the results of an activity in order to verify whether the emissions are compliant with the legal provisions”.

4. Sustainable business integration to SPA company’s global strategy

The company-city hall partnership helps the company to become aware of the need to articulate the economic development in compliance with the requirements of the sustainable development mechanisms promoted by the city hall and the local community as a whole. Also, the company understands that it must move towards sustainability in business. Sustainability in business is a challenge that requires the

company's management to manifest social sustainability, to investigate the customers transversely and perform the activities so as to protect the environment.

Becoming a sustainable SPA company requires the entrepreneur or manager (in case of medical SPA) to have a strategic sustainability vision that would be reflected in the global strategy. This means a strategic thinking able to establish the bases of a fruitful partnership, materialised in a SPA company – local community collaboration project. For this purpose, the company's management is to coordinate three types of activities (Langerin, 2007, pp. 419-424):

- preliminary activities;
- implementation activities;
- monitoring activities.

The project preliminary activities refer to choosing the partners, setting up the project team and forming the group of the parties involved in the partnership project.

The project preliminary activities begin with the appointment of the project manager and forming the team. The project manager and team examine the sustainable development requirements of the local community. On this occasion, interpersonal relationships are established and a dialogue occurs between the company's representatives (manager and project team) and the personnel of the local community. As the dialogue unfolds, the collaboration, partnership intentions begin to crystallise. Also, the dialogue evolves by accumulating an experience that emerges towards the common goals.

When closing the dialogue, the managers and the members of the project team are able to suggest a list of potential partners to the company. Naturally, list of partners will be finalised by the company's manager.

The manager and the members of the project team are consulted regarding the stakeholders. This time, after an individual analysis of the proposals is done, the company's management decides on the final identification of the stakeholders involved. Moreover, it also establishes the key-parties.

Once completed, the preliminary activities prepare the transition to the implementation of the partnership project. At the stage of defining the project, the manager and the project team solve two issues:

- it determines the profile of the local community and that of how to interact with the company;
- it determines the operational profile of the company with suggestions on the procedural and structural reconfiguration of the company.

Determining the profile of the local community and that of how to interact with the company aims to ensure the identification of the sustainability aspects likely to have significant positive impact. The information collected and processed on this occasion are crystallised in aspects of sustainability with relevance for the company and stakeholders. The SWOT analysis and the performance of the research-development activity enable the company to locate the requirements of mandatory and optional feature that positively or negatively implement sustainability.

If we refer to the SWOT analysis, locating the requirements of mandatory and optional feature will intervene with a significant share in capitalizing the opportunities and limiting the manifestation of risks. By focusing the SWOT analysis on sustainability, one can also identify to what extent the company responds to the economic, social and ecological requirements. One may also identify how the company is equipped and the (financial, human and material) resources are used to meet the customers' expectations and needs.

The research-development activity provides solutions to the company in order to be more reactive, even proactive, in the case of harshening certain environmental rules and legislations. Also, the research-development activity can focus on the identification or discovery of processes, methods, materials with a positive impact on the company and its products/services.

Determining the operational profile of the company implies the analysis of the requirements of sustainable development of the local community, as well as the analysis of the internal transformations that influence the company's sustainability. Identifying the sustainability aspects by means of the two analyses is relevant both to the company and to the stakeholders.

Regarding the requirements of sustainable development of the local community, the company is interested to know the local initiatives to use the endogenous resources and, to the same extent, the external resources that intervene in changing the economic, social and ecologic. Moreover, the local community is "a territory of social education where the individuals and the community understand to achieve the changes from a multiple perspective, according to the values of the social equity, ecological prudence, culture openness...". (Gagnon and Klein, 1991, p. 242). Therefore, the information on the sustainable development of the local community thus become a key components in promoting the SPA business sustainability.

Likewise, the analysis of the internal transformations can be interested, for example, by the influences of transversality development in the procedural and structural organisation of the SPA company. In the current environment of the SPA companies, the quality and compression of time can be influence by transversality, because it provides everyone with the possibility to understand and measure their contribution with the collective effort. Transversality highlights the need to transfer the SPA business from the functional vision based on compartment. This transition leads us to a procedural and structural reconfiguration with a positive impact on the sustainability of the SPA company.

Determining the profile of the local community, of the way of company-local community interaction and of the operational profile of the company servers to create a list of sustainability aspects. The company and the stakeholders use this list in order to formulate into the global strategy the objectives regarding the sustainable development. By means of the set strategic objectives, the SPA company generates a "set of specific sustainable indicators. The presence of the set of indicators is mandatory to be able to measure the progress achieved in the

sustainable development, as well as to compare its sustainability with the sustainability of other companies” (Voita and Candea, 2010, p. 54).

The global strategy, accompanied by the action plan, is implemented or (AND) subject to supervision. Supervision serves to the purpose of internal evaluation and external evolution of the impacts of sustainability on the sustainable development of the local community. By supervision, the company supports the contribution brought to the sustainable development of the local community.

Conclusions

Sustainability aspects of a company’s business development require a correct and deep understanding of the nature of relations between the sustainable development of the local community and the sustainable development of the company. The understanding that the relationships between stakeholders and local communities should develop sustainably and the understanding that companies should develop sustainably are of the “cause-effect” type and are of paramount importance. Taking into consideration the “cause-effect” phenomenon, stakeholders will understand that the desideratum of local communities is sustainable development, and that companies are able to support local communities in achieving this desideratum if they, themselves, develop sustainably.

The tool that helps the stakeholders to achieve their common objective is the partnership. In order to have a fruitful partnership, the local community selects the most appropriate principles of the Rio Declaration and of Agenda 21. Then, it decides on an alternative of combining selected principles and creates the correct architecture of global strategy. It points out the essential parts of the main directions of sustainable development and adds these directions to its global strategy which can be found in the subheading: “Sustainable development of the local community.” Moreover, the local community supports companies interested in sustainable development by providing advisory services and training and by creating the favorable environment for the manifestation of the win-win attitude.

Each company develops its own global strategy in accordance with its strategic vision of sustainable development. To this end, it determines both the profile of the local community development and its own operational profile and it builds the local community-company partnership making procedural and structural reconfigurations that support its sustainable development and the sustainable development of the local community.

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