

2nd International Sustainability Conference



What about needs?

Operationalising the Brundtland Definition of Sustainable Development

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Content

- Motivation and aim of the presentation
- Definitions of relevant concepts
- Sustainable Development and needs
- Taking quality of life into account
- Conclusions

Hypothesis

People with an intentionally sustainable life style
tend to have a higher QOL



Operationalising Sustainable Development (SD)

- Either focussing on material requirements: maintaining physical conditions of humans and income needed to buy resources
- Or focussing on individual judgement concerning quality of life (QOL) (direct relationship between income and needs fulfilled)
 - Both have not really been successful as a paradigm on which decisions can be based
 - Could the focus on needs in connection with QOL be more appealing for policy makers and humans?

Concept of needs

- Most fundamental dimensions of human flourishing (= given end)
- Actions to fulfill them need no further reasoning
- Increase in the fulfillment is accompanied by positive emotions
- Internal driving force:
 - Non-negotiable
 - Essential for health of individual
- Needs are universal in type
- Needs are not (un) sustainable per se

Max-Neef's axiological categories (1993)

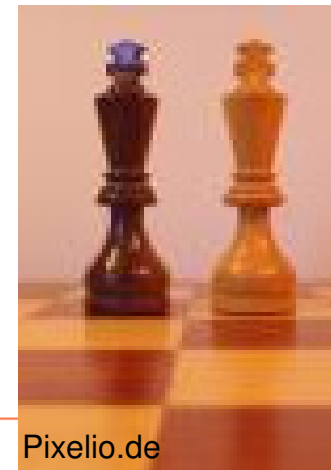
NEEDS	Being (Qualities)	Having (Things)	Doing (Actions)	Interacting (Settings)
Subsistence	Physical and mental health	Food shelter, work	Feed, clothes, rest, work	Living environment, social setting
Protection	Care, adaptability, autonomy	Social security, health systems, work	Co-operate, plan, take care of, help	Social and natural environment
Affection				
Understanding				
Participation	Receptiveness, dedication, sense of humour	Responsibilities, duties, work, rights	Cooperate, dissent, express opinions	Associations, parties, churches, neighbourhoods
Leisure				
Creation				
Identity				
Freedom	Autonomy, passion, self-esteem	Equal rights	Dissent, choose, run risks, develop awareness	anywhere

Sen's capabilities approach

Capabilities determine the **objective conditions**, i.e. resources in human, social and material capital, and the freedom to choose which needs should be fulfilled and how.

Strategies

- Strategies serve to fulfill one's needs
- They are chosen depending on values, culture, preferences, resources and chances for realisation (determine lifestyles)
- Basic (subsistence) needs: rather materialistic strategies;
- other needs: also immaterial strategies possible
- choice of strategies can lead to (un)sustainable development





Linking needs to sustainability

“Sustainable development is a development that meets the ***needs*** of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own ***needs***” (WCED, 1987)

Linking needs to sustainability

- Brundtland report
 - *Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life.*

- The needs concept within the 'Brundtland definition' is focused on basic needs which are covered in SUBSISTENCE according to Max-Neef
- But Brundtland also argues that needs fulfilment beyond subsistence should be aimed at and is possible
- Needs are not further described; no concept to work with them is given

Tensions between needs and SD

1. Intraindividual: the same strategy or set of strategies which increases SD can support needs as well as inhibit these needs for this person
2. Intragenerational (individual) vs. Intergenerational (societal) : certain strategies support caring for next generations, but inhibit individual needs
3. Intra- vs. intergenerational on the societal level or temporal tension: a certain strategy might inhibit individual or societal needs in the short term but support these needs in the long term

Governance of SD

- Problem is to find strategies that help fulfilling (part of) someone's needs without compromising other needs (of this person or others) at the same time.
- Fulfilment of individual needs is compatible with SD, if adequate strategies are chosen.
- But needs are not the leverage point for government interaction.
- Needs can **not** be allowed, forbidden or supported.
- Government can only focus on **strategies!**

The concept of Quality of Life

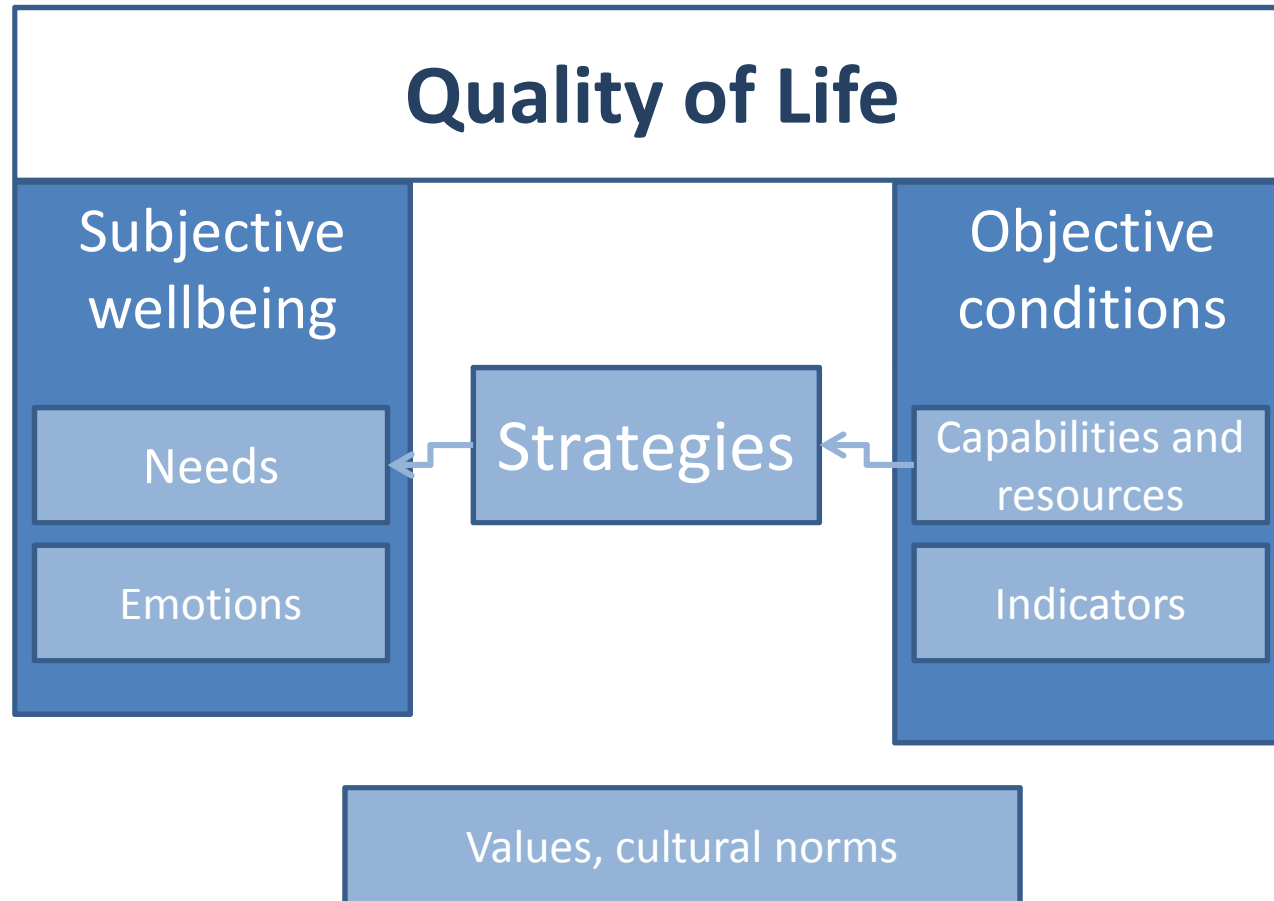
„Quality of life ...defined as subjective well-being and personal growth in a healthy and prosperous environment (Lane 1996)

Quality of Life has two determinants:

- Objective: resources and capabilities one person has to fulfill his/her needs
- Subjective: perception of the fulfillment of these needs



Needs and quality of life



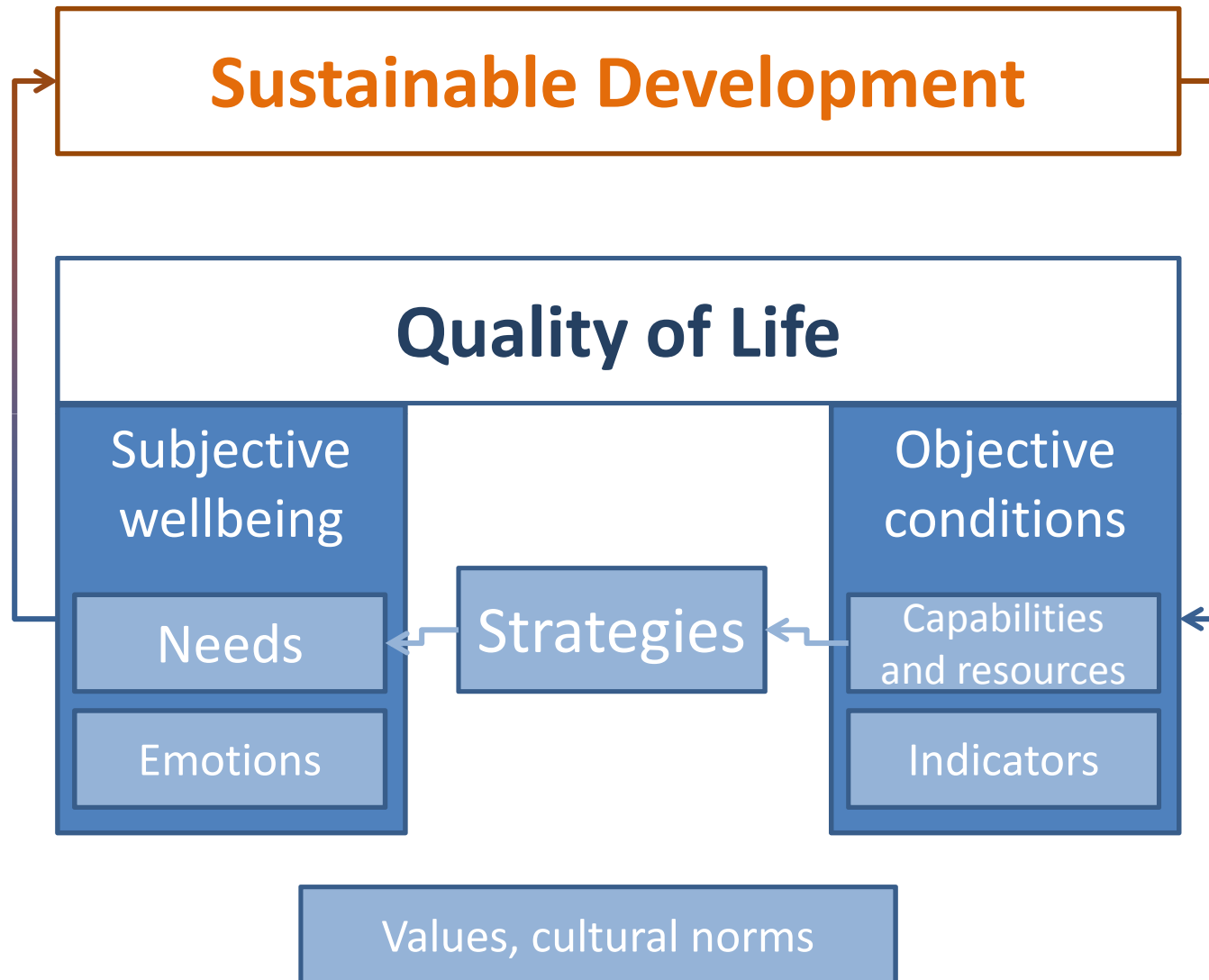
New broadened definition of SD?

Sustainable development is a development that **allows for a high quality of life** of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to **have a high quality of life as well.**

High quality of life: possibility to fulfil nine categories of needs (Max-Neef)

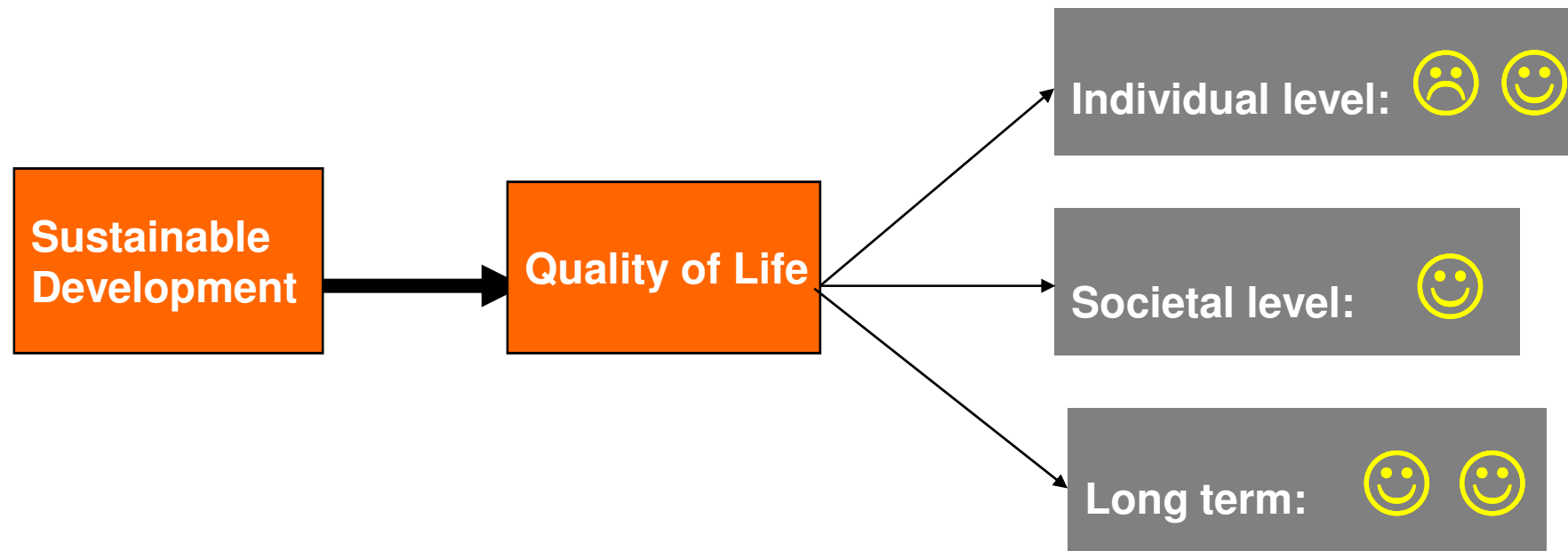
But: The desire to make people happy is maybe the most dangerous of all political ideals (Karl Popper, 1945)

Interrelations



SD conditions QOL?

If the aim is to enable high QOL for all - now and in future. Is SD the right strategy?



People with an intentionally sustainable life style tend to have a higher QOL

SD governance using QOL

- Focussing on QOL instead of needs: objective and subjective parts are included
- Focussing on frame conditions (enlarging capability space and resources) AND incentives for strategies compatible with SD
- SD can only be realised if people are also touched by it **emotionally**; this can rather be provided by needs and QOL than by operationalisations of SD so far.

Conclusions

- Good message: SD und QOL can go together
- Policy decisions can be based on QOL (objective part) and strategies
- Hypothesis to be tested in research projects: with new form of science
Mode-3 science: based on mode-2 plus emphasising subjective level (needs and emotions)



Thank you for your attention!

For paper and comments/questions:

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