



# Tackling Complex Problems with Citizens: Climate Change & Sustainable Development

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[lebensministerium.at](http://lebensministerium.at)





**Agenda 21 (UN-Summit Environment and Development 1992); Aalborg Charta (1994); EU Sustainable Development Strategy (2006)**

**Sustainable Development needs broad commitment and civic engagement to become reality!**

*“One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making.”*

**Preamble to Part III of Agenda 21**

*“Enhance the participation of citizens in decision-making.”*

**Policy guiding principle “Involvement of citizens” EU SDS**





## Sustainability engagement in Austria has many different faces

### „Top down“:

e.g.

**Local Agenda 21**

(local level),

**Stakeholder dialogues, strategies**

(national level),

**Citizens Panels**

(different levels)

**Government  
initiatives**

### „Bottum up“:

e.g.

**Initiatives of CSOs**

(World Social Forum;

Conference „Civil Society“,

NGOs)





## Dilemma of Public Participation and Sustainable Development – two ways of thinking

Participatory processes with  
an open end / open results.  
„People are able to define their  
own ways...“

versus

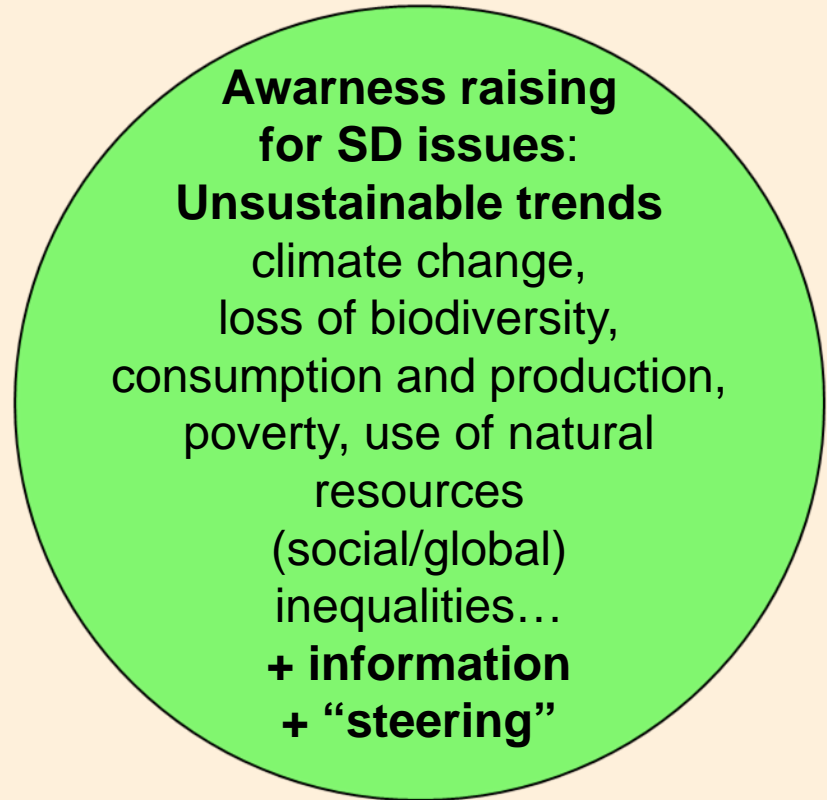
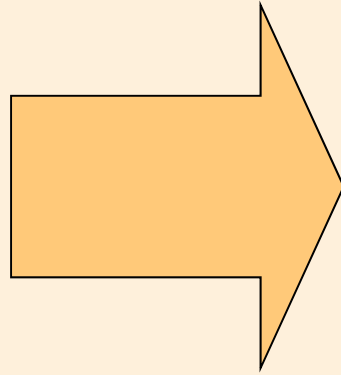
Engage people  
for the implementation of  
(existing)  
agreements on SD (Agenda 21,  
Aalborg Comitments etc.)  
with clear  
objectives...





## Practical Solutions...

People don't want to re-act and implement goals top down – they want to create their own vision, define their values and find their ways



# Austrian examples (local level): citizens engagement



## Local Agenda 21

Paths

into a sustainable future

13% of all municipalities in  
Austria

International examples: ICLEI -  
Local Governments for SD

„Energy self efficient  
municipalities“

„Climate Protection  
municipalities“  
(720)

„Energy-efficient  
municipalities“  
(57 e5)

# Austrian examples (national level)



## National Climate Change Strategy

(adaptation 2007)  
Broad consultation  
process

+

## National Climate Change Law

Planned legislative act  
(distribution of responsibilities  
national level/provinces)

„Austrian  
Forest Dialogue“  
(Stakeholder Dialogue)



# 5 success factors to enable sustainable solutions and avoid frustration in participatory processes



# Success factor 1



**Participation can not be about taking over government duties by citizens (in times of small budgets), but a mutually supportive partnership („at the same eye-level“)!**

- **Discussion about roles and attitudes (“enabling” politicians, new styles in administration, empowerment of civil society etc.)**
- **Important question: do we really really want public participation?**



## Success factor 2



**The relationship and linkages between “participatory” and representative democracy should be clear**

**What is at stake in the participatory process?**

**Who can discuss & decide about what?**

**What is the role of the elected bodies?**

**How will be decided (majority voting, consensus...)?**

**“Stop-and Go Principle” (Mäder, Vorarlberg)**



## Success factor 3



### „Expectations management“

- Discussion about different expectations and also fears (to loose control/power etc.)

**Possible expectations: “*I can realize my interests 100%.*” “*Now we can take over the power.*” “*Let the citizens work first, then we will decide what to do with the results.*” etc.**



# Success factor 4



## Feed-back and Follow-up

- **Decision of bodies of representative democracy → feed-back + good arguments, if some points have not been taken into account**
- **Information about the further proceeding, some quick results**



# Success factor 5



**Importance of design** of participatory process (including linkages): framework conditions and quality criteria

**e.g. balanced participation of people/”interests” (next generation?)**

Working Sheets with recommendations at [www.partizipation.at](http://www.partizipation.at) (in english)



# SD & Public Participation



## “Sustainability Steering”:

- Issues do mobilize people, but they are also very complex, so that people feel, they cannot do anything about it → important to bring in practical information!! People often lack information.
- Work with SD principles (like diversity, nearness...)
- Let people talk about their values or cultural patterns/habits...
- Let people elaborate their own SD-indicators
- Introduce SD-check for projects/measures
- Be careful: not too much information; “objectivity” !?
- Bring in different tool like ecological footprint
- Fun factor ! (moral, “why do we have to care?”)





## What is a good life for present and future generations?

### What is missing?

- Deliberative processes / collective “bargaining” processes (at all levels) about our goals as a society, as community
- What is important for us as society? (growth vs. quality of life)
- Involve a lot of people !!





- Public Participation Manual (2005): Promotion of participatory democracy in Austria
- Good practice and recommendations for target groups
- Also available in english [www.partizipation.at](http://www.partizipation.at) (download pdf)
- Working sheets (1-4; Strategic Group)

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ÖSTERREICHISCHE GESELLSCHAFT  
FÜR UMWELT UND TECHNIK

ÖGUT NEWS 1/2005

Die Zukunft gemeinsam gestalten

AGENDA 21

Das Handbuch  
Öffentlichkeits-  
beteiligung

In Zusammenarbeit mit:

ÖKOLOGIE INSTITUT  
für regionale Umweltbildung

Büro Arbter

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## Questions still in discussion (1): meta-level



**Does participation automatically lead to more climate change/a better environment/SD?**

**How can personal motives/interests be transformed into common goals?**

**SD questions need deliberative processes to manage trade-offs and transformation of thinking/behaviour !!!**



## Questions still in discussion (2)



**Different challenges  
at different policy  
levels  
(e.g. national level:  
dialogue with  
NGOs/resources)**

**Linkages between  
representative  
and participatory  
democracy...**





# Your success factors for public participation on the way to a sustainable development ?





**Thank you for your attention!**

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