

Sustainable Development – Some Lessons on Governance

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Introduction

South Africa is about to implement its National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) in 2010.¹ Germany's NSSD is moving into its second phase, re-adjusting its NSSD of 2002.² What lessons can be drawn from Germany's first phase on how to govern sustainable development as a national strategy? While the concrete meaning of SD in Germany in South Africa is fairly different, the lessons in governing sustainable development in Germany, and specifically how it has changed from 2002 to 2008, may be of importance for South Africa in implementing its NSSD.

The German NSSD and its review

The German NSSD is guided by four principles of sustainability:


- Generational justice
- Quality of Life
- Social Cohesion
- International Responsibility.








This principles are based on indicators, i.e. a set of quantified targets, to allow for a regular, bi-annual monitoring of success. The process of monitoring is undertaken by the German statistical office in Wiesbaden. The synthesis of this monitoring and the reporting of results is controlled by a roundtable of under-secretaries of the chancellery. A board of advisors consisting of well-known and respected public figures, e.g. representatives from the church, reaches out to all actors in society, not just government.

The German NSSD was reviewed in 2008.³ Lessons from this review may be of importance for South Africa in implementing its NSSD. Success or failure of the NSSD is judged in this review on a four grade (weather) scale:

- **Sun shine:** Target can be achieved.
- **Partly cloudy:** Could be missed by 5-20%.
- **Cloudy:** Could be missed by more than 20%.
- **Heavy rain:** Development goes into the wrong direction.

The German NSSD consists of 21 indicators. Two thirds (14 of 21) of the indicators are social or economic indicators. This demonstrates the great importance given to the social and economic dimension of sustainability in Germany. In contrast to this dominant approach I have selected eight indicators for this short review (in the following table) with a relative bias towards environmental indicators because of the special interest of today's participants in this conference.

Goal (Indicator)	Development (2002-2008)	Grade
Steady moderate growth (Per capita income)	Per capita income has been rising in real terms from 1991 to 2007 at about 23.8 %, on average nearly 2 % per annum. This can be called a steady, moderate growth. It was non-destructive in as much it was accompanied by progress in many environmental indicators.	

Kyoto-targets for climate protection	Emission of greenhouse gases decreased bei more than 20% (20.4 %) compared to 1990. The Kyoto-Targets for the 2008-2012 period will be achieved.	
Doubling the share of renewables	The share of renewables rose from 2002 to 2007 from 2.1 % auf 6.7 %. The target of 2002 – to double the share of renewables in both primary energy use and electricity production has been surpassed.	
Doubling resource productivity	Resource productivity – a measure of usage of all non-biotic material including imported goods – did not constantly move into the right direction and is far from being in line with the projected goal of doubling by 2020 if not additional measures will be taken.	
Increasing ODA to 0.51% of GNP in 2010 and 0.7 % in 2015	Official development aid did increase from 0.31 % of Gross National Product (GNP) to 0.37% (by almost 20%) but is not on the way to reach the interim target of 0.51% in next year and 0.7 % in 2015. Additional measures will have to be taken.	
Balanced budget	The national budget deficit seems on after hefty brak out following the German reunification (and the consequent period of high unemployment in the mid-ninteies and then again in the early 2000 period. In 2007 it was the first year to have a positive balance of public finance, i.e. cut back in debt, but this could not be sustained in the last two years in the face of the financial crisis.	
Full-time schooling	Full-time schooling is an important measure to increase chances for women to participate in formal employment and seen as a key to also change the current trend of a decreasing birth rate. It shall achieve 60% in 2020, while pre-school nursery shall be 35% in 2020. Especially the kindergarten-goal has been strongly missed, mainly do to the fact that the enforcement of pertinent policies lies with the communal level where it faced serious difficulties in implementation.	
Limiting the usage of virgin land for urban development to 30 ha/day by 2020	Similarly the enforcement of the 30ha-Goal was left to the local and regional level, and failed because of exactly this split responsibility between different levels of governance. The daily “land consumption” did not significantly decrease in the last decade and is far from meeting the target level (106 ha/day in 2008).	

Some lessons on governance

Overall, the results of the 2002 strategy are mixed: Relative success on the side of energy and climate protection; relative disappointment in the field of social sustainability and developments which are enforced at the sub-national level. These deficits were acknowledged in the 2008 audit of the sustainability strategy. A major recommendation from this review is to strengthen the “management of sustainability” by legal and organizational measures, and additional policies and measures where target failure was indicated. A major innovation in regulation is the introduction of Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) for federal laws and regulations. Additional Policies and Measures were introduced in fields where targets were underdemanding (i.e., in the cases of climate protection and the desired share of renewable energy). Cornerstone new regulation is the so-called 20-20-20 rule - the EU’s integrated energy and climate policy program towards 2020. It pushes for

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- a reduction of climate gases minimally by 20% (in fact 30% are promised if all major economies agree to cut greenhouses gases by 2050 in half at COP15 in Kopenhagen)
- a 20% share of renewables in primary energy and electricity production
- a 20% increase in energy efficiency, mainly achieved by new codes for buildings and product standards, the so called eco-design directive.

To meet the targets for ODA, new ODA programs of 3 billion Euro per year were released and Germany played a constructive role in G8 negotiations on international debt relief in Gleneagles and Heiligendamm. To decrease land consumption, sustainability impact assessment is made mandatory in communal land zoning and regional planning. Federal tax incentives for building new homes (on 'greenfields') were cut to zero, too. Others measures were taken to counteract the stated deficits. The list would be too extensive to be explained in this place.

These examples are to show that reporting of failures to meet quantified goals resulted in concrete legal and economic responses by the federal government under the German NSSD. My conclusion in looking at the results from six years of NSSD in Germany therefore is: Effective national SD policy needs quantified targets, appropriate economic framework conditions (undistorted prices in as much as they are possible), stronger „management tools“ (such as SIAs at different levels), coherent multi-level governance and a powerful, central institutionalisation – best located at the chancellery.

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¹ Sustainable Development. South Africa's National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2006)

² Perspektiven für Deutschland. Unsere Strategie für eine Nachhaltige Entwicklung (2002), <http://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/en/home/>

³ Björn Stigson (Chair of the Peer) (2009), Sustainable Development in Germany - Conclusions from the Peer Review of Sustainable Development policies in Germany, 9th Annual Conference of the German Council for Sustainable Development, Berlin 11/23/2009.