

Principles of sustainable development

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Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development

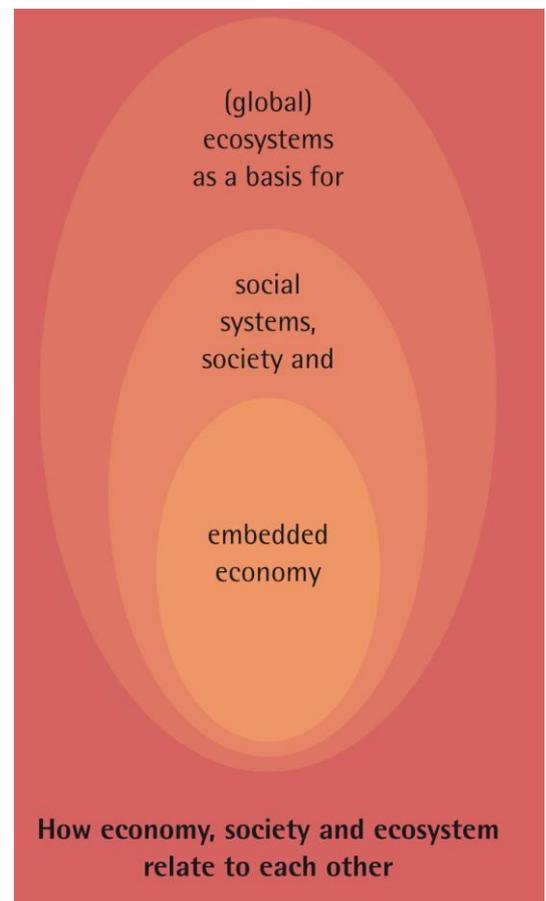
Preamble

We, the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (HNE Eberswalde), define sustainable development as an overall concept under which human life and economic activity do crucially depend on the viability of the global ecosystem. The 'green thread' already devised on reestablishment of the University in 1992 led the path to the University's current motto *Working with Nature, Sustaining Humanity* which emerged from a conceptual discourse around the turn of the millenium. It spells out that, from our point of view, economic and social sustainability can only be achieved if society respects the functionality and capacity of ecosystems and is shaped in line with our planet's natural conditions.

In order to preserve the means of livelihood for plants, animals and human beings, economy has to be embedded into that system (Fig. 1). A sustainable economy will therefore providently economise on resources, take responsibility for possible encroachments on nature and be caring and future-oriented in its approach to the people without whom commercial activity is not possible. This understanding is based on the insight that a bare focus on growth, even when aligned with ecological and social issues, cannot provide for our future.

Ecosystems and societies are complex systems that evolve independently while constantly influencing each other. Sustainable development must employ the precautionary principle to keep ecological and social systems working and capable of development so as to make them resilient to interference and change over the long term and avoid undesirable side-effects. Within these limits, development opportunities must be secured and equitably allocated to the people of this and following generations. We at HNE Eberswalde take the view that education and participation are at the very core of sustainable development processes. Our name, 'University for Sustainable Development', is both an incentive and an obligation to our staff to devise and purposefully promote specific fields of action for sustainable development within the scope of our activities.

The following principles were conceived and worked out in close cooperation with all the University's institutions by a round table on sustainable development at HNEE, an overall and self-governed initiative. After widespread discussion they were approved by the senate on 13 February 2013.



HNEE acknowledges its responsibility towards its students, employees and cooperation partners, as well as business, society and nature, to teach, study and put into practice specific plans for sustainable action. This involves

- thinking and acting on a long-term basis as a principle governing all our activities,
- using natural resources carefully and economically,
- cultivating a caring approach to human interaction and making justice and equity our standards of acting,
- deliberating and communicating our own development in the process of establishing sustainability.

These principles shall guide the actions of all our University's students and employees in their own interaction and when collaborating with partners outside the University. Providing conditions as stated below will motivate our staff to get involved personally and initiate a collective process of learning on the path to sustainability. All goals described in the following are to be achieved by the University over the short, medium or long term by its own independent action.

I. "We at HNE"

Promoting sustainable development and organisation within the University

We facilitate sustainable development at the University within the sphere of influence we command and according to approved scientific and social standards. This involves the following issues:

1. Sustainability in studying and research

Our principal duty is to educate committed people who contribute to sustainable development in their professional and social lives. We therefore seek to impart outstanding technical and methodical qualifications to our future graduates, integrating aspects of sustainability as a matter of course. This applies to research at the University as well, where the accent is on sound, solution-oriented programmes.

Sustainability in studying and research implies, for instance,

- to continue and develop the transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary Sustainability Lecture for all first-semester students.
- to anchor the concept of sustainability to all study courses, making it subject to technical in-depth discussion while maintaining a strong relation to practice and taking into account the results of international sustainability research.
- to develop more study topics aimed at provoking discussion on students' and teachers' responsibility for sustainable development. This implies promoting sustainable ways of studying, offering ethical and political education and discussing innovative approaches and concepts of thinking.
- to aim for a comprehensive character education and teach organisational competence so as to enable students to actively and committedly shape our future in a sustainable way.
- to ensure the future viability of our degrees and courses in close cooperation with prospective employers and according to their requirements.
- to establish a strong relation to sustainability in research by systematically imparting information and offering consultancy
- to foster a cross-department and transdisciplinary exchange on sustainability research.
- to strive for a holistic and differentiated view on social issues in research and teaching, using eco-balances and similar methods.

2. Environmental and sustainability management at the University

Our university uses an environmental management system which is continually being improved and complies with the EMAS certification standard. Our goals comprise

- to ecologically optimise workflows involving the use of raw materials and energy and avoid externalisation of environmental costs to other regions.
- to improve resource efficiency by comprehensively and responsibly using renewable energies. Our long-term goal is a 100% heat and electricity supply to all our premises from renewable sources, preferably of local or regional origin and from ecologically sustainable production.
- to avoid waste and pollution of water, soil and air.
- to make HNEE a carbon neutral university, measured by emission balance and effective compensation of emissions.
- to devise strategies and solutions and discuss projects and methods of environmental and sustainability management in class.
- to seek for broad participation of students and employees in the process of improvement.

3. Sustainability in social and professional life

Our University aims to offer equal studying and working opportunities to every person, regardless of their background, gender or possible impairment. We strive for the well-being of our students and employees with a focus on reconciling academic, professional and personal life. We take a respectful view on human resources. The university's managing body does actively promote the career advancement of HNEE's employees in the teaching, research and administrative sectors. This is to be accomplished by

- devising and implementing a well-structured human resource development plan with the accent on professional training and qualification, including regular appraisal interviews and vocational training offers, within the conditions set by our status as a state-owned university.
- actively promoting scientific career opportunities by means of mentoring and tutoring programmes for undergraduates, graduates and non-professorial teachers.
- establishing a culture of appreciativeness and critical discussion by recognising effort and promoting commitment and participation.
- offering opportunities for students to participate in the University's activities and stimulating commitment across departments.
- evaluating and developing activities and opportunities aimed at reconciling studies and work, respectively, with family life.
- conceiving and implementing health promotion and prophylaxis programmes for staff members of the University.
- implementation of an equal-opportunities programme which will evolve into a diversity management programme for the University.
- improving accessibility by means of information and raising awareness among staff members.
- providing information geared to possible target groups about the range of consulting and other services offered by the university.
- ensuring efficiency in the work of the University's advisory bodies as forums for discussion, exchange and decision-making.

4. Communication and documentation

We are creating and optimising structures suited to anchoring the concept of sustainability in the minds of all our staff members. This implies

- documentation of our development towards sustainability in the course of reporting as already required. This may take the shape of a dedicated sustainability report.
- participation of the University staff, for example through the HNEE round table on sustainable development, in shaping our understanding of sustainability, making us a learning organisation.
- actively communicating sustainable development at HNEE to our partners and the general public.
- advising newly recruited staff and newly enrolled students on these sustainability principles and how to integrate them into their activities at the University.
- using the EMMA campus management system to align administrative acts with the needs of those involved or affected and increase transparency of these processes.

II. “Acting in public”

Promoting sustainable development in society, from the local to the global scale

We are aware that sustainable development at HNE will affect society on a regional and global scale both directly and indirectly.

1. Setting examples by acting sustainably

The University, as a scientific facility in the public sector, is both willing and obliged to set examples of sustainability. This naturally requires that HNEE comply with its own standards of sustainable development. Sustainability in our consumption and use of resources is especially important in this context, affecting the following spheres of activity:

- environmental management and sustainable operation of the University,
- intensified cooperation with the 'Studentenwerk' student union in order to establish sustainably operated cafeterias,
- financial transactions, where banks committed to sustainability are to be preferred as far as possible for a state-owned facility. We shall communicate this preference also in our dealings with the state of Brandenburg.

2. Regional and global networking

The University sees itself acting in a local, regional, national and global context. Our goal is to enable our graduates and employees to carry on the idea of sustainability beyond the University and to live up to it in society. Our numerous cooperations with regional partners, national and international networks and the principle of integrating the findings of international research must be extended and furthered so as to promote sustainable development. We offer spaces for discussion to civil initiatives related to sustainability.

III. "Together" Learning and shaping sustainability

We think of sustainable development as a collective process of learning and shaping things which can only be successful in an organisation like ours if many of our employees take part in it, as well as partners from outside. We therefore invite all interested parties to submit their suggestions, proposals and criticism concerning sustainable development at the University in a constructive way and to take part in the shaping of these principles. These principles of sustainability shall be reconsidered and revised on a regular basis and in case of demand.

