



Criteria for Sustainable Development Research

•Overview

- Why criteria are needed
- Characteristics of SDR
- First Conclusions for criteria formulating
- Starting points for defining discrimination criteria
- Starting points for defining evaluation criteria

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Criteria for Sustainable Development Research (SDR) – What For? (1)

Why criteria for SDR are needed

- Discrimination of SDR projects
- Evaluation of quality of SDR projects

Who will need criteria for SDR

- Researchers
 - Building an appropriate research team (scientifically and organisationally), including selecting partners from practice
 - Choice of appropriate theoretical approaches and methods
- Administrators and external evaluators
 - Choice of indicators (quantitative and qualitative), e.g. for specific working programmes and calls for proposals
 - Transparency of decision-making in the awarding of contracts and funds



Criteria for Sustainable Development Research (SDR) – What For? (2)

- Policy makers / stakeholders in the field of research policy
 - Definition of research funding strategies and objectives
 - Decision about the right choice of instruments in achieving the objectives of a innovative funding strategy (national, EU level)
 - Review of achievement of objectives



Characteristics of SDR (1)

So now the question is what characterize SDR as opposed to other types of research (as...)

Basic prerequisites

- Analysing processes, not isolated phenomena
- Analysing with respect to decision making processes and arrangements
- Differentiate between the normative, analytic and strategic dimensions of sustainability issues
- Differentiate between the form of Knowledge, which mainly is achieved: orientation knowledge, system knowledge and transformation knowledge



Characteristics of SDR (2)

Specific Research Domain

- Long term analysis of the relationships between people and their natural and social environment at different spatial levels
- ⇒ Specific scientific challenges
- Analysing nature-society systems
 - Problem of scale (long-term environmental effects – short-term decision making processes; interconnectedness of global, regional and local aspects) of a given problemdynamic
 - And with respect to the normativ dimension: bringing together objectives for inter- and intra-generational justice



Characteristics of SDR (3)

New Research Type, which can be identified by an orientation towards

- Oriented towards problem solving
- Oriented towards different actor perspectives
- Oriented towards transdisciplinary cooperation with respect to the latter means
 - Integration of disciplinary generated knowledge
 - Integration of scientific and lay knowledge



Characteristics of SDR (4)

Specific Organisation of Research processes

- Continuity between knowledge production and action: taking into account intermediate results as well as final outcomes
- Managing asymmetries between partners and power relationships (in the realm of science and of society) by appropriate working settings
- Focus on the transferability of results and ending the collaborative operation – no creation of clients



First Conclusion (1)

Sustainable Development Research (SDR) is close to Mode 2 Research:

- Focused on application context
- Dealing with heterogeneous / high diverse cognitive and organisational setting
- Investigating hybrid objects
- Providing for social accountability
- and maintenance for reflexivity

SDR is also characterized by elements which normally are associated with Mode 1 Research:

- Depends on a theoretical description
- Needs innovative disciplinary knowledge generation process
- Is influenced by the chosen observer position



First Conclusion (2)

No universally valid criteria set

- Specific criteria sets are needed
 - Depending on the given project type (from strong application oriented to fundamental research project type)
 - Depending on chosen problem / topic selection
 - Depending on chosen type of integration, which ist achieved
 - Depending on user / or practical partners needs and interests



Starting points for defining discrimination criteria (1)

First I pointed out why C.are needed, then a gave some characteristics of SDR and drew some conclusions from this. Now I will look for some starting points to go further-

And to do so I will use the characteristics of SDR Research type.

Problem orientation

- Beginning of the research project from a societal problem perspective?
- Constructing a common shared interdisciplinary research object

Actor orientation

- Assessment of everyday-life consequences of problem solutions are needed (e.g. Gender dimension is taken into account)
- Social and cultural differences have to be taken into account (e.g. identifying different lifestyle-groups, ore the valuation of socio-demographic indicators)
- Target-group specific strategies and mesures must be worked out



Starting points for defining discrimination criteria (2)

Integration orientation

- Defining an appropriate integration concept
- Making the grade of integration explicit ((with respect to a (multi-) disciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary level)

Organisation of the research process

Planning and implementing an organisation structure are highly important for an successful SDR

- Is not only a matter of project outcome but of project planning and project realisation as well
- Taking different scientific careers, cultural backgrounds and institutional interests into account



Starting points for defining evaluation criteria (1)

Problem orientation

- Criteria are needed to assess the quality of the scientific reformulation of the societal / practical problem, which the project started from
- Criteria are needed as well to assess the practical relevance of the interdisciplinary research object for the project progress

Actor orientation

- This means to assess the suitability for practical implementation of problem-solutions by partners
- And to evaluate the appropriateness of the combination of practice partners and the focused type of knowledge, which it achieved



Starting points for defining evaluation criteria (2)

Integration orientation

- Criteria are needed to determine to what extent integration has been achieved, and how relevant the new generated “integrated” knowledge is (the famous question for the “value-added” of inter- and transdisciplinary integration)
- Criteria are needed to evaluate to what extent cross-disciplinary quality assurance has been established
- And to determine to what extent foresight approaches are used (not only reactive approaches)

Organisation of the research process

- To determine how well a shared mission statement has been formulated
- ... how well the research team has been balanced
- and evaluation criteria are needed to determine how well feedback-loops have been implemented.