



Inaugural lecture

(Non)sustainability of sustainability – a
critical analysis of the concept of
sustainable development

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WHERE DOES THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COME FROM?

Understanding the achievement of sustainable development as a global project is first and foremost a cognitive issue and then a question of values and education. (Lay, 1998)



THE USE OF THE TERM

...The divergence is related to normatively charged concepts such as 'freedom,' 'justice,' and 'democracy' and is so great that it can prevent the implementation of these concepts." (Waas, 2011).

“...Sustainable development has no cause for celebration; with its ubiquity in the 21st century, it has become a political slogan and a kind of larpurartist mantra." (Šimleša, 2010).

THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1

Extremely frequently used term

2

5.2 million results in
Croatian alone in (0.44
seconds)

3

Sustainable development –
about 682,000,000 results
(0.63 seconds)

4

„...In just 50 years, it has evolved
from an alternative worldview to a
widely accepted and politically
supported development agenda “
(Waas et al.,2011: 1641).

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE USE OF THE TERM



The term was first used by **Barbara Ward** at a conference on economic development in **1969**.

The report ***Our Common Future*** (1987.) published by the **World Commission on Environment and Development** defines it as:
“meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

After *the World Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992*, it became part of everyday and daily politics.

In the early days of mass use (**after Rio 1992**), the phrase referred exclusively to the ecological dimension and did not take account of social and economic circumstances.

“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

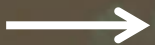
The concept of needs

the basis for intragenerational equality

The concept of constraints

the basis for intergenerational quality.

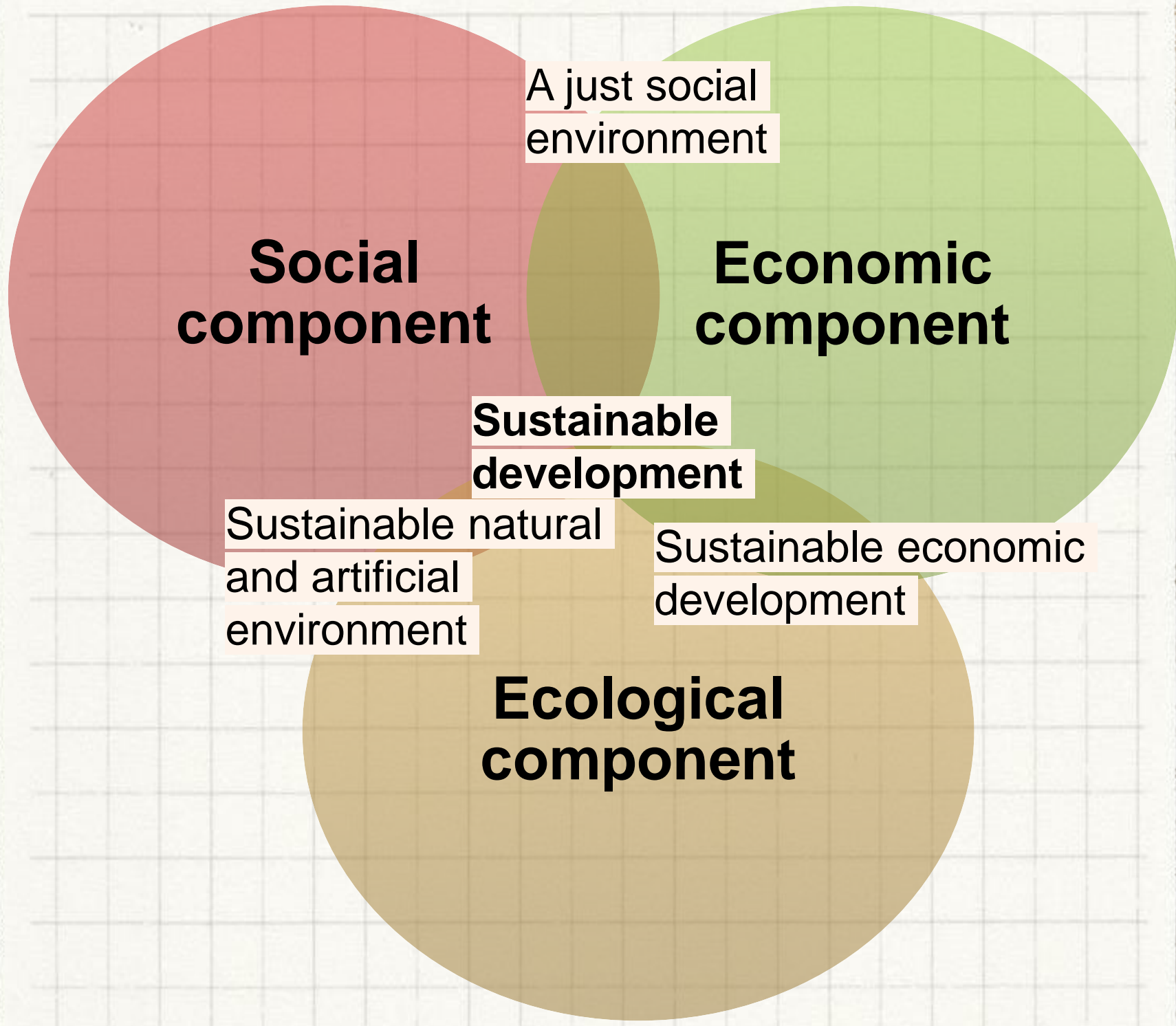
WHERE DO WE STAND TODAY?



WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?



HOW DO WE GET THERE?





Today, it is a „high quota, a guiding idea, a mega-goal or the prevailing concept that is assigned a mediating role between economics and environmental protection, so we can conclude that „sustainability is a process, not a goal, and sustainable development is an approach to this process.”
Simleša, 2003

„The past is what acts as a warning; the future must oppose it. Therefore, the focus on sustainability is considered a "capability for the future."
Altner, 1996

„It is a projective way of thinking, based on a value as a starting point and the first germs of action”
Lay, 2007

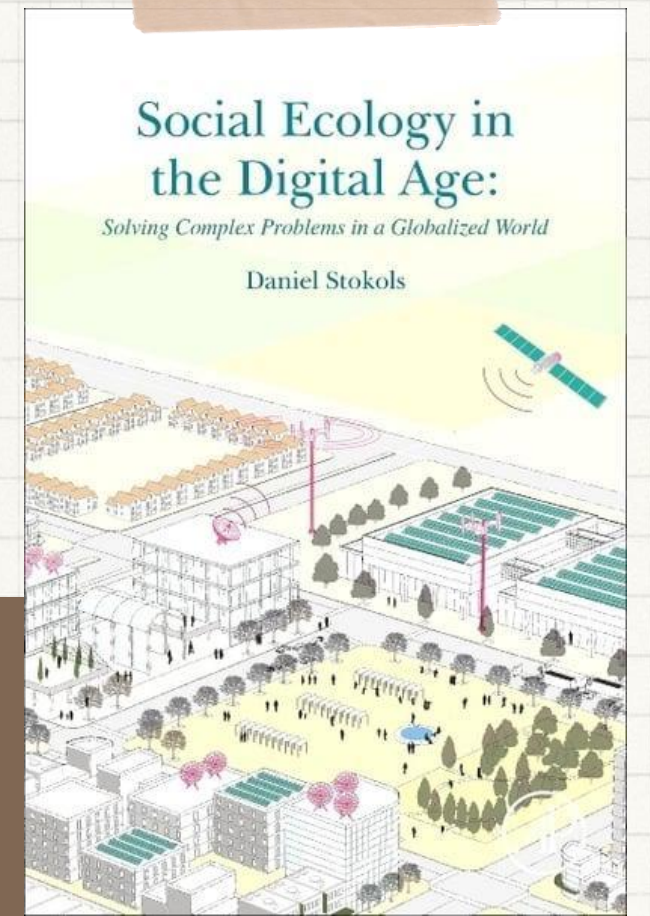
„ ...The global concept of sustainable development problematizes the concepts of carrying capacity, endangered equilibrium, balance, system overload, and the elements of operationalization of comprehensiveness, globality, integrity, and interconnectedness. It problematizes how sociology, as one of the modern applied social disciplines, can be usefully integrated into such a concept.”
Čaldarović, 1993



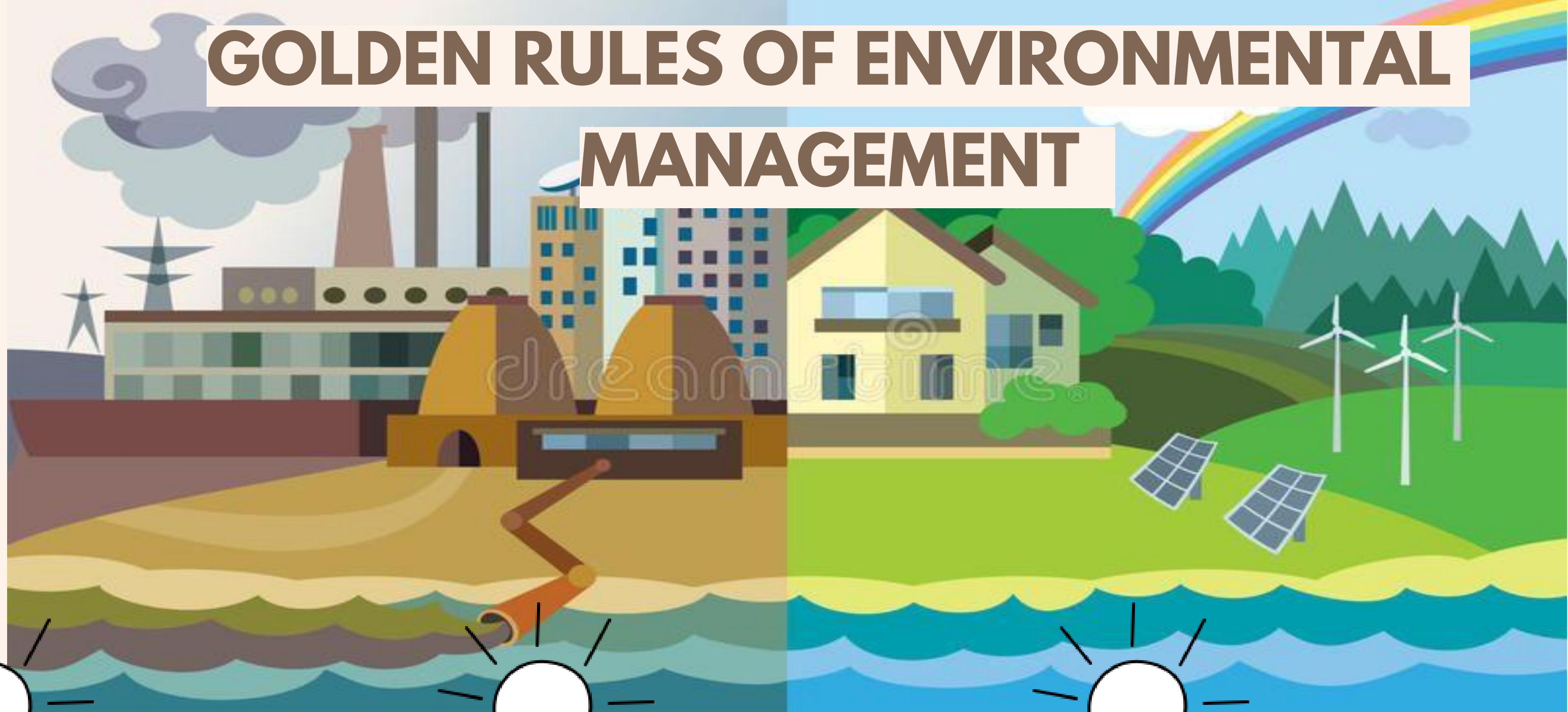
TARGETS & PRIORITIES:

- SOCIAL INCLUSION
- JUSTICE
- EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

- ECOLOGICAL
- ECONOMIC
- SOCIO-CULTURAL
- POLITICAL



GOLDEN RULES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT



Non-renewable resources should only be used to the extent that they can be replaced by renewable substitutes (substitution rule);

The amount of renewable resources should not exceed the limit of their renewability (reduction rule)

The emission of pollutants should not exceed the absorption capacity of the environment (assimilation rule)

THE REALTIONSHIP BETWEEN ECOLOGY AND BUSINESS



Anti-green paradigm (status quo, open conflict)

The green-wash paradigm (hypocritical corporate attitude towards the environment – polluters promote sustainability)

The green state paradigm (true coexistence of business and the environment)





CRITIQUE:

- ❖ In itself, this seems to be a contradiction, because logically something cannot be maintained and developed at the same time, and some authors have even stated that sustainable development is a 'wooden iron' or measures the 'squaring of the circle'. Šimleša (2010) considers this criticism of sustainable development to be 'the silliest and most stupid of all'.
- ❖ A concept that everyone verbally agrees on but none of those who should be the agents of change have either the interest or the political power to do so. (Pravdić, 2002)
- ❖ The so-called 'greening' of the economy, which often accompanies the rhetoric of sustainable development, has become a profitable political and commercial strategy to address the degradation of the world's ecology. 'Damage'. (Van Loon, 2003)
- ❖ 17 proposed targets and 169 sub-targets are 'pure fantasy' and 'chaos' (The Economist, 2015)



A look in the future

The scientific community and much of the public agree that one should live in harmony with nature, and the concept of sustainable development in this regard has proven key to achieving the goal of such coexistence in this regard. But whether it is successful, and whether it can be successful, remains questionable.

The idea of continuous development and progress is intrinsic to our civilisation and to the historical moment in which we live, even if its inner logic is currently and to a marked degree being questioned.

Our vision of development focuses on the children of the future, the heirs of our legacy. And the young generation is everywhere the hope of the older generations.“

(de Haan, 1995)

CURRENT STATE

Zagreb

- Quality of life
- Municipal economy
- Urban infrastructure

Croatia

- Normative-Legal level
- Value & Plans level
- Symbolic & Strategic level

World

- Exercise of fundamental human rights
- Balance of ecosystems
- Survival of civilization

- Doing the opposite of everything we have done so far...
- Understanding society and social relations on the basis of social facts and organic solidarity.
- Integrativity, pluriperspectivity, transdisciplinarity and universal socially responsible action based on orientational knowledge, ethics of economic responsibility, ethics of nature and ethics of the child.
- Pillars of the new paradigm:
 - Honest dialogue, open public debate, inclusivity and social justice (true public sphere).
 - Local, national and global consensus on important goals (integrative bioethics).
 - Peaceful replacement of kleptocracy and kakistocracy by a new democracy (new constructivism)

A NEW PARADIGM?

