

SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY FOR A MORE RESILIENT STATE BORDER GUARD ORGANIZATION

Valdis Jukšs

Daugavpils University, Latvia

Dzintra Iliško

Daugavpils University, Latvia

Jeļena Badjanova

Daugavpils University, Latvia

Abstract. *In line with the EU2020 strategy, sustainable development has been a high priority in the EU. Implementing a sustainable strategy in any organization is a complex, value-based multi-dimensional process where sustainability is translated and adapted in the regional context. Implementation of a sustainability strategy requires defining a vision, developing sustainable strategies, assessing the current state of arts, monitoring the process and providing the platform for all actors involved to implement the vision.*

The aim of the article is to offer a conceptual basis for building a sustainable strategy in the state border guard organization. This involves rethinking, repositioning the current strategy and formulating a future-oriented perspective in order to enhance awareness of the complexity, accept the dynamic nature of corporate sustainability and to adopt a proactive behavior towards sustainability issues. The paper presents a case study on challenges that the State Border Guard organization is facing for implementing a sustainability strategy. The research study presents a qualitative study for a deeper understanding of the process of conceptualizing and implementing a sustainability strategy in Latgale region. The methodology employed in the study is semi-structured interviews with the representatives of administration on the process and the challenges of implementing sustainability strategy.

Keywords: *corporate sustainability, multiple stakeholders, resilience, sustainability strategy*

Introduction

Developing a sustainable and a long term strategy is not anymore an option but an imperative of strategic planning in any sphere of life. In a contemporary world of military and religious conflicts, this is particularly important to plan strategically and with a sustainable mission in mind. Sustainability as a strategy goes beyond the environmental aspects and presents a holistic vision, including political, culture, economic and social aspects of an organization (Blackburn, 2007). The world has changed immensely during the last fifty years and any organization cannot stay any longer as a closed system. It must be seen as an open and dynamic system that is resilient to many disruptions from the outside world.

It needs to adapt a long-term strategy and effective balance between security and environmental and societal requirements (Hartman, Butts, Bankus, & Carney, 2012). Sustainability strategy sets long-term goals for building a safe and sustainable world. Sustainability is a management approach with its system framework focused on the wise use of resources and socially responsible action (UN, 2015). Sustainability vision requires fostering on sustainability ethics, innovations, thus enhancing well-being for all. *The Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development* (2015) serves as a comprehensive framework to reach a better world for everyone and provokes a paradigm shift providing a space for a system change in an organization. The following section of the paper outlines a conceptual framework for implementing a sustainability strategy in the State Border Guard organization.

The aim of the article is to offer a conceptual basis for building a sustainable strategy in the state border guard organization and to explore the process of implementing the sustainability strategy in practice. The methodology employed in the study is semi-structured interviews with the representatives of administration on the process and the challenges of implementing sustainability strategy.

Towards a Sustainability Strategy

Sustainability thinking has become an emergent transdisciplinary paradigm in sustainability science research (Keys, Huemann, & Turner, 2014). This involves complex thinking, new methods in dealings with new emerging problems, and a new ecological understanding of the world order. Ecological understanding presents a worldview of a sustainable balance between various subsystems. Leaders within the organization serve as forces that encourage innovation, continuous improvement and diversity that brings along choice, resilience, and sustainability (Fenton, 2016). Another characteristic of an organization as a living system is the coevolution of interdependent units of the organization. The environment of an organization becomes increasingly dynamic and complex and requires co-evolutionary relationships, characterized by reciprocity, simultaneity, adaptability, boundary spanning and permanence (Werbach, 2009).

An authentic strategic vision involves formulating core values, dedication, challenges, inspiration, organizations' mission, vision, and strategies, as well as a procedure and criteria for measuring progress (Stead & Stead, 2014).

Instead of embracing sustainability as a piecemeal approach, this requires adopting a holistic view of sustainability and making it an integral component of an organization's strategy (Lowitt, 2011). Implementing sustainability strategy requires considering its rich complexity, transdisciplinary context, value bases,

and ambiguity of the sustainability term. The sustainable strategy requires the adaptive capability of an organization to engage diverse groups of stakeholders in a long-term planning process. The sustainable strategy requires developing a shared purpose and values (Fiksel, Eason, & Frederickson, 2012). As (Sivius & Tharp, 2013, 34) reported, formulation of a strategy requires “strategic ambidexterity - alignment and emergence” (Leff, 2014, p. 9). A new sustainability paradigm involves complex thinking about “the interrelatedness of ontological and epistemological order” and changes of meanings and priorities (Leff, 2014, p. 9). Building a sustainability strategy also involves creativity in thinking, innovative knowledge, and sociological imagination (Leff, 2014).

Dealing with a Complexity as a Current State of Arts

Complexity has no rigorous definition. It can be better described by a holistic nature of the term that cannot be reduced to separate parts (Holland, 2014). Complexity thinking was developed in many areas, such as systems theory, chaos theory, and nonlinear dynamics to name but few. The transdisciplinary character of complexity thinking also makes it difficult to provide any specific definition (Davis & Sumara, 2014). Complexity theory seeks to understand how order and chaos arise from the interaction of many components of the system where new properties emerge in the adaptive interaction chains and adaptive orientations of a system (Masson, 2008). Complexity theory is a theory of change, evaluation and adaptation (Waldrop, 1992).

The State Border Guard organization being a typical hierarchical organization can be viewed as a complex system where emergent properties of the system are consistent with the existing properties at lower levels and are ambiguously bond to a closer surrounding and a community. The State Border Guard organization being organizationally closed and stable, maintain a stable equilibrium, and its organizational patterns endure when the organization has to encounter the diverse dynamic contexts (Davis & Sumara, 2014). The organization itself is a nested system composed of many units and subunits and interdependencies (See Figure 1)

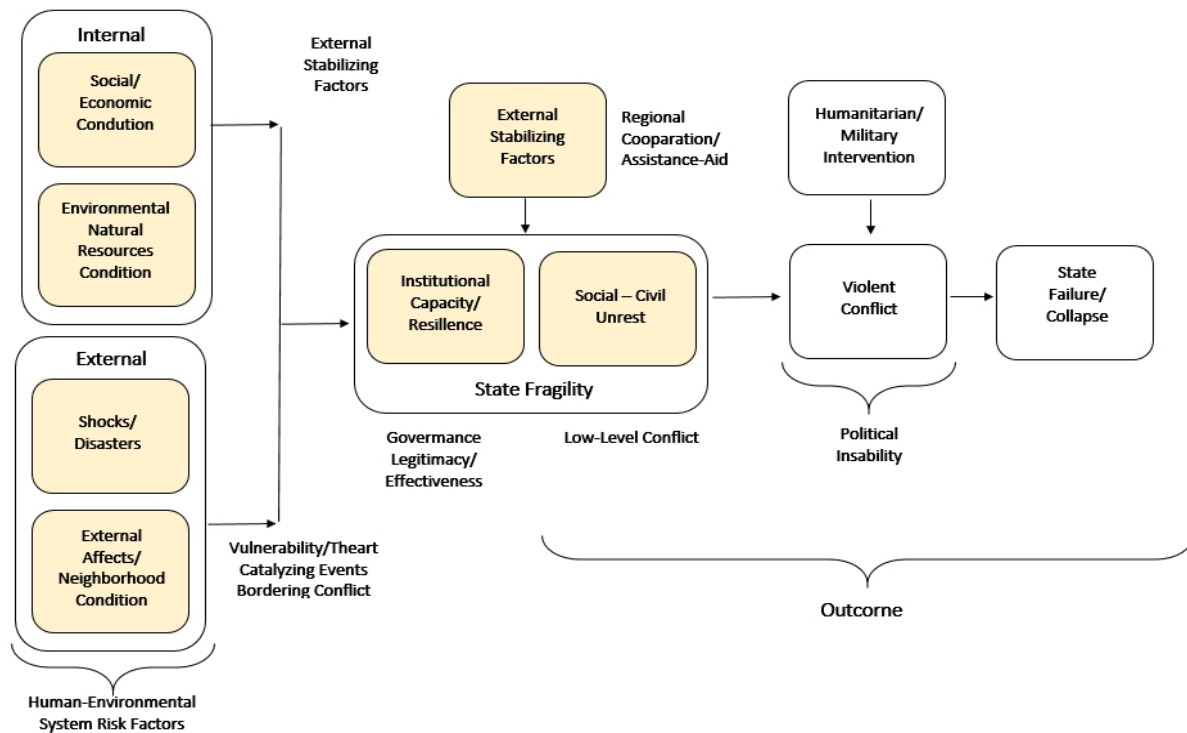


Figure 1 Complexity of Functionality of the State Border Organization
(adopted from Hartman et al., 2012)

As a complex system, it is a self-organizing system where any small changes produce bigger changes caused by the adaptive interactions. As a complex system, it is a self-organizing system that adaptive and actively responds to new challenges and threats and brings order in the preliminary chaos (Stacey, Griffin, & Shaw, 2000).

Building Resilience of the State Border Guard Organization

Any organization needs to develop resilience and to constantly adapt to the challenges of globalization and technological advancements. In order to stay efficient in a constantly changing environment, the State Border Guard organization needs to develop its resilience to outside pressures and challenges. Resilience is a key component in the sustainability strategy of an organization. In a complex and a globalized world, the State Border Guard organization needs to deal with a number of disruptions coming both from inside and outside. The vision of the State Border Guard organization is to ensure the safeguarding of the borders more often under uncertain, ever-changing and dynamic conditions. This requires adaptive management strategies, resilient capabilities in building teamwork, ability to act in the situation of unforeseen disruptions and in mastering competence. Resilience expands from protecting territory against specific threats to flexibility and proactive action. Fostering adaptability is a part of the

sustainability strategy in a response to disruptions from outside. The organization needs to be able to adapt to uncertain and changing conditions.

Expanding Collaboration with Multiple Stakeholders

Expanding collaboration means involving multiple stakeholders, such as NGOs, academia, government, organizations, and a community in order to foster sustainable and resilient communities. This requires a detailed analysis of local challenges and needs. In line with the UN agenda 2030 (UN, 2015), the organization intends to act in a collaborative partnership in building the world in a more sustainable and resilient way. Seventeen sustainable development goals also demonstrate the ambition of the UN associated countries in envisioning a just, tolerant and safe world in their shared commitment and collaboration.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of this research study, the authors have applied a qualitative research methodology to understand the process of implementing a sustainability strategy for the State Border Guard organization. The qualitative analyses were undertaken to explore this unique case in order to identify the success factors and obstacles of implementing sustainability strategy in the organization. The case study approach is widely used in management research that helps to answer “how” and “why” questions to gain the evidence from the processes in order to develop explanatory information and explore how the organizations implements the sustainability strategy in practice.

The authors have carried out one-hour long interview with three representatives of the administrative body of the State Border Guard organization. The main focus of the semi-structured interviews was to carry out the inquiry about the process of implementing a sustainability strategy: struggles and difficulties, visions and hopes as seen by the administrative bodies of the organization. To gain an informative picture on the process of implementing a sustainability strategy in the organization, interviews were carried with three representatives from the department of strategic management and human resource management. The interviews were undertaken during the process of translating sustainability strategy into practice. Interviews were taken in an onsite situation in a semi-structured interview format. Interviews lasted sixty minutes and were complemented with spontaneous questions. All respondents had higher education and qualification gained in training abroad. All of them can be described as professional and motivated informants. The informants were asked how sustainability is being implemented in their organization (What policies and instruments do they use, what are main sustainability challenges the organization

is facing? How do the organization is dealing with those challenges at the strategic level? Who is involved in strategic decision-making processes? How successful is the organization in achieving set sustainability objectives? Is the respondent's own sustainability activity is linked to the overall organizational culture and mission? How relevant sustainability strategy is for the future of the organization? What new concepts and instruments one needs for implementing sustainability?).

Small case studies have been a subject of criticism because of lack of validity and generalizability. Still, the present research has identified challenges in the process of bridging the gap between the formulation of the strategy and implementing it in practice and do not offer any generalizations. Qualitative research, being holistic, implies multiple interpretations and perspectives that are reflected in the research findings. The authors tried to avoid predicting respondents' likely responses and avoid preconceived understandings and notions. Instead, the authors tried to reduce biases by formulating questions so that the meaning is clear for the participants and organizing the interviews as shared, negotiated and a dynamic process. We allowed the participants to take their time and to answer their way, we adopted a sensitive attitude, active listening techniques, and were checking the reliability, validity, and consistency of responses by good places questioning.

In recent studies particular attention has been paid to aspects of implementing sustainability strategy in organizations, therefore the focus of this study is on diverse aspects on how the strategy is implemented in practice.

Research Findings

Three representatives of the administrative body were asked to participate in the inquiry on a voluntarily bases and signed their consensus of participation in the research. The authors have granted anonymity to all the participants of the research. All three respondents described in a detail the main mission and a responsibility of the State Border Guard organization in safeguarding the country's borders according to the State migration policy in line with the State security policy. The organization is responsible for the state security and is involved in a constant evaluation of social and economic factors in their dynamic development while facing new EU challenges and undertaking new responsibilities. All of them define the policy of personal management as a management of educated and efficient personal while building the employee's loyalty to the organization. The organization is engaged in evaluating risks in the security sphere (international terrorism, trafficking). The organization has high requirements to offer services according to the international requirements that require innovative solutions and contemporary technical solutions in order to ensure border security. As one of the respondents reported, technological

innovations became one of the main stimulus for continuous development of functioning of the organization and its development.

Implementing the sustainable State Border Guard strategy will allow them to maintain and to develop the system of border security according to the EU requirements and Schengen requirements. Among the tasks of the State Border organization are the following: to ensure the efficiency of border check points by use of innovative technical solutions based on biometric evaluation of data, thus ensuring the effectiveness of control of the sea border by the use of innovative technical equipment and by maintaining video observance, thus ensuring the participation of the State Border Guard organization in international missions and operations as well as participating in international missions and operations in Europe, and in Frontex activities. The organization is also responsible for maintaining border security and is engaged in controlling migration processes on the borders.

One of the representatives of the staff has commented that the sustainability strategy goes beyond formal tasks and requirements and pointed to its holistic and complex character in making local and global impact for implementing sustainability goals and maintaining security. For the evaluation on the organization's sustainability, all the three respondents have mentioned significance of all factors: environmental, economic and societal. Sustainability involves greater complexity shaped by various regional demands. The process of implementing a sustainability strategy allows addressing regional challenges in a more innovative way by considering economic, political, and environmental aspects. The following descriptive characteristics of a sustainable strategy were identified during the interviews and supported by the literature review (Table 1).

Table 1 Organizations' sustainability descriptors (from interviews and supported by (Fiksel et al., 2009)

Sustainability Indicators	Descriptive
Relevant	Enhancing social and environmental conditions as well as economic prosperity.
Meaningful	Comprehensible and transparent
Objective	Respectful to regional, cultural and socio-economic differences
Effective	Adaptable at regional, state, or local levels
Comprehensive and systems-based	With system perspective
Durable with long-term relevance	Having a long-term perspective
Stakeholder participation	Building networks with societal partners

The success factors of implementing sustainability strategy as identified are the following: organizational structure (expectations, experience, open and dynamic frame of the organizational structure); leadership (vision where

sustainability is regarded as a central element), employee’s motivation to participate in the process of implementing the strategy, training, workshops), and a communication with the multiple stakeholders (concern about their needs) (Martin & Verbeek, 2006).

Table 2 Interview responses with the staff members from the management team (designed by the authors and is based on interview data)

Response	Interview questions
<p><u>Sustainability challenges</u> Among the most topical issues that the organization is facing are such globalization challenges as migration processes, ecological issues, and border security challenges.</p>	What are the main sustainability challenges the organization is facing?
<p><u>Sustainability challenges</u> The staff members are undergoing training, both in Latvia and abroad by acquiring new strategies and innovative solutions, though ensuring border security issues.</p>	How do the organization is dealing with those challenges at the strategic level?
<p><u>Involvement in the decision making processes</u> All administrative staff members are being involved in management planning processes for implementing sustainability strategy</p>	Who is involved in a strategic decision- making processes?
<p><u>Factors of success</u> All respondents are aware that there is a long way to go for implementing sustainability strategy to become a whole institutional strategy, still some elements are already being implemented successfully. Among the factors of success that were mentioned were the following: organizational culture, motivation of employees to implement strategy and communication of sustainability message across the organization.</p>	How successful is the organization in achieving set sustainability objectives?
<p><u>Organizational culture and mission</u> All three staff members have undergone sufficient training both in Latvia and abroad and have a deep concern for integrating sustainability not only in legislation but in practice as well.</p>	Is your own sustainability activity is linked to the overall organizational culture and mission?
<p><u>Relevance of sustainability strategy for the organization</u> All interview participants are aware of the topicality of sustainability both globally and locally, as well as the need to implement it.</p>	How relevant sustainability strategy is for the future of the organization?
<p><u>Instruments for implementing sustainability strategy</u> Raising awareness about the sustainability issues, communicating sustainability message across all levels in the organization, engaging in a team work.</p>	What new concepts and instruments you needs for implementing sustainability?

Recommendations for Implementing Sustainability Strategy in the State Board Guard Organization

Every organization has a unique organizational structure, aims, therefore, a robust sustainability strategy needs to be designed as relevant for a particular organization. Concern about sustainability and societal issues require organizations to adapt sustainability strategies by balancing societal, environmental and culture aspects of the organization and the society. All aspects of sustainability strategy need to be taken into account, such as economic, ecological, social and culture aspect (Alibašić, 2018).

Sustainability needs to be integrated into a core strategy and need to be related to all aspects of the organization, such as organizational culture, leadership, employee motivation and communication of sustainability message across all sectors of organization. This is important that strategy fits coherently with the processes that are taking place in the organization (Engert & Baumgartner, 2016).

All members of the organization need to create a common understanding of the concept of sustainability and its value. Corporate sustainability strategy needs to be translated into practice and the factors that foster implementing the strategy also need to be taken into consideration which is the following: an organizational culture, motivation of employees and communication of a sustainability message.

The identification of stakeholders and their needs should be considered of high importance that influences the implementation process of a strategy. This is essential to develop a holistic framework of how the organization is functioning and to consider all interactions between tangible and intangible assets (see Figure 1).

While implementing a sustainability strategy, the organization needs to respond to a reality of a changing world and activate social, environmental and cultural changes that may lead to sustainable transformations. Incorporation of a sustainability strategy involves redesigning and redefining the existing strategy that meets the needs and expectations of all stakeholders and supports long-term value.

Conclusions

Developing and implementing a sustainability strategy requires a system approach by taking into account all the aspects of sustainability: societal, economic, political, and environmental. Sustainability is a complex issue that is a crucial issue for present and future generations. Sustainability is an ability of an organization to maintain systems comprehensively, with a minimum negative

social, economic, environmental, and governance effects on resources while maximizing positive results

Implementing a sustainability strategy requires strength of commitment and a good will of all actors involved by concentrating energies and resources of all team members and applying a multi-dimensional change program by incorporating new information, policy, and initiatives.

The State Border Organization needs to be viewed as a living and adaptive organization resilient to outside pressures and influences and need to have a capacity to learn and to improve. The organization needs to undertake the path facing changes that might be non-linear and irreversible. A sustainability strategy must be flexible, which is determined by the need to assist in rapid adaptation. New initiatives and information need to be supported by the sustained efforts in order to alter new information ordering structures towards a sustainability trajectory.

A chaotic external world requires internal cohesion and flexibility of the organization in its move towards a sustainability strategy. This requires analyzing the changing landscape and engaging in future scenario writing and setting a greater purpose in connection with broader global challenges (political, economic, environmental and cultural). All actors involved need to make sure how sustainability align with the organizational goals, vision and mission statement and how committed is the personnel to implement this vision.

The case study was an attempt to increase understanding about the process of implementing sustainability strategy in the State Border organization, with a particular focus on a gap between the formulation of the strategy and implementing it in practice. The results gained in this study confirm the relevance of factors outlined in other studies. This case study attempted to outline specific conditions and a deeper understanding of success factors for implementing sustainability strategy in practice. The designed recommendations refer to specific conditions for implementing sustainability strategy in the State border organization.

The organization is facing a number of sustainability problems; therefore, case analyses presents one of the 'wicked' issues that need an absolutely new framework for dealing with is. This framework for the state border guard organization the authors define as an open, dynamic and self-organizing system that is resilient to the outside pressures.

As the interview data shows. among the factors of success in implementing the sustainability strategy are the following: whole institutional strategy, organizational culture, motivation of employees to implement strategy and communication of sustainability message across the organization.

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