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FORESCENE

Industry/Economy

Role of Sustainability Assessment

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Today's Talk

- Nature of Questions
- Interpreting (un)sustainability in the context of industry/economy
- Role of sustainability assessment

Nature of the questions

- **Require us to set out what we mean by sustainability**
 - **holistic concept – stresses links and relationships**
 - **concerns goals – current and future wellbeing**
 - **concerns constraints – inviolable limits, interdependent**
 - **concerns complex systems – respect uncertainty**
- **Sustainability concerns over the economy:**
 - **biophysical degradation**
 - **gap between rich and poor**
- **Require us to reframe role of industry/economy in development**
- **Normative and prescriptive – legitimacy of process by which answers reached is critical – MATISSE - ISA**

Unsustainability of the economy

- Change in context and problems
- Inertia in adjusting institutions to current context and problems
- Systemic problem
 - wrong goals (bias, surrogate, ambiguity)
 - artefact relationships institutionalised
 - ignore limits and interdependence

Lock-in

- Power
- Need to build constituencies and prove transition is possible through evolutionary change that will command support
- Goals – even when we set goals for sustainability, ‘surrogate’ goals like production, jobs and competitiveness are carried forward. Danger lies in their indirect link to welfare and in their ambiguity. Their contribution to sustainability depends on qualitative attributes. We therefore need a screening method for differentiating positive from negative contributions.

Progress toward SD (Gibson 2005)

- Socio-ecological system integrity
- Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity
- Intragenerational equity
- Intergenerational equity
- Resources and their efficient use
- Socio-ecological civility and democratic governance
- Precaution and adaptation

Integration – contribute to all of these simultaneously

Strategies and instruments

- See paper!
- Shift away from employment as primary means to distribute entitlement to GDP
- **Individual tradable permits (carbon budgets?)**
- Implies a new development paradigm and a new policy regime... need to explore alternatives together with stakeholders, policymakers and those with agency
- Methods and tools for participatory exploration, social learning, capacity building, transformation, transition management

Role for Sustainability Assessment

- SA a spectrum of assessment types
- All sustainability assessments are:
 - Information gathering, generating and synthesising processes
 - Tests to ensure the consistency of initiatives with our intention and interpretation of sustainability
- Sustainability assessments distinguished by:
 - Purpose and premise
 - How tools are used (rather than what they are)
- Differentiate 'pragmatic' SA from 'strategic' SA
 - Pragmatic: used now for screening sectoral policies without any explicit sustainability orientation
 - Strategic: potential for developing **long-term, cross-sectoral sustainability-oriented strategies** for addressing persistent problems of unsustainable development

Integrated Sustainability Assessment

‘ISA is a cyclical, participatory process of scoping, envisioning, experimenting, and learning through which a shared interpretation of sustainability for a specific context is developed and applied in an integrated manner in order to explore solutions to persistent problems of unsustainable development’ (MATISSE)

ISA: a **paradigm-exploring** process

ISA is an assessment process that seeks to address persistent problems that cannot be solved within the prevailing policy paradigm.

ISA seeks simultaneously to define acceptable solutions to problems and the policy paradigm with which these would be consistent and within which these could be implemented feasibly; i.e. ISA searches for new paradigms