How to Select Policy Relevant Indicators for Sustainable Development?

*a step by step approach*

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Similarities with the procession of Echternach
1. Sustainable development and policy

2. Pragmatic step by step approach to select SD indicators

3. Conclusions
What’s Sustainable Development?

- The hole world is in favor
- Countless definitions of SD
- Different perceptions on SD and how to measure progress
- Broad Brundlandt definition useful to bind people
- It’s about continuity and a fair division of means to fulfill needs
Sustainability Issues

Actions taken *here* and *now* have effects *elsewhere* and at a *later* stage.

Essence for policy makers

- Identification of *trade-offs*
- Recognising the available *options for action*

The need to make sustainability operational
Operationalising Sustainable Development

**Means**
Capital/Stocks
- Economic
- Natural
- Human
- Social

**Goals**
Welfare / SD
- No poverty
- Biodiversity
- Healthy
- Stable society
- …
Sustainable development & policies

Sustainable development
- More than environmental issues
- Dominated by long-term viability
- Concern for tomorrow => social goals
- Operationalisation in each social domain

Policies for Sustainable Development need
- Vision
- Strategy
- Indicators
Pragmatic approach to select indicators

1. Selection of the sustainability issues

What are our concerns for tomorrow?

Three ways to discover actual concerns:

1. *Tap the political debate*
2. *Citizens preferences by surveys*
3. *Using scientific insights*
Pragmatic approach to select indicators

1. Selection of the sustainability issues
2. What are the goals for each domain?

Operationalise a vision

Concrete and shared goals needed

- climate vs. biodiversity
Pragmatic approach to select indicators

1. Selection of the sustainability issues
2. What are the goals for each domain?
3. Which resources are available?

Identifying the available economic, human, ecologic and social capitals

Policy making means iteration between goals and means
Pragmatic approach to select indicators

1. Selection of the sustainability issues
2. What are the goals for each domain?
3. Which resources are available?
4. Analysis of goals and means by theme
   - Synergy, co-benefits?
   - Trade-offs?
   - Barriers to reaching the goals?
   - Options for action?
   - Effects of alternative options (if … then)?
Pragmatic approach to select indicators

1. Selection of the sustainability issues
2. What are the goals for each domain?
3. Which resources are available?
4. Analysis of goals and means by theme
5. Select indicators for each domain

Result of the analyses of the previous steps
Pragmatic approach to select indicators

1. Selection of the sustainability issues
2. What are the goals for each domain?
3. Which resources are available?
4. Analysis of goals and means by theme
5. Select indicators for each domain
6. Aggregation
   - Small set is handy and will be used
   - It should not conceal choices
   - Green GDP is too aggregated and less useful
Sustainability Indicators - Conclusions

- The search for the ultimate set of SD Indicators has much in common with the quest for the holy grail.

- Although the grail will not be found, the search in itself is purifying and meaningful.
Sustainability Indicators - Conclusions

- Science can help to derive Policy Relevant Sustainability Indicators
  - Offer insight in trends and available resources
  - Identifying trade-offs and options for action

- Sustainability Indicators require long-term goals with broad social commitment
  - To measure progress and reconsider the goals

😊 Thanks!