



Sustainable Development and the Governance of Long-Term Decisions

Roeland J. in 't Veld



Question:

What can be learned from ‘good practices’ and ‘worst cases’ about the conditions under which governments and other societal actors may take wise decisions with a long-term perspective?

12 Recommendations

Work continuing

Presentation final report at international conference August 2009 on ‘Knowledge Democracy’

Policy principle

Recommendation 1: The political principle for long-term decision making should be: “We have no right to make decisions which would, according to our present knowledge and values, impose on future generations such costs and risks as we would not be willing to assume by ourselves.”

2 Types of long-term problems:

- With long lead time between action and impact;
- With series of actions that has to be continued consistently





Recommendation 2: Before decisions are made, the lead time(s) of the measures under consideration should be analysed thoroughly.

Recommendation 3: When a series of interventions is necessary in order to reach a desired result in the long term, it is crucial that perseverance, consistency, continuity and reflexivity are secured.



Resilience of policies/decisions

Recommendation 4: Resilience of policies/decisions is a requisite for dealing with the fundamental uncertainty about the future.

Institutional resilience

Recommendation 5: Ensure that institutions involved in long-term decision making are able to act in a resilient way; this implies investing in flexibility and in alertness (creating 'watchdog capacity'), without making the institutions unstable and unreliable.



Future research

Recommendation 6: Design future research in a transdisciplinary and participative way, and make use of foresight methods like scenario techniques and horizon scanning for improving the robustness and resilience of long-term policies

Assumptions behind decision support methods

Recommendation 7: Be transparent and realistic about the limitations of decision support systems, and ensure that ethical and political assumptions in decision support systems are chosen in the political arena, and use where appropriate independent bodies.



Dealing with dilemma's

Recommendation 8: Make trade-offs between short-term and long-term objectives transparent and identify the factors that favour either side.

Survival of the policy lifecycle

Recommendation 9: Long-term decision making requires policy mechanisms that prolong the policy lifecycle of policy issues.

'Best practices'

Recommendation 10: Always translate 'best practices' into a form which works in a specific situation, tradition and culture.



Long-term orientation of society

Recommendation 11: Invest in increasing the long-term values of citizens: this may make long-term decision-making politically more feasible.

Governance approach

Recommendation 12: The governance for sustainable long-term decision making requires a situational combination of network, market and hierarchical mechanisms, instruments and measures, in which in most cases the degree of complexity requires some prominent role of network governance.



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