Impact Assessment for Sustainable Development: A Vision for Future Development

Sander Janssen, Klaus Jacob & Jacques Jansen, Team Earth Informatics, Alterra - Wageningen UR, Wageningen, The Netherlands.

ABSTRACT
Demonstrating the evidence for the needs and the benefits of planned policies is increasingly core in decision making in Europe, Member States, business and among stakeholders. In particular, the consideration of impacts on the different dimensions of sustainable development in decision making requires a comprehensive evidence base. In our paper, we elaborate on the basis of the activities and findings of the Network of Excellence LIAISE a number of criteria to improve the evidence base of policy making.

Based on a number of cases, the development of tools and a toolbox to facilitate impact assessment of policies we demonstrate that research and the IA process firstly must be truly transdisciplinary, in involving stakeholders in a participative fashion in the whole process, instead of consultative and only involving them for legitimation. Second, it must be integrative in drawing knowledge and perspectives from all dimensions of sustainability and from across scientific disciplines directly from the start. Third, it must demonstrate the impacts of policies on the creation/depletion of stocks of capital (economic, social and natural). This implies that long term benefits and adverse impacts must have a similar weight and importance as those visible on the short term such as division of resources and geographical issues. Knowledge Brokerage is key to facilitate between the spheres of research and decision making – in particular in understanding the contexts of decision making. We showcase how knowledge brokerage can be shaped. Finally, the requirements for policy and SD relevant research can translate into quality attributes. This should guide future research and in particular the development of models and help to develop a durable and excellent research community.