

## Open Action and Research Network (45)

As problems become more numerous and intractable, more and more people and groups of diverse people are working together to address them. While diversity is a necessity and can potentially be a source of strength, it introduces vexing problems that are likely to grow worse over time if we don't learn how to manage them effectively. Each person and organization working on the problem has a unique orientation that is important to the overall effort but can conflict with others. These conflicts can take many forms including reward structures; goals, tactics, and strategies; areas of interests; obligations and allegiances; values and norms, status, legitimacy, and power. Potential conflicts also include practical issues such as time-management and work habits, as well as ultimately, the very language that the community uses to discuss the issues. We must acknowledge the importance of networks that incorporate both action and research and are open to the admission of new members. At the same time we must work consciously to identify the inherent dilemmas of the situation as well as the emerging wisdom that is to be learned from the practice. We must then take note of the avenues that are likely to yield important and useful insights about working together as we move forward.

Written by Douglas Schuler

## Alternative Progress Indicators (46)

Economic indexes of various kinds attempt to measure the well-being of nations, markets, corporations, individual people, and society as a whole. Most of these economic indexes as well as risk are expressed only in monetary terms. Unfortunately economic indexes like these miss several important factors; they need to focus on information about what actually makes life worth living including natural and social capital (living capital). The Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) developed by the economic research group, Redefining Progress, uses much of the same data that the gross domestic product (GDP) is based on but adjusts for positive factors such as housework and volunteering and negative factors such as pollution and crime. Alternative indexes like the GPI that include natural and human capital can illuminate the real picture of human well-being, which can be overshadowed by traditional economic indexes. It is imperative to accurately measure the well-being of nations, corporations, individual people, and societies through indexes that adequately reflect the true costs and benefits contributing to the well-being of the world.

Written by Burl Humana and Richard Reiss

## Meaningful Maps (47)



People are often unaware of the state of the world around them, especially when the relationships are "invisible", second-order, or abstract. Many of the important issues for the community, the environment and for humanity are difficult to see.

To improve the world, we must understand the current situation, highlight the important factors, and help others to understand the issues. Meaningful Maps can provide a focus for relevant information and present it in a way that is easy to understand. Groups need to target their resources carefully to achieve the maximum impact. They also want to communicate their concerns and encourage others to support their work. To be effective the maps often need to reveal hidden relationships.

Written by Andy Dearden and Scot Fletcher

## Citizen Access to Simulations (48)

It can be difficult to understand and bring into public deliberation the long-term consequences of major public decisions, such as building a new rail system or highway. Simulations can help illuminate long-term consequences on land use, transportation, and environmental impacts of different choices). To be compelling and useful, the results of the simulation should be presented in a way that they can be understood and used by a range of interested citizens. Further, ideally not just the results but access to running the simulation should be available to the public, to allow experimentation with alternatives. To aid in understanding and credibility, the simulation should be constructed in a transparent fashion, so that its operation is open to inspection and discussion.

Citizen Access to Simulations is potentially useful to advocacy groups, other community organizations, business associations, and local and regional governments. It will depend on a suitable simulation and available data. Simulation and modeling can provide powerful capabilities for informing community discussions, particularly if the results can be presented using the same indicators that were used in a participatory community and civic indicators project.

Written by Alan Borning