

More from less in sustainable development and sustainability appraisal

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Resource productivity

Get more economic
production /
consumption...

...from each unit of
resource consumption /
waste / impact

Supports mainstream 'story' on technology, innovation, investment, competitiveness etc.

Eg 'factor 2' (=halving) of car fuel consumption.

But it's not working:

- rebound effects: fuel efficiency gains taken as
 - warmer homes;
 - bigger, heavier, faster cars;
- consumption growth swamps savings;
- 'dematerialised' activity added, not substitute?

Easy 'factor 2's for drivers

Take a friend

– halve fuel per *passenger* km

Go half as far...

– halve fuel per *destination reached*

...half as often (eg combine errands)

– halve fuel per *errand*

Cycle or walk

– 'factor 100'?

Don't go at all

– cut fuel per *benefit gained*

Lessons:

- Behaviour change makes factor 10+ possible
- Eco-efficiency of *outcomes*, not *activity*
- Movement is only a means, not an end

More of what, less of what?

Clear that SD means *less*:

- Greenhouse gas emissions: **80% less by 2050**
- Energy, water, resource consumption
- Pollution, unredeemed waste
- Pressure on stressed species, habitats

Most policy assumes the *more* is traded economic activity as measured by GDP/GVA.

Resource efficiency is measured as energy or resource 'footprint' per £ (or \$ or €) of GDP.

Quality of life

Would be better if:

- people could access the *same* things with *less* expense, hassle, uncertainty
- the old, young, disabled, infirm and poor were less excluded
- streets were safer, quieter, cleaner, more sociable, less cluttered
- more people got healthy exercise in daily routine
- Thousands weren't killed on roads

Eco efficiency of wellbeing

Same principle applies to energy

Less carbon per kWh:

Renewables, CHP, CCS (but prove it works!)

– per delivered kWh:

Condensing boiler, thermostats, controls

– per energy service:

Low energy light bulbs, AA rated appliances

– per quality of life service:

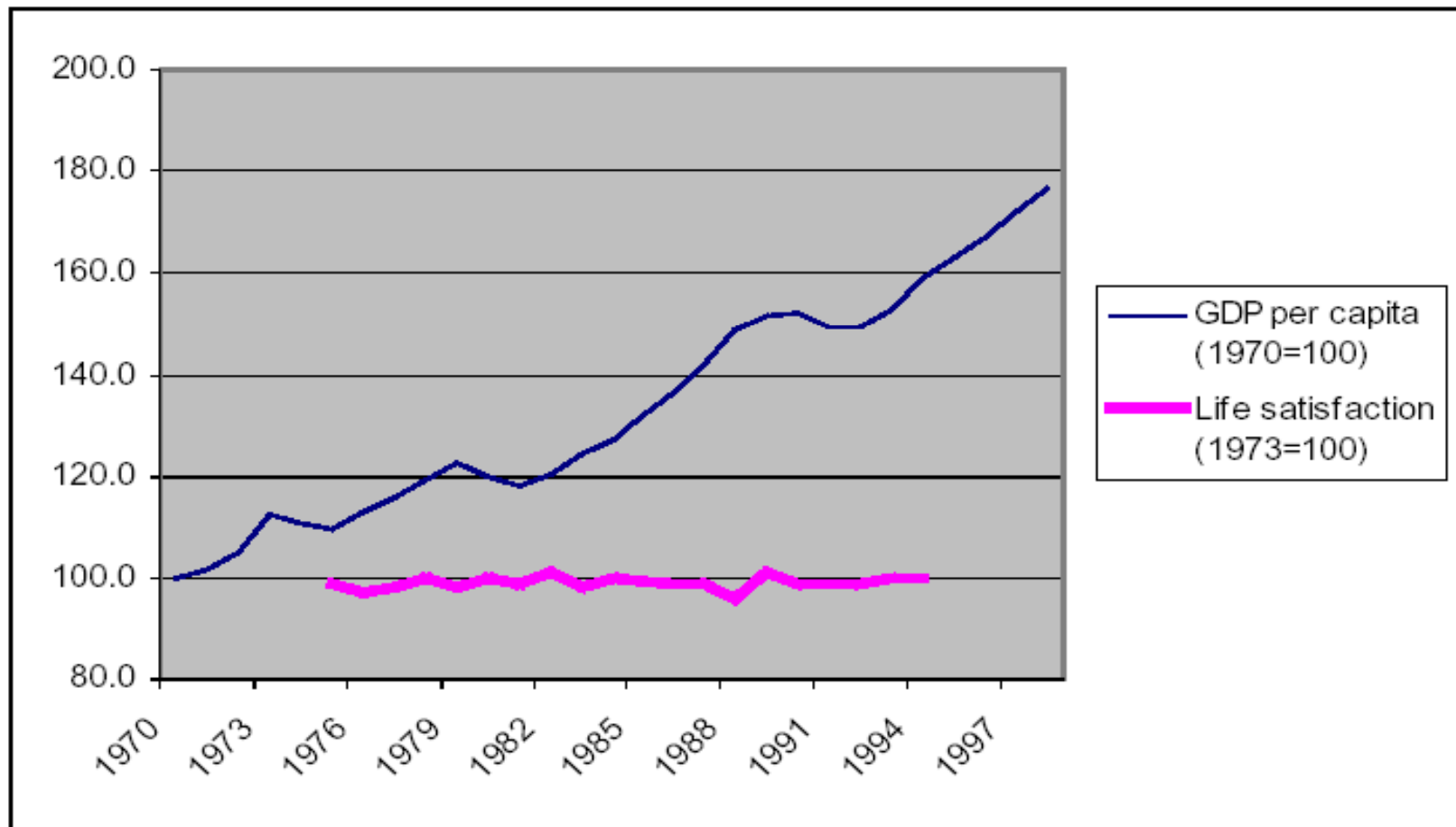
Insulation, draughtproofing

– per comfort / wellbeing:

Warm clothes, cosy fireside

Growth doesn't make us happier

Chart 9. UK life satisfaction and GDP per capita 1973-1997



Source: Strategy Unit, 2003

What really gives life satisfaction?

- Health
- Work: personal control, variety, security, skill use, not too stressed
- Relationships, especially marriage
- Leisure, especially active, sociable
- Equality
- Governance: stability, not too rapid change
- Democracy
- Income: *relative*, and depending on other factors

Slow is the new fast

‘Fast lane’ life:

Drive to:

- gym (for workout)
- supermarket
- airport (for escape)
- art class (for expression)
- home for ready meal watching TV

‘Slow’ life:

Cycle:

- up a hill...
- to local shop...
- through park...
- home to cook...
- convivial meal with friends

- Samaritans

What's it got to do with appraisal?

Environmental appraisal tries to stop damage to environment: negative, defensive, reactive ...and often fails.

Sustainability appraisal criticised for diluting and compromising environmental messages, and disguising power relations.

Sustainability appraisal *can* achieve more than environmental appraisal *if we use it to scrutinise assumed economic benefits of development as well as environmental disbenefits.*

Fiji tourism: environmental impacts

‘Tropical paradise’: apparently unspoilt, but nudging capacity limits:

- Coral reefs stressed by nutrients, disturbance;
- Mangrove clearance leaves coast vulnerable;
- Unstable forests; erosion, flooding;
- Fresh water stress;
- Unmanaged waste piling up.

Just presenting this as barriers to ‘billion dollar tourism industry’ would have got nowhere.

But we also looked at social and economic factors.

Fiji tourism: social/economic impacts

Rapid investment–led development would:

- Further concentrate wealth where least useful;
- Do nothing for remote, poor communities;
- Undermine traditional village living, cohesion;
- Require subversion of traditional ‘ownership’
- Replace ‘subsistence affluence’ with menial labour and dependency;
- Only retain 30%–60% of proceeds: ‘Billion dollar industry’ only worth \$300M to Fiji? ... even less after defensive / repair costs?
- Be vulnerable to travel scares, fuel prices, competition from other sun/sea/sand offers.¹²

Fiji: result!

Argued that rapid tourism development not *only* environmentally dangerous but *also* dubious, insecure, reduced socioeconomic benefits.

Cabinet considered the report, adopted lower impact, more incremental, devolved, ecotourism based approach. (SEA not the only reason!)

Closer to home

Several SA/SEAs of regional strategies say:

- No explanation why competitiveness driven, high value added economic growth beneficial;
- Alternative economic pathway should be considered;
- Growth *could* be reconciled with environment if (but *only* if) high mandatory envt standards;
- No point struggling for a few % reduction in GHGs while aviation, road expansion continues and will swamp the gains.

Unlike Fiji ...

Permanent Secretaries don't go to steering group!

SA not required of UK / English strategies.

Consequences of national policies (eg aviation, road growth) ruled out of scope

Unwelcome recommendations trigger demands for ever more evidence

Recommendations (eg water neutrality, traffic reduction) deemed 'impracticable', removed, leaving the unsustainability

Nobody has to do more than *consider* SA recommendations anyway.

This is not good enough

Development which raises risk of human suffering / annihilation is not practicable or desirable.

We *need* to cut greenhouse gas emissions quickly and rapidly.

It would be *nice* if we could also live healthier, happier, more secure, fulfilled, fair and dignified lives while doing so.

This could be *easy* if we stop assuming that growth = progress.

Appraisal could play an important role in redirecting progress.

To do its job, appraisal needs

(1) To ask the right questions:

- Integrated coverage: everything that matters for human wellbeing and security;
- Outcome objectives: test results not methods;
- Distinguish 'less bad than it would have been', from 'getting better', and 'on track for sustainability' - only the last is good enough

To do its job, appraisal needs

(2) To appraise what will really happen:

- *Important* effects often hard to *measure*: out of town retail may cause more unprovable indirect job losses than provable direct gains;
- Assess results not aspirations: will policies be implemented? Will they work? Will funding support or thwart them?
- Recognise context: eg if higher level policies (aviation growth, inability to control bus services) make policies futile, say so.
- Admit uncertainty: eg all regional strategies based on economic growth projections which₁₈ are now clearly fantasy.

To do its job, appraisal needs

(3) Procedural independence and traction:

- Not commissioned / managed by the same organisation that wants its plan approved;
- Follow-through: revisit unimplemented recommendations from previous appraisals;
- Able to require recommendations to be seriously considered – eg if a sustained major recommendation is rejected, plan making authority must give a specific reason, open to legal challenge.

Conclusion

We *could* ‘improve the quality of life within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems’.

The same changes necessary for climate security can also add to human wellbeing.

We know what they are. They don’t need any miracle technologies.

We are currently abjectly failing to make the necessary decisions.

Sustainability appraisal can’t save the world. But it can and should make clear what is needed, and how far decisions are achieving it.