



Colloquium

Envisioning sustainability pathways: Recent Progress in the Use of Participatory Integrated Assessment for Sustainability Research

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Abstract: The field of Participatory Integrated Assessment (PIA) is still very young, having evolved from the broader field of Integrated Assessment (IA) in the mid to late 1990's. Despite its youth, PIA has contributed significantly to the understanding of complex human-environment systems. Like Integrated Assessment, PIA is a problem-based field, with a focus on interdisciplinary research. Fundamental to PIA, however, is the assertion that the quality of decisions is improved by the direct involvement of stakeholders in the assessment process. Within this evolving field, there has been significant progress recently in the application of participatory scenario-based backcasting approaches to sustainability research – approaches that blend quantitative and qualitative analysis – in order to explore alternative climate change futures. Several projects undertaken in British Columbia, Canada, involving backcasting techniques, 3D visualization tools, criteria and indicators, and multi-stakeholder participation demonstrate this progress. The success of these techniques in building capacity, designing integrated policy solutions, revealing values and attitudes, building awareness, promoting dialogue, and enhancing collaboration among various departments, disciplines, and stakeholders will be discussed.



John Robinson is a professor with the Institute for Resources, Environment, and Sustainability, and the Department of Geography, at the University of British Columbia. He is currently directing research programs looking at the intersection of climate change mitigation, adaptation and sustainability; the use of visualization, modeling and citizen engagement to explore sustainable futures; sustainable buildings and urban design; creating private/public/NGO and research sector partnerships for sustainability; and generally the intersection of sustainability, social and technological change, behaviour change, and community engagement processes. His major current project is trying to get

the Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability (CIRS) built and operating. Dr. Robinson is a member of the BC Climate Action Team, the BC Hydro External Advisory Committee on Electricity Conservation and Efficiency, and the Vancouver Climate Leadership Council. He is on the Board of the Sustainable Cities Foundation and the Pembina Institute, a member of the Steering Group of HELIO International, and on the Editorial Boards of the journals *Integrated Assessment*, *Ecology and Society*, *Building Research and Information*, and *Industrial Ecology*. In 2008 Dr. Robinson was made a Fellow of the Trudeau Foundation. He is a member of the Program Committee for the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, and was a Lead Author in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) and the last three reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (1995, 2001, 2007), of which the 2007 report was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Colloquium Host: Anne van der Veen, Professor of Governance & Spatial Integrated Assessment, ITC

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