

Transformation of Planning Processes Requires Long Time Frames and Sustained Support for Change Agents

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Editorial

An important and urgent challenge is incorporating climate change into decision-making in order to achieve "climate compatible development" (CCD) for communities in the developing world. The United Nations' (2015) Sustainable Development Goals can be attained by identifying development investments and initiatives that also reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and alleviate poverty. This process is complicated by the uncertainties in climate change projections and impacts and the necessity for cooperation between public and private actors across multiple sectors. In addition, other drivers such as population growth, increasing economic volatility and modernisation interact with climate change to generate non-linear and unexpected outcomes and shocks for livelihoods, requiring a complex systems approach to development planning and evaluation. By taking a systems approach to future uncertainty, the recent construct of adaptation pathways provides a potentially useful decision-making framework; It incorporates a number of fundamental ideas.

First, the effects and reactions of climate change must be viewed in the context of dynamic, multi-scale social-ecological systems. Second, adaptation involves a number of parties with divergent values, objectives, and information that must be acknowledged and negotiated. Third, cross-scale, cross-jurisdictional, and cross-sector coordination is required for responses to change. Fourth, planning processes should develop and implement transformative strategies to address systemic causes, which in developing countries are frequently the institutional and political roots of disadvantage, as well as incremental adaptation strategies to address immediate causes or symptoms of vulnerability. Local efforts often matched the overarching programme objectives that officials had in mind when defining them. Rand research discovered that "acceptance" was merely the beginning of the tale, and that adopting a project that was in line with federal objectives did not guarantee its successful implementation [1-3].

They discovered that even a project's successful completion did not guarantee its long-term continuation. Study on Change Agent found that the general investment's net return was adoption of numerous innovations, successful implementation of a small number of them, and long-term maintenance of an even smaller number. Although federal seed money was essential to local efforts, Money did not always buy the things that mattered most to successful implementation and continuation of local change agent

projects. The consequences of the various federal policies examined by Rand primarily depended on local factors, not federal guidelines or funding levels. A general finding of the Change Agent study that has become almost a truism is that it is exceedingly difficult for policy to change practice, especially across levels of government. Contrary to the one-to-one relationship assumed to exist between policy and practice, the Change Agent study demonstrated that the nature, amount, and pace of change at the local level was a product of local factors that were largely beyond the control of higher-level policymakers.

To further complicate matters, these local factors change over time and so create substantively and strategically different settings for policy. The specific findings that hold today are corollaries of this general observation about the relationship between macro-level policies and micro-level behavior. A few of these findings follow. The study placed too much emphasis on the value of initial motivation. According to one interpretation of the Change Agent study, policy could only succeed when local instigators encouraged and supported it. This research was mostly based on the distinction we saw in the field between programmes launched due to perceived programmatic need or promise and those carried out for opportunistic reasons—available funds. This conclusion still holds true in part. It is true that the motivation of advocates—people who support the project and are prepared to devote time, energy, and effort to its success—helps to kickstart and sustain planned-change initiatives [4,5].

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