



A strategic evaluation of IAASTD : the power of science policy interfaces for change

*Beyond the crossroads : New issues, Persistent problems
Linking food security, sustainability science and sustainability politics
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Key messages

- **The role of Science Policy Interfaces is of a political nature : need to be clearer about their specific role for change in the policy field**
- **IAASTD received (in France) as a major basis of expertise and a reference process for its inclusiveness of different sources of knowledge, but a weak basis for change in policies, needing new developments**
- **Reaching consensus should not have been an imperative of IAASTD**
- **Interpret IAASTD as a strategic project for change : decisive importance of its scientific credibility, and of inclusiveness as a capacity to make new or emerging voices and visions be heard**
- **Do we need to institutionalize IAASTD , among all other initiatives (HLPE, GFAR, IPBES...) ?**
- **It would probably be necessary, but beware to maintain its capacity to define and discuss the framing of the questions, because the challenge and the power are there !**

Science Policy Interfaces and Politics

- IPCC (mainly its WG 1) and MEA as references
- The power of science to put problems on the agenda :
successful references when technological solutions are available for implementation
 - Acid rains and LRTAP, CFC and the Montreal protocol
 - ⇒ *What you need then is « sound » science and efficient communication to decision makers*
- But the political structure of the field is specific to each domain
- The structure of academic and epistemic communities is also specific
- Controversies might be impossible to reduce to a consensus with an uncertainty range
 - « Bring politics back in science » (Scoones, 2008)
 - Giving these interfaces the power to *change policies*
 - Not just a question of efficient impact, but of resistance to messages

Evaluating science policy interfaces

- Evaluating science policy interfaces should not be reduced to quality and efficiency standards
- It **first** has to take into account their **specific strategic role for change**
 - Assessing the current state of a problem;
 - Evaluating the performance of existing or possible policy options;
 - Evaluating the costs (not only economic costs, but also social, environmental, political costs) of the different options, and the distribution of these costs among the different negotiating parties or non negotiating stakeholders;
 - Closing controversies when possible;
 - Re-opening the range of possible options;
 - Re-framing the formulation of a problem to include dimensions that are not enough taken into account...
- Credibility, Legitimacy and Relevance should be assessed in the perspective of this specific role
 - Essential tensions
 - For instance between
 - relevance and link to policy makers
 - vs. independence to ensure capacity to reframe the question and problem
 - **Who has the power to frame the problem ?**

Reception of IAASTD : a subjective French perception

- For the French research community, the perception that for the first time French experts were really mobilised to participate actively and with visibility to an international assessment
- For French agricultural researchers, apparently a major moment in the community
 - A very useful process
 - The acknowledgement of a very good capacity to link different types of knowledge
 - One of the references for Cirad's proposal of global orchestration of ag. research at G20 on ARD
 - An exceptional synthesis of expertise, a very good basis for quotation
 - But an implicit difficulty to endorse the summary for decision makers and to disseminate officially and actively the conclusions of IAASTD
- For many agents of change in the Agriculture / Environment nexus, IAASTD was seen as a major contribution to base their interventions on scientific evidence
 - But apparently a need for other exercises legitimising again the results
 - For instance, the SCAR Foresight Expert Group Reports to the EU Commission
 - IAASTD as a good basis for new processes
 - « Greening the Economy with Agriculture », FAO

What if IAASTD is evaluated on its capacity to build consensus : some frequent criticisms

- An important achievement : an inclusive process, particularly focussing on the involvement of scientists and stakeholders from the South
 - Vs. IPCC, CGIAR, ...
- But a failure in building consensus among all stakeholders involved
 - Is it necessary to have an intergovernmental approval of the results ? What with the MEA ?
 - Is it necessary to have all stakeholders approving the conclusions ?
- Not enough explicit attention to the imbalances of power in the field of knowledge (Stokstad, Scoones, 2008)
 - Explicitly deal with controversies in social sciences : liberalisation and smallholders devt
- Different narratives and worldviews that could not get into the scenario chapter
 - The need for a pluralistic and formalised discussion of assumptions about the future
 - And particularly about technological promises in the BAU and in the Agroecological scenarios
 - Now UNEP's Green Economy Report's Scenarios (brown vs. green scenarios) are an important building block for this discussion

What if we evaluate IAASTD as a strategic intervention : for instance as a strategy for change

- Interpret IAASTD as a strategic project to change balances among competing visions within the realm of the debate on future global agriculture
 - ... linked to a political context with power imbalances in agricultural research priority setting and food security governance
 - ... proposing (1) an alternative vision for future global agriculture (“BAU isn’t an option”)...
 - ... and (2) a change in food security governance (donors, IAR orientations...)
- How to evaluate the results of this strategic project ?
 - Quality of contents, scientific credibility (peer review process).
 - Participatory process: legitimacy through pluralism, not consensus
 - Inclusiveness allows new, emerging voices to be heard
 - Debate about the future : scenarios chapter reduced to not relevant scenarios

What do we need now ?

What permanent mechanisms are already there ?

- GFAR's struggle to install a relevant and participatory process of priority setting for International Agricultural Research
 - Legitimacy through representation of Southern NARS and Southern farmers
 - An attempt to ensure its saliency by organising a Foresight Exchange Forum
 - Pluralistic approach
 - » Convergences and divergences both as interesting messages for decision makers
 - » Open process, enabling new stakeholders to participate to the expert foresight discussion
- HLPE to the CFS
 - Controversies in the field of social sciences are addressed
 - Very different from the reference of LRTAP or IPCC-WG 1
 - Small number of experts, able to discuss and explain the convergences and divergences of schools of thoughts among the academic community (e.g. economics)
 - But not in a capacity to reframe the questions asked
 - Difficulty to include different types of knowledge (« classical » expert panel)
 - Still in a learning process

What do we need now ? IAASTD 2 ? A permanent IAASTD ?

Do we need to institutionalise IAASTD ?

- A new science based independent assessment, dealing with the new challenges ?
- Crucial role to enable to re-frame the question : that's where the power lies
- Discussing narratives about the future is a key characteristic
- Independence from a mandatory body like CFS is necessary, but relevance and impact has to be ensured

→Links to IPBES ? IPCC ?

Thank you for your attention

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