Regional Sustainability in Western Australia: An Enabling State?

Central Thesis

The international participatory development paradigm offers insight into a process for Regional Sustainability in Western Australia
A context for regional sustainability in Western Australia.

Conceptual and methodological framework of the international participatory development paradigm.

Employing this framework to conduct an analysis of potential for regional participatory development in Western Australia.

Lessons from the international paradigm that suggest a need for the creation of an enabling bureaucratic environment.
A context for regional sustainability in Western Australia

- Regional sustainability and the Draft State Sustainability Strategy
- What evidence suggests a need for a regional approach?
  - Non Capital City issues
  - Globalisation and economy
  - Ecology
  - People
What is a region?

Defining regions for the purpose of sustainability requires consideration of a number of factors:

- Social factors
- Administrative boundaries
- Ecological boundaries
Regional governance structures in Western Australia

- Regional Development Commissions
- Regional Associations of local government
- Regionalisation and/or Regionalism
International Participatory Paradigm Framework

- Coherent and mutually supporting pattern of concepts, values, methods and behaviour amenable to wide application.
- Move away from industrial modernist expert controlled to participatory inclusive and open ended learning process.
A Conceptual Framework

- Participation
- Facilitation
- Capacity building
- Empowerment
- Networking
- Conflict resolution
Participatory Methods

- A systematic learning process
- Multiple perspectives; group learning process;
- Context specific;
- Facilitating experts and stakeholders; and
- Leading to sustained action.
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Western Australian Regional Participatory Development

- Participation and the Citizens and Civics Unit
- A need for facilitation
- Government support for Capacity Building and Empowerment
- Networking and Conflict Resolution
International Participatory Development Lessons: An Enabling State

- Top-heavy bureaucratic hierarchy tendency to standardize, centralize, impose targets within projects.
- Power differentials a constraint. Power includes influence and authority over decision-making and access, control and ownership over funding and knowledge.
- Complementary focus upon government and civil society. Sustainability requires partnership with industry.
Key elements required for government to become a strategic and enabling institution:

International experience

- A policy framework supportive of a clear role for local communities;
- Strong leadership committed to developing learning-organisational systems, capacities and working rules;
- Long-term financial commitments and flexible funding arrangements;
- Better systems of monitoring and evaluating performance, and new mechanisms for ensuring accountability, both to policy and to communities;
attention and patience in working out the details of systems and procedures, with lessons learnt from pilot projects, and the negotiation and accommodation of different interests and perceptions;

creative management, so that improved policies, procedures and field practices, once developed, can be scaled-up and implemented effectively;

and open, supportive yet challenging organisational climate in which it is safe to experiment and fail;
small, interdisciplinary teams or working groups of innovative and committed agency professionals working in collaboration with external resource persons capable of acting as catalysts for change (unbundling hierarchy);

regular documentation and analysis of lessons for improving practice and building and institutional memory;

a flexible, integrated, phased training programme over a sustained period of time, involving key actors at different levels.
Implementing Institutional Change

- Institutional frameworks that facilitate processes of dialogue, partnership, networking, learning and managing change.
- Methodologies are employed for training. Supported by changing the rules in use, financial management practices, reporting systems and supervisory methods.
Korten identifies five inter-related stages which are linked through feedback loops.

- Identify the changes required within training.
- Exposure of senior staff.
- Approach is tested in the field and assessed.
- Training of large numbers of staff.
- Training of in-house facilitators.
Conclusion

- Political commitment to participation in Western Australia.
- Needs to be reoriented towards a facilitative approach.
- International experience demonstrates transformation within the structures and philosophy of government is necessary.
- Important for regional sustainability strategies