



2023 RSA Winter Conference

Dos and don'ts of the Process of Developing Sustainability Indicators in Switzerland (Sociological Approach)

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As part of an HES-SO research project on leading indicators, a series of interviews led to two observations: making a numerical diagnosis is a stage of the work that needs to be overcome. If it is to be of benefit to those working in the field, this diagnostic phase must open the door to the future. However, the relative complexity of the information sometimes discourages the best wills, the technical nature of the indicator systems gives a false impression of mastery, and the recommendations are often the missing piece in the picture. In other words, either the diagnosis has not been finalised, or it has been finalised, but the process of improving the status quo is more confining than engaging. At best, it is an end in itself. To avoid this pitfall, we have noted that a clear, shared pre-existing vision and a strategy with milestones are a prerequisite. This is our second observation. External support (from experts or peers) can enrich the vision, but it should be self-sustaining.

It seems to us that the definition of a desirable future, towards which to strive, is also the moment when the objectives guiding us towards this horizon are defined. This raises the following questions: Is avoiding unnecessary damage still a sufficient and defensible objective today? What if indicator systems no longer measured only negative effects (large or small) in an attempt to preserve a factitious balance that we know to be unsustainable?



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Thursday, November 9, 2023, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM GMT

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