New developments in national sustainable development strategies: from a management to a visioning tool

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Best Practices in Sustainability Policies and Strategies

Screening of 45 Strategies, in depth analysis of 10 strategies:

1) What are good practices of SDS?
2) What are good practices of sustainability policies?

⇒ Besides few prominent examples of termination of SD strategies and policies, SD Strategies remain important in many countries

⇒ Besides otherwise claims in the academic literature, innovation in SDS can be observed
The sample

1. Aargau: renewal 2013
2. Bhutan: renewal 2012
3. Flanders: renewal 2011
4. France: renewal 2010
5. Finland: renewal is under way
6. Tyrol: adopted in 2012
7. Austria: first joint strategy of federal state and länder adopted 2010
9. California: (Growth Council Strategic Plan 2012-2014) adopted 2012
10. Switzerland: renewal is planned

⇒ Many other recently adopted or renewed strategies
Characteristics of the Strategies

No gold standard for meeting the challenges of SD:
1) Implementation: mainstreaming versus work program
2) Monitoring and evaluation: orientation on output versus outcome/impact
3) Horizontal integration: Mainstreaming / interdepartmental coordination / special council
4) Vertical integration: integration versus coherence
5) Participation: institutionalized participation versus ad hoc participation
6) Content and goals: management approach versus leitbild orientation
Goals and content

Management approach
- Measurable and timebound targets
- Defined responsibilities
- Monitoring

⇒ Either strong steering capacities or consensus

Leitbild orientation
- positive and long term vision for a country
- (qualitative) targets
- Justification of activities
Do Visionary Leitbilder replace Management approaches?

Three dimensions of strategies:

- **Documents**: Demonstrating the needs to act, providing guidance, showing evidence basis, defining responsibility => provision of legitimacy
- **Processes**: development and implementation; participation; monitoring and evaluation
- **Capacities**: Networks, process design, knowledge basis, communication competences

⇒ Leitbilder and visions contribute to provide legitimacy but they will not have a substantial impact without processes and capacities
⇒ Capacities and processes without guiding visions will not effectively impact on policies and society