Context-Based Sustainability

A New Paradigm for Measuring & Reporting Sustainability Performance Grounded in a Not-So-New Common-Sense View of the Subject

Mark W. McElroy, PhD
Executive Director
Center for Sustainable Organizations

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The Incrementalist Status Quo

• Current best practices (GRI, IIRC, others) best described as “incrementalist” in form
  – Impacts expressed in marginal or absolute terms
    • “x impacts this year versus y impacts last year”
  – Sometimes also expressed in relative or intensity-based terms
    • “x units of impact per y”

• Fails to take limits or thresholds in the supply of, or demand for, critical resources explicitly into account – does not express sustainability per se!

• Makes it possible to perform ostensibly “well” while still putting resources & well-being at risk
Bringing “Context” into Play

• Context-Based Sustainability changes all of this by bringing contextually relevant circumstances into play
  – Impacts always expressed relative to limits and thresholds in resources (vital capitals) being impacted by organizational activities – thresholds
  – Impacts also expressed relative to organization-specific allocations of the responsibility to abide by such thresholds (when shared) in fair, just and proportionate ways – allocations
  – All consistent with long-standing interpretations of “sustainability” (multiple capitals, their limits, well-being)

• Results in the use of context-based metrics where:

  \[ S = \frac{A}{N} \]  
  (actual impact/normative impact)
Thank You!

Mark W. McElroy, PhD
mmcelroy@vermontel.net
www.sustainableorganizations.org

For more information on Context-Based Sustainability, see here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Context-Based_Sustainability

For more information on the multicapital interpretation of sustainability see here:


http://www.multicapitalscorecard.com