
Environmental Responsibility: Integrating Information Networks for Collective Planetary Stewardship

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Abstract

Responsibility born from resource consumption literacy and ethics in global environmental movement is limited to institutions, and remains absent for ends user. Thus, planetary stewardship exists only at earth system boundaries where pressures sink to the local scale while responsibility remains afloat. ‘Environmental Responsibility’(ER) must primarily percolate to catalyze ends-user ‘participation’. Existing participation of ends-user is restricted within policy spheres, appearing synonymous to ‘enforcements’ in social psychology, causing the individual’s sense of ER to remain limited. Much accounted reason for the inequality is that existing information and knowledge mobilization mechanisms operate only through linear exchanges between institutions and users, and therefore reinforce hierarchical relationships. Coupled with conflicting interests and perspectives of stakeholders in multilevel environmental governance, and absence of grassroots information networking for inclusive decision making, there are therefore, information gaps that hinder ER locally. Study seeks to disclose these gaps through information-needs assessment of stakeholders, and attempts to chart the desired course for future action within framework of Future Earth while encompassing the nexus among ‘Information-Ethics-Responsibility-Participation’(IERP). Analysis involved several affiliated projects, and the assessment parameters considered to break complexity included: a. Feedback: Ends-user feedback to improve resource consumption literacy and consequently behaviour and habit (consumption displays, eco-labeling, billing, advisory services, sensor technology); and b. Administrative Traditions and Institutional Policy: Rewarding-punishing to enforce desired action (subsidies, taxation).

The research answers: 1. Who gets the Information (Equity in Distribution)? Information must serve individual requirements using public information systems, as existing ‘information publishing mechanisms’ are designed by and for the analysts; and 2. How information will translate to responsible participation in future? Central to ER is the need for Citizen Centered Transparency mechanism (CCT) that supplies interactive and tailored information to address the needs of the marginalized and vulnerable, meaning greater accountability in execution mechanisms. CCT also looks for transparency of aid-spending-execution in addition to aid-allocation by donor-stakeholders.

Findings suggest that embedding responsibilities in local development planning, and manifesting environmental goals in economic policy, than isolate environmental policies, bear clear and transparent potential short-term benefits, short-term costs, and they coincide with people’s economic goals. Also grassroot-roles for responsible action are empowered with presence

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of end-user-information. Barrier-free communication process for decision-making is promised among multiplicity of stakeholders. Local shift from irresponsible behaviour and waste habits is improved by fostering the sense of responsibility through distinguishable bridge of transparent mechanisms, held on pillars of information. Thus research finds significance where information and knowledge networks demand for easy-translation of regional policies into grassroots action for environmental justice, adaptation, and resilience capacity-building.