

UNSW Australia
ELEC4122
Term 1, 2019

Activity Week 7
What matters in a decision?

We all have individual priorities when we make decisions. Some value relationship in a team; some value the achievements. Some value people more than profit, and some vice versa. In the business world, economic profitability has the priority. But the same focus on economic values is often used in analysis of sustainability questions to over-value monetary based indicators. (Recall: what is an indicator?) The decisions that are made in such a context tend to be short-sighted, and continue the historic trend of exploiting ecosystems and societies which have little control of resources to defend their own interests. Decisions about true sustainability need to be made in a context that truly values longer-term horizons and broader perspectives than the prevailing paradigm of economic & political expediency.

Analysis of sustainability questions often uses the so-called three pillars: environmental, social & economic well-being. In New Zealand, however, planners must consider a fourth element: cultural well-being.

During Class

Once again, form teams of about 6 people and then discuss the question overleaf.

this week's out-of-class (i.e. tutorial) question — try 60 words in 10 min

- 1. How sustainable is the technology of the humble pencil?*
- 2. What about that associated with your thesis? Can you think of a suitable indicator to support that assessment?*

THE FINE PRINT

This tutorial activity is designed to help students understand different emphases in decision-making, particularly about sustainability.