

# PLACEHOLDER

by

Jack Reid

Submitted to the Program in Media Arts and Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Media Arts and Sciences

at the

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

December 2022

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## **Abstract**

[PLACEHOLDER]

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# Acknowledgments

Rebecca

pika

TFZ

Danielle Wood

Donna Rhodes

Committee Members

Felipe and other international collaborators

Land acknowledgment



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# List of Acronyms

<b>AIAA</b>	American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
<b>CBERS</b>	China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite Program
<b>CEOS</b>	Committee on Earth Observation Satellites
<b>CPR</b>	common-pool resources
<b>DEM</b>	Digital Elevation Model
<b>DSM</b>	Digital Surface Model
<b>DSS</b>	Decision Support System
<b>DTM</b>	Digital Terrain Model
<b>EO</b>	earth observation
<b>EOC</b>	Earth Observation Center
<b>EOS</b>	earth observation system
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Agency
<b>ESA</b>	European Space Agency
<b>EVDT</b>	Environment, Vulnerability, Decision-Making, Technology
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency
<b>GEO</b>	Group of Earth Observations
<b>FEWS NET</b>	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
<b>GIS</b>	geographic information system
<b>GISc</b>	geographic information science
<b>GPM</b>	Global Precipitation Measurement
<b>GRACE</b>	Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment
<b>ICESat-2</b>	Ice, Cloud, and land Elevation Satellite 2
<b>JAXA</b>	Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency

<b>LEED</b>	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
<b>LIDAR</b>	light detection and ranging
<b>LUNR</b>	Land Use and Natural Resources Inventory
<b>MDG</b>	Millenium Development Goal
<b>MODIS</b>	Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer
<b>NASA</b>	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
<b>NOAA</b>	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>OSTP</b>	Office of Science and Technology Policy
<b>OTA</b>	Office of Technology Assessment
<b>PGIS</b>	participatory geographic information system
<b>PPGIS</b>	public participation geographic information system
<b>PPBS</b>	Planning-Programming-Budgeting System
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SERVIR</b>	Sistema Regional De Visualización Y Monitoreo De Mesoamérica
<b>SWOT</b>	Surface Water Ocean Topography
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USGS</b>	United States Geological Survey
<b>VIIRS</b>	Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

A quick note on the use of first person pronouns in this piece. The word 'I' will obviously refer to the author, Jack Reid, and will be commonly used when describing work that I have done, arguments that I am asserting, etc. That said, the Environment, Vulnerability, Decision-Making, Technology (EVDT) Framework and its various implementations, including the Vida Decision Support System (DSS), were not solo projects but instead involved multiple contributors, both inside the Space Enabled Research Group and outside of it. Thus when I use 'we' when talking about EVDT I will be referring to this collection of individuals. Additionally, sometimes I will use 'we' to refer to the Space Enabled Research Group, particularly when discussing our group's set of methodologies and principles. Finally, on occasion, I may use 'we' in the general humanistic sense. I will strive to make in which sense I am using 'we' clear in context.

### 1.1 Research Questions

The work described in this thesis centers on exploring the efficacy and difficulties of *collaboratively developing a systems-architecture-informed, multidisciplinary geographic information system (GIS) DSS for sustainable development* applications that makes significant use of *remote observation data*. The meanings and histories of the emphasized terms will be explored further in later chapters of this thesis, along with

the methods used in this exploration and the findings that resulted.

To this end, this paper expands and codifies a previously proposed EVDT Modeling Framework for combining earth observation (EO) and other types of data to inform decision-making in complex socio-environmental systems, particularly those pertaining to sustainable development [1]. Such a framework could also inform the development of future EO systems that are better designed for particular application contexts. In the beginning of the following section, this framework will be explained. The remainder of the paper will then focus on making the framework more tangible by examining a particular application in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, before concluding with remarks about the future of the framework and of the application case study.

## 1.2 Framing

This piece is fundamentally about modeling, in particular, multidisciplinary modeling, and how modeling can inform actual action. Now individual models are inherently simplifications, intentional or otherwise, aimed at accomplishing a goal. They are metaphors for how the world really works, intended to enhance human faculties and focus our intention. Now the problem with such metaphors is that, as Elizabeth Ostrom puts it, "Relying on metaphors as the foundation for policy advice can lead to results substantially different from those presumed to be likely... One can get trapped in one's own intellectual web. When years have been spent in the development of a theory with considerable power and elegance, analysts obviously will want to apply this tool to as many situations as possible... Confusing a model with the theory of which it is one representation can limit applicability still further" [2].

This is of course only compounded when multiple models from different domains are strung together, as will be described later. We must accordingly be focused on maintaining intellectual humility and avoid catching outself in our own web. Fortunately, such interdisciplinary humility is a key principle of the Space Enabled Research Group of which I am a part. We choose to practice a certain "theoretical pluralism"



[3] in our methods, learning from those of different fields and not assuming that, merely because we have chose a certain approach, it is the only or the best possible approach.

In addition to our theoretical pluralism, we must also practice a humility in application. Much of our sustainable development work takes place in communities or even countries to which we are outsiders. There is a real danger that we rush in and prescribe the wrong solution to a problem that the community faces or misidentify the problem altogether. We could even to identify a problem were none, in fact exists, pathologizing the normal and natural, the Victorian England medical profession did to women [4].

As is described further later, we strive to avoid this by allowing actual community members to identify the problem; by speaking with multiple community members to garner different perspectives; and, when possible, spending time in the community outelves. These latter two components are key, because even the member of a community may be afflicted with significant misaprehensions about aspects of their own community, particularly of those who are seen inferior due to economic class, race, gender, education, or some other marker. Jane Jacob's described such a phenomena vividly in her classic text, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* [5]:

Consider, for example the orthodox planning reaction to a district called the North End in Boston. This is an old, low-rent area merging into the heavy indsutry of the waterfront, and it is officially considered Boston's wost slum and civic shame... When I saw the North End again in 1959, I was amazed at the change. Dozens and dozens of buildings had been rehabilitated... The general street atmosphere of buoyancy, friendliness, and good health was so infectious that I began asking directions of people just for the fun of getting in on some talk. I had seen a lot of Boston in the past couple of days, most of it sorely distressing, and this struck me, with relief, as the healthiest place in the city... I called a Boston planner I know.

"Why in the world are you down in the North End?" he said, "That's a slum!... It has among the lowest delinquency, disease, and infant mortality rates in the city. It has has the lowest ratio of rent to income in the city... the child population is just above average for the city, on the nose. The death rate is low, 8.8 per thousand, against the average city rate of 11.2. The TB death rate is very low, less than 1 per ten thousand, [I] can't

understand it, it's lower even than Brookline's. In the old days the North End used to be the city's worst spot for tuberculosis, but all that has changed. Well, they must be strong people. Of course it's a terrible slum."

"You should have more slums like this," I said.

## **1.3 Methodology**

## **1.4 Space Enabled Principles**

## **1.5 Structure of Thesis**

Chapter 2 will layout the EVDT framework used through this work along with its theoretical underpinnings, motivation for its pursuit, and various potential critiques.

Chapter 3 will lay out the methodology in more detail. Chapter 4...

# Chapter 2

## Motivation, Theory, and Frameworks

The question of motivation includes several elements. Why sustainable development? Why remote observation data? Why systems architecture and engineering? Why these particular case studies? Why me? This chapter will address these questions as well as respond to several critiques of the chosen approach.

### 2.1 Motivation

#### 2.1.1 Personal Motivation

My background may make my interest in this work, collaborative modeling for sustainable development, seem a bit odd. Almost all of my prior work was either funded by the military or done directly for the military, from improving weapons testing procedures at Sandia National Labs to defense acquisition policy analysis for my masters at MIT to summers spent at the RAND Corporation helping the US military to plan aircraft and air defense acquisitions, to name just a few. My one purely private sector job, as an engineering intern at a fossil fuel refinery on the coast of Texas, was hardly emblematic of a great commitment to sustainability.

In another way, however, I am merely following in a well trod, if problematic, pathway. Like Jennifer Light [6], I was exposed to scenario planning and other forms of decision support tools during summers working at the RAND Corporation. And

like numerous MIT scholars (Jay Forrester, Norbert Wiener, Joseph Weizenbaum, the list goes on) I have pivoted from, or perhaps built upon, my experience with military engineering to instead tackle societal development problems. The convergence of this two institutions is not something to be passed over. "Support for applying cybernetic principles to research on nonliving systems emerged from organizations... studying management, engineering and control. RAND and MIT stood at the forefront of this trend. With their heritage of mathematical innovation and ties to the armed forces... these and cognate institutions offered ideal laboratories to transform cybernetic principles into management practices." [6]

There is a key difference between me and my predecessors (or so I would like to believe). While some of these (Weizenbaum in particular [6]) came to have doubts about the consequences of applying military-originated technical methods to civilian applications, most of them did not. They resolutely swept aside complications, objections, and planning professionals to solve the problems that they identified in their own way. They built names and careers in this way, but also caused significant harms in their hubris, as I will discuss more later in this chapter.

My background and perspective is somewhat different from them in certain ways, however. My undergraduate mechanical engineering degree was obtained alongside a philosophy degree. My masters aerospace engineering degree was obtained alongside a technology policy degree. And now, over the course of my doctorate, I have invested time in taking development and planning classes, reading foundational texts, and engaging with my antiracist and anticolonialist peers in Space Enabled. My education in matters of urban development and ethics is thus more significant than the one-month seminars that MIT and the University of California at Berkeley provided to aerospace workers in 1971 to prepare them for local government positions [6].

Finally, I have the history, both positive and negative, of my MIT predecessors to inform my actions, in a way that they did not. For these reasons, I often find myself more sympathetic to the contemporary critics of some of these MIT scholars, such as Ida Hoos [7]. This, of course, raises the question of why I am proceeding with this work anyways then.

The answer to that is multifaceted. For one, I believe that the relevant fields have advanced significantly and, to some extent at least, have learned from their prior missteps. This is elaborated on in my detail throughout this chapter. Another aspect is that I (and my advisor evidently) believe that my knowledge and systems engineering in general does still have something to offer humanity beyond building rockets. Additionally, I and my peers, with our particular commitment to the principles outlined earlier, may have an important role to play on influencing the aerospace/systems engineering communities, urging them to curb their worst impulses and learn from their own history. Finally, it is because I want to be of service to humanity. As my aerospace education and career progressed, I found myself increasingly faced with only two options: "pure" scientific work or defense work. Reluctant to choose either, I was being quickly sucked into the gravity of the default: the aerospace defense sector. The Space Enabled Research Group, and the work detailed in this thesis in particular, offered me a third option, to apply my skills and interests to directly help humans on Earth. Now all that is left to is to do it.

### **2.1.2 Why Sustainable Development?**

Before exploring the various methodologies and theoretical frameworks used in this work, it is worth exploring exactly what it is we are hoping to accomplish and why it is important. We need to talk about sustainable development.

#### **What is Sustainable Development?**

The term *sustainable development* is simultaneously one that invites immediate, intuitive understanding, and one that reminds frustratingly vague. *Sustainable* here means something somewhat more specific than its general definitions of "able to be maintained or kept going" or "capable of being supported or upheld." Instead, it refers to something more specific, commonly associated with the natural environment: "pertaining to a system that maintains its own viability by using techniques that allow for continual reuse" [8]. As to what "system" we are talking about here,

the "development" half of sustainable development, we mean generally, human society and wellbeing. This is of course still much too vague, so let us turn to the first official use of the term, which was in the 1987 report by the United Nations (UN) World Commission on Environment and Development, commonly known as the Brundtland Report, after the name of the chair of the commission. This report defined sustainable development as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [9]. We have now helpfully clarified the time scale under which this system needs to "maintain its own viability" but still have done little to clarify what aspects of human society are included within "development."

In 1992, the UN provided more detail in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. In this report, they said that "human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to healthy and productive life in harmony with nature." Furthermore, they state that eradicating poverty is "an indispensable requirement for sustainable development" and environmental protection constitutes "an integral part of the development process" [10]. So we now have several key components, including human health and productivity, the protection of the natural environment, and the elimination of poverty. It is still unclear whether this is a complete list, however, and, if so, what are the connections between these components.

Official clarification would come in 2002, at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. There we get the following [11]:

These efforts will also promote the integration of the three components of sustainable development — economic development, social development and environmental protection — as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars. Poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development.

We now have three linked components along with a set of potential actions for implementation. This is the definition that would stick and become commonplace. From here has built intellectual fields and massive multi-governmental interventions.

Jeffery Sachs describes this further, "As an intellectual pursuit, sustainable development tries to make sense of the interactions of three complex systems: the world economy, the global society, and the Earth's physical environment... Sustainable development is also a normative outlook of the world, meaning that it recommends a set of goals to which the world should aspire... SDGs call for socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable growth." [12]

Questions remain, however. Why all this effort? And what are these SDGs?

### **Why is Sustainable Development Important?**

As former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon put it: "Sustainable development is the central challenge of our times" [12]. Despite significant progress in certain domains and certain regions, many individuals and communities are still suffering from severe privations of food, water, healthcare, and more. This is no mere issue of production, but is also connected with issues of allocation (economic inequality is swiftly rising in many parts of the world, including in the author's own country), political mismanagement and oppression, and environmental changes. This work will not detail these numerous concerns (instead I recommend Jeffrey Sachs's *The Age of Sustainable Development* for an accessible survey), but it is worth point out that the last of these issues, that of environmental changes, is particularly important as it shapes how we can seek to rectify the others. Historical means of economic development (particularly the extensive use of fossil fuels) is no longer seen as sustainable, due to humanity butting up against and even exceeding certain planetary boundaries or capacity limits, as seen in Figure 2-1, particularly those of climate change, biodiversity loss, ocean acidification, and the nitrogen cycle.

While the impacts of these excesses will be felt globally, they will most heavily fall upon some of the poorer and historically oppressed states, harming those with the least capacity of absorb such impacts and thereby potentially exacerbating global inequality. The spatial variation of the estimated impacts of climate change, for instance, can be seen in Figure 2-2.

Furthermore, as was suggested by the Johannesburg definition of sustainable de-

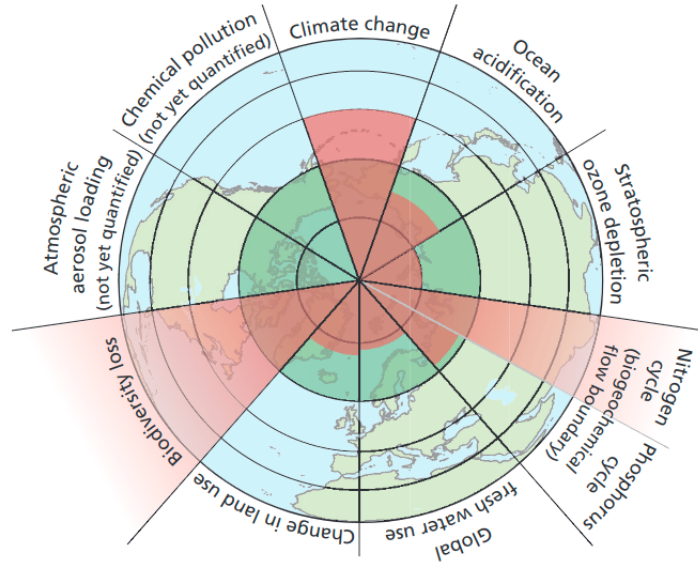


Figure 2-1: Planetary Boundaries. From [13]

velopment, the effects of violating these planetary boundaries will not be limited to a particular domain of human life. Table 2.1 estimates such multi-domain impacts on different regions of the world iff major, international corrective efforts are not undertaken immediately. The numerous connections between these domains is a key motivation for this work and for the methods chosen, as will be seen later.

Table 2.1: Estimated impacts of "business-as-usual" by domain and region. H=High; M=Moderate. Adapated from [15] and [12] <sup>1</sup>

	North America	Latin America & Caribbean	Europe	Middle East & North Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	South & Central Asia	South-east Asia & Pacific	East Asia
Food Insecurity & Malnutrition				H	H	H	M	M
Poverty				M	H	H	M	M
Land Use Change		H			H	M	M	M
Soil Degradation				M	H	H	M	H
Water Shortage	M			H	H	H	M	M
Water & Air Pollution	M		M	M		H	H	H
Biodiversity Loss		H	M	M	M	M	H	H
Sea Level Rise	M	M	H	M	H	H	H	H
Ocean Acidification	M	H	H	M	M	M	H	M

<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that, despite the latter of these two sources citing the former, the two sources differ in noticeable ways, with no explanation provided in either document. Where they are in conflict, I have chosen to use the latter source. In the former source, there is also a error: Ocean Acidification in the Middle East / North Africa is listed as "H" but the cell is in yellow. The correct entry is not known, so I have gone with "M" in yellow here in order to avoid overstatement.



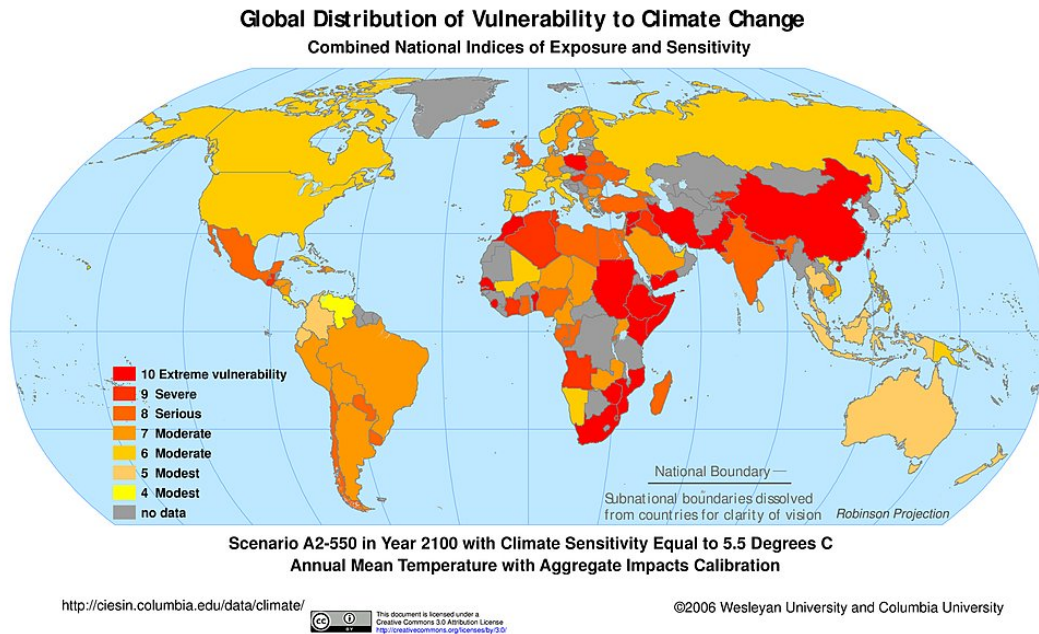


Figure 2-2: Assessment of global distribution of vulnerability to climate change. From [14]

A key reason why these planetary boundaries have been so recklessly exceeded despite the enormous human costs that will result is that these aspects of the environment have historically been both undervalued and poorly understood, at least by those championing economic development. Historically, surveys and quantifications of the natural environment focused primarily, or even entirely, on resources that could be extracted and exploited for economic benefit. In early forest surveys, for instance, "Missing... were all those parts of trees, even revenue-bearing trees, which might have been useful to the population but whose value could not be converted into fiscal receipts" [16]. Just as these factors were missing from accountings of the natural environment, so were they missing from accounts of human society. "Non-human animals are rarely considered within the realms of social theory, and yet... animals can be regarded as a 'marginal social group' that is 'subjected to all manner of socio-spatial inclusions and exclusions.'" ([17, 18, 19] as paraphrased in [20]). While these authors were referring primarily to animals, it is also I would argue that this includes plants too, as is particularly evident in the common definition of a weed as a plant growing

where it is not wanted.

Fortunately, economists and earth scientists in recent decades have embarked on an effort to better understand and catalog such *ecosystem services*, that is to say, the various benefits that humans are provided by the natural environment and healthy ecosystems in particular. Figure 2-3 illustrates these connections between the environment and human wellbeing, along with the degree to which these connections are mediated by socioeconomic factors. This work has progressed to the extent that there is now a regularly updated database of almost 5,000 value observations of ecosystem services in a wide variety of regions and biomes (though it should be noted that the database overrepresents valuations involving the United Kingdom, inland wetlands, and coastal systems) [21]. Cataloging such ecosystem services is only one step, however. We must also present this data in useful ways to decision-makers so that they may act upon it, as well as provide them with the tools for them to identify additional, uncataloged ecosystem services in their own communities.

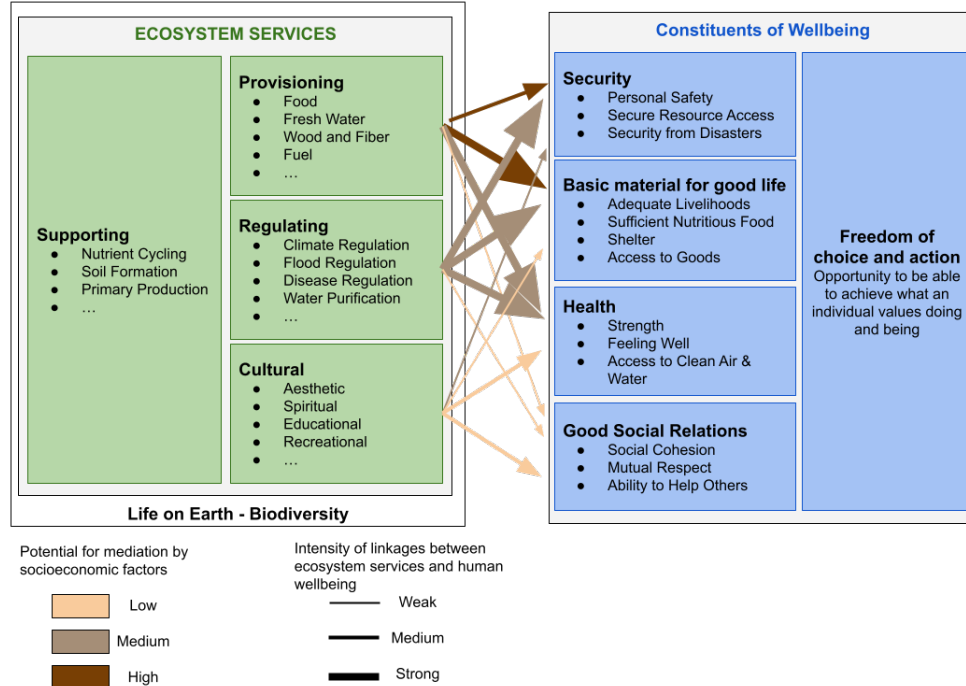


Figure 2-3: Linkages between categories of ecosystem services and compotents of human wellbeing. Adapted from [22]

## What about the Sustainable Development Goals?

At the end of Section 2.1.2, I quoted a passage that referred to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), though I did not explain what these were. Now I shall address that deficiency, as the acpsdg are a key part of how sustainable development is currently thought about around the world, to the extent that Sachs wrote that, "Our new era will soon be described by new global goals, the SDGs" [12]. In order to understand the SDGs, however, we must first go back fifteen years prior to their creation, when the nations of the world sought to proactively face the new millennium. In 2000, the UN established eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that the nations of the world pledged to pursue for the next fifteen years. These were [emphasis added]:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. To achieve universal primary education
3. To promote gender equality and empower women
4. To reduce child mortality
5. To improve maternal health
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. To ensure environmental **sustainability**
8. To develop a global partnership for development

Within each of these goals were various more specific *targets*, each with a set of quantitative metrics or *indicators*. While significant progress towards the MDGs was made over the course of those fifteen years, significant issues persisted after their conclusion [23]. By the year 2015, numerous changes had occurred. There was an increased interest in recognizing the interdependence of the challenges facing humanity, treating causes rather than symptoms, and in collective action rather than donor-driven action. The MDGs, for instance, often focused exclusively on developing countries and what developed countries could offer them, sometimes explicitly so, such as in Target 8.E: "In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries."

By the year 2015, there was an heightened recognition of disparities and issues within all nations, not just the developing ones. These factors, coupled with the rise in public salience regarding sustainability, resulted in the successors to the MDGs, the SDGs. The SDGs were set in 2015 and are intended to serve as global goals for the international community until 2030. It expanded the number of goals from 8 to 17, each with its own set of indicators and targets [24]. Some of the original MDGs were split into multiple, more specific goals (e.g. #1 became #2 and #3) while other SDGs are wholly novel. The abbreviated forms of these new goals can be seen in Figure 2-4.



Figure 2-4: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The heightened importance of sustainability is evident both in the elevation of the word to the collective title of the SDGs, but also in the increased frequency of its use within the goals. In the original MDGs the word "sustainable" or a variant thereof is used only once in the goals and 6 times among the targets and indicators (and even then it is most commonly in reference to "debt sustainability"). In the SDGs, "sustainable" and its variants is found 13 times in the goals and 68 times among the targets and indicators, referring to a whole host of domains but most commonly referring to "sustainable development" or sustainable use of various resources. While significant gaps in our understanding and recognition of the connections between

the environment, human wellbeing, technologies, and decision-making persist [25], the SDGs are a notable step towards acknowledging that our planet is one complex system and that, in many cases, attempts to tackle one domain without considering the others are fated to fail.

Despite their short, clear formulations, actually achieving many of the SDGs involves the significant work by numerous actors in many domains and involving various technologies, as evidenced by the total of 169 targets and 232 indicators within the goals [26]. In short, they require either the creation or the improvement of complex sociotechnical systems. Within SDG #2, for instance, is Target 2.3: "By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment." Associated with this target are indicators 2.3.1, "Volume of production per labour unit by classes of farming/pastoral/forestry enterprise size," and 2.3.2, "Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status" [26]. Clearly, accomplishing this goal will require innovation in agricultural technology, creation of new policy and technological mechanisms for linking financial services to these small-scale food producers, and new methods of collecting information to enable both the evaluation of our progress and the sociotechnical systems created to reach the target.

It is at this need that the research question of this thesis is addressed.

### **2.1.3 Why Remote Observation Data**

While many of the initial efforts at remote observation from air and space were done with military objectives in mind, scientific, commercial, and social applications soon became abundant. Since much of space-based remote observation in the past several decades has been primarily driven by large governmental scientific organizations, much of that data has been made publicly accessible. An enormous amount of EO satellite data is freely available to the public through 20+ National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) earth science satellites [27], the European Space

Agency (ESA) Copernicus Programme (which includes both the 6 Sentinel satellites and in-situ measurements), the various satellites managed by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) Earth Observation Center (EOC), the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite Program (CBERS), and the satellites of other space agencies. While this data is largely free currently, this has not consistently been true, nor is it guaranteed to continue in the future [28]. For most of the early history of satellite observation, imagery was kept highly classified and zealously guarded, to the extent that Congressman George Brown Jr., who was integral in the establishment of the US Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), resigned from his post on the House Intelligence Panel in protest over the enforced secrecy in even discussing the topic [29, 30]. Even when the data was available to the public, it was not always freely available, as various countries have made attempts to monetize remote observation data. In the 1970s and early 1980s, for instance, Landsat data was a government-managed operation that provided products at a low-cost, based primarily on the cost of reproduction. In the 1980s, however, the program was transferred to a private entity and prices were increased by more than an order of magnitude and significant copyright restrictions were put in place [31]. Currently the data is once again made free after the monetization efforts met with limited success [32], but this may not remain the case moving forward [33].

The use patterns of remote observation data has varied for reasons beyond cost and military secrecy, however. Social applications were being considered from quite early on. As Jennifer Light recorded, "one proponent [from the late 1940s] explained, photointerpretation data did not directly provide 'social data,' yet they were 'pertinent to social research needs in so far as such 'physical data' have meaningful sociological correlates" [6]. In the succeeding decades, the degree to which humans have altered the surface of our planet has only increased and, as a result, we can now also infer a great deal more about humans from images of that surface. By the early 1970s five rationales for using satellite imagery in city planning had become widespread [6]:

1. It offers a synoptic, total view of the complex system in a given area.

2. Satellites provide repetitive, longitudinal coverage.
3. Satellite inventories were more efficient and up-to-date than ground surveys.
4. Remote sensing was objective.
5. Satellites produced digital imagery that could be easily combined with ground-based data in novel GISs.

Despite these rationales, cities and metropolitan areas largely elected not to use satellite imagery for several decades, choosing instead to rely on aerial imagery and ground-based surveys [6]. The reasons for this are many, but probably include that many of these rationales were overstated for their day. Insufficient resolution and inconsistent coverage limited intra-urban use. While satellite imagery provides a wonderful decades-long longitudinal dataset now, it did not at the time. Satellite imagery was still heavily dependent on human photointerpretation, undermining the argument that the data was "objective" in any meaningful sense. Finally the cost and specialization required to effectively use the data limited its ability to be combined with other datasets. Black-and-white aerial imagery provided sufficient resolution, oblique angles, and immediate interpretability to even the untrained eye. Plus cities were compact enough that the advantages of scale offered by satellites largely did not come into play. Ultimately, while GIS technology (discussed in Section 2.1.4) was readily adopted by cities, satellite imagery was not [6].

Furthermore, despite espousing these five rationales, NASA "did not go a long way toward incorporating remote sensing into day-to-day practices in city planning agencies. This was compounded by the fact that far more academics than local government officials participated in these experiments, providing applications of satellite data that were almost always a step removed from urban managers' needs" [6]. One of the first use of non-visual imagery for such applications, for example, was unaffiliated with NASA or the space industry in general. In 1970, the city of Los Angeles used aerial infrared imagery to identify unsound housing, and, by 1972, had integrated this imagery with other datasets into a digital decision support system for assessing urban blight [6].

However, much has changed since the 1970s. The rise of multiple EO satellite com-

panies, including the company Planet’s 100+ satellites [34], Digital Global’s WorldView satellites, and Astro Digital’s recent launch of their first two satellites [35], suggests that yet more satellite data is soon to be available for a price. These data sources are likely to be complimentary, with the commercial satellites primarily providing visual imagery and NASA satellites primarily supplying other forms of scientific data, though the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS), the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS), and the Landsat program all capture visual imagery as well. While many of these satellites were designed primarily with scientific purposes in mind, this data is increasingly being used by a wide variety of groups around the world to enable sustainable development and other humanitarian applications, such as forest fire tracking [via MODIS and VIIRS [36]], agricultural monitoring [via Global Precipitation Measurement (GPM) for rainfall [37] and GRACE for soil moisture [38]], climate change vulnerability assessments [via Ice, Cloud, and land Elevation Satellite 2 (ICESat-2) for vegetation and ice monitoring [39]], and many other applications, such as the upcoming Surface Water Ocean Topography (SWOT) [40].

Furthermore, over the course of the past two decades, efforts have been made to systematize the application of remote sensing data to inform decision-making on a host of sustainable development areas. Internationally, over 100 countries worked together to form Group of Earth Observations (GEO) and 60 agencies with active earth observation satellites have formed the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS). In the US, the primary source of such applications is the NASA Applied Science Program, a part of the Earth Science Division, that includes programs focused on disasters, ecological forecasting, health & air quality, water resources, and wildland fires, using data from NASA satellites as well as those of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Applied Science Program has clearly learned from NASA past failures of engagement with local decision-makers, and now publish guides on how to ensure that new projects are actually helpful to users [41]. In keeping with this new mentality, the Applied Science Program, through their Capacity Building portfolio, frequently



partners with other organizations, such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID). For instance, both groups worked together to form the Sistema Regional De Visualización Y Monitoreo De Mesoamérica (SERVIR), which provides geospatial information and predictive models to parts of Africa and Asia. In a similar collaborative effort, NASA and USAID have also integrated remote sensing data into the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).

Such efforts have been quite successful in their goals, but have required significant time, expertise, and effort to create and maintain. As overpass frequencies, resolutions, and computational speed have increased, it is increasingly possible to conduct much more rapid, localized, and ad hoc applications of remote sensing data for sustainable development and humanitarian purposes. Within 48 hours and one week respectively, NASA was able to provide maps of damaged areas of Mexico City to Mexican authorities following the 2017 earthquake [42] and maps of damaged areas of Puerto Rico to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) following Hurricane Maria [43] (in fact, both of these maps were provided during the same week), through NASA's Disasters Team under the Applied Sciences Program. Such data collection and processing can increasingly be done without the expertise and remote observation systems of governmental space agencies, as demonstrated by a recent effort to conduct near-real-time deforestation monitoring and response [44].

These developments have powerful implications for equity. "The geography agenda is distorted by being data-led... The first law of geographical information: the poorer the country, the less and the worse the data" ([45] as paraphrased by [46]). Remote observation has the potential to help upend this, by providing at least some base level of data globally, with no distinctions for borders or wealth.

Increasingly, sustainable development applications of remote observation data are not limited by available remote observation platforms, but by lack of knowledge by potential end-users of its value and by the tools to make use of available data. While data is often available (either freely or at some cost), it is not always readily accessible (particularly in real time) or easily interpreted. Those with the knowledge and capabilities to access and transform this data continue to reside primarily in government

agencies and universities (though we have certainly seen heartening growth of such users in a much more diverse set of countries over the past couple of decades). The majority of prominent earth observation systems (EOSs) are still designed primarily with scientific, meteorological, or military purposes in mind, limiting their utility in more applied contexts, regardless of the creativity of users. And many successful applications of EO data, particularly that which is not straightforward visual imagery, remain squarely focused on characterizing specific, usually environmental, phenomena, such as wildfires [36], aquatic bacterial growths [47], or deforestation [48], with only limited excursions into assessing the connections between such phenomena and human wellbeing.

More is needed to enable the use of EO data for human decision-making in such a way that acknowledges the linkages between the environment and humans. This is major aim of this work.

#### **2.1.4 Why GIS and Decision Support?**

The term GIS refers to any digital system for storing, visualizing, and analyzing geospatial data, that is data that has some geographic component. It thus refers to the underlying computer systems enabling the middle three components of the broader geographic information science (GISc) methodology, as shown in Figure 2-5. In that sense, the work related in this thesis can be seen as an exercise in GISc spanning all five components, while the specific software produced for this work are instances of GIS. It should be noted that this distinction is not commonly made, with GIS commonly being used generically to encompass both GISc and GIS. The term and the field originated in the 1960s and 70s with experimental efforts of the Canada Geographic Information System and the US Bureau of the Census to digitize their demographic and land cover data [49]. The key value of GIS is that it "allows geographers to integrate diverse types of data over different spatial scales from the regional to the global, while the advanced capabilities of GIS for organizing and displaying these data transform the geographer's view of the world" ([50] as paraphrased in [51]).

Even with the relatively limited computing capabilities of the era, interest in

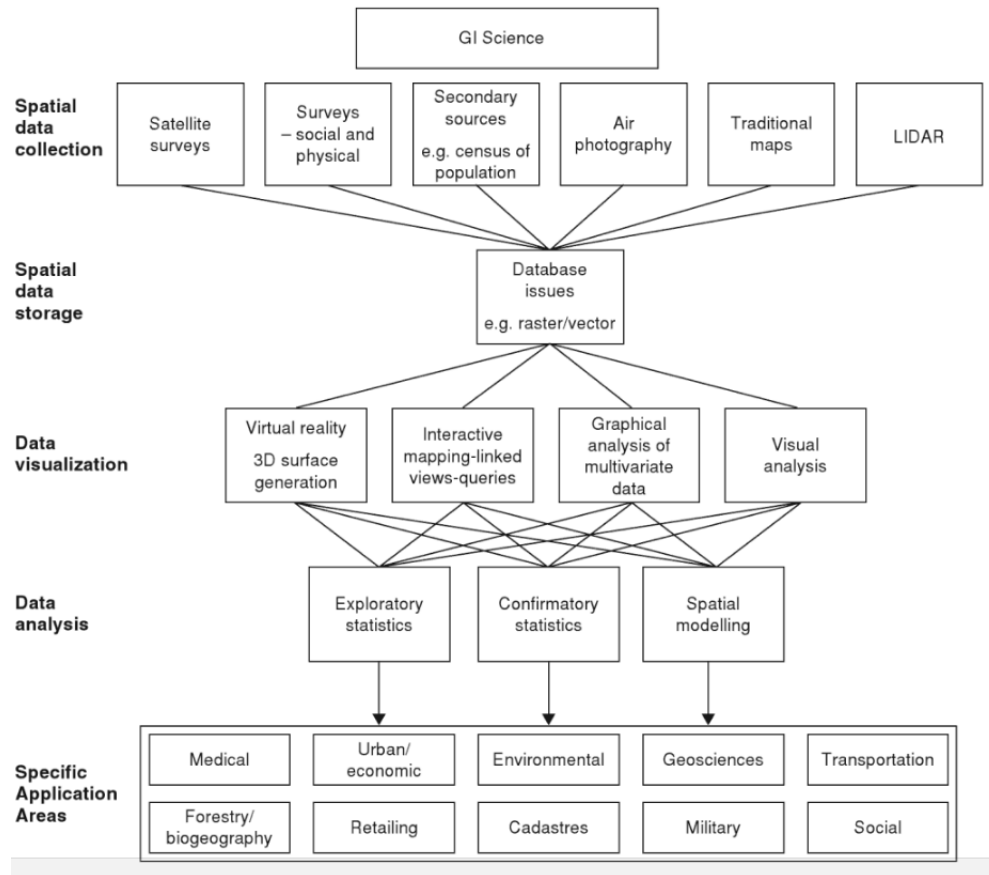


Figure 2-5: Overview of Geographical Information Science. From [52]

GIS grew quickly with local governments quickly adopting it for planning purposes, as was mentioned in Section 2.1.3. One key moment in the development of GIS as we know it, was ESRI's creation of the shapefile format (which links geometries with data in a standardized, if somewhat limited, fashion) in the late 1980s, and, more importantly, their open publishing of the format, allowing others to create and manipulate such files [53]. In 1990, Tomlin defined the sub-discipline of GIS known as cartographic modeling, which attempts to generalize and standardize the analytic and synthetic capabilities of geographical information systems. It does so by decomposing data, data-processing tasks, and data-processing control notation into elementary components that can be recomposed with relative ease and great flexibility" [54]. This theory would come to underly much of research and development work done with GIS. including that of this thesis.

By 1991, Maguire et al. felt that "it is not fanciful to suggest that by the end of the century GIS will be used every day by everyone in the developed world for routine operations" [55]. This, of course, would turn out to be an understatement, as the world is currently incredibly dependent on GIS. Individuals rely upon the various map applications that we use to search and navigate our world. Governments use maps to visualize their jurisdictions and motivate action, as Chicago has done by visualizing food deserts and mapping where new supermarkets are both needed and economically viable [56].

There is now a well established marketplace for geographic data (as shown in 2-6) and thus for GISs to handle that data. It should be noted that the institution that I am associated with, a university, is classified here as a "value-added intermediary" which serves an important connective role between suppliers, infrastructure, and users. This positioning is crucial to the nature of this work, as will be discussed further in Chapter 3. For now it is enough to understand that, whether one is interested in remote observation data or local economics, the question is not whether one should use GIS, but how. To this end, the next two sections will go into more detail about two different veins of GIS: collaborative systems and decision support systems.

### **Why Collaborative and Open Source?**

As was mentioned in Section 2.1.3, many of the early applications of remote observation data was technology, rather than need, driven. So it was with the closely related field of GIS as well, leading to powerful critiques by Pickles and others [58]. These critiques resulted in a reconsideration of the top-down nature of the field and the identification of several potent reasons for broadening the base of participation. First, there was the recognition that the developer of a GIS is not the supreme authority on all fields. "It is the geomorphologist who is best able to choose the data model for representation of terrain in a GIS, not the computer scientist or the statistician, and it is the urban geographer who is best able to advice on how to represent the many facets of the urban environment in a GIS designed for urban planning" [49]. This means that, while collaborations certainly can introduce additional difficulties,

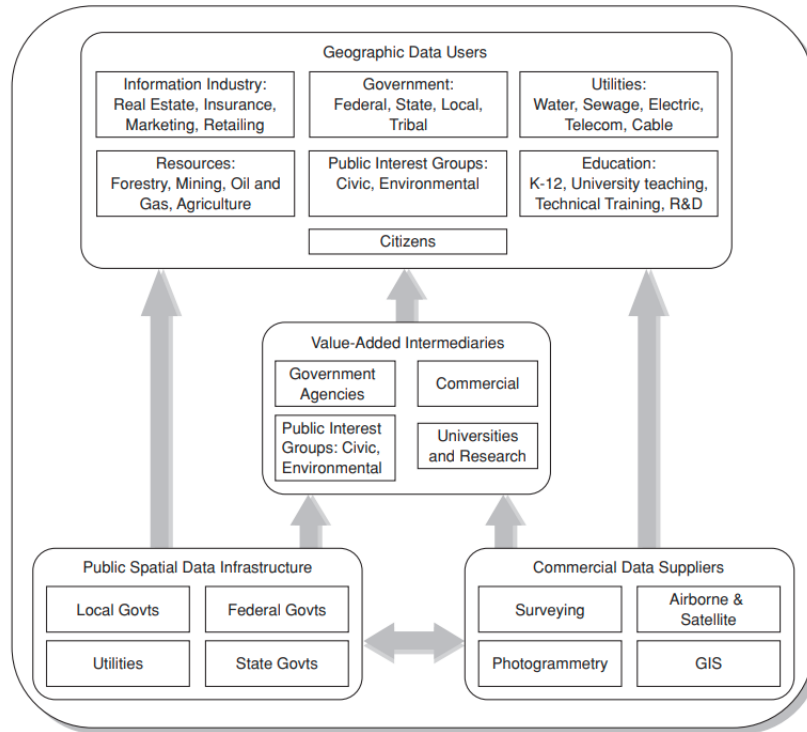


Figure 2-6: The marketplace for geographic data. From [57]

such as cultural conflicts, issues of interpersonal trust, effort required to establish rules and norms of participation, they are also immensely rewarding and can improve the results of the work [59]. The dynamics at play in such collaborations can be seen in Figure 2-7. This is certainly a more complicated situation than the traditional, straightforward, academic implementation of a GIS project.

Second, there was a recognition of the equity concerns at play. Users and disadvantaged communities needed to be involved in the development of GIS data, analysis, and use, if they were going to have a meaningful chance of improving their circumstances. The Canadian International Development Research Centre noted that, "It is impossible to have sustainable and equitable development without free access to reliable and accurate information" [61]. Meanwhile, academic geographer Matthew Edney argued that, "Without equitable access to GIS data and technology, small users, local governments, nonprofit community agencies, and nonmainstream groups are significantly disadvantaged in their capacity to engage in the decision-making process" ([62] as paraphrased in [63]).

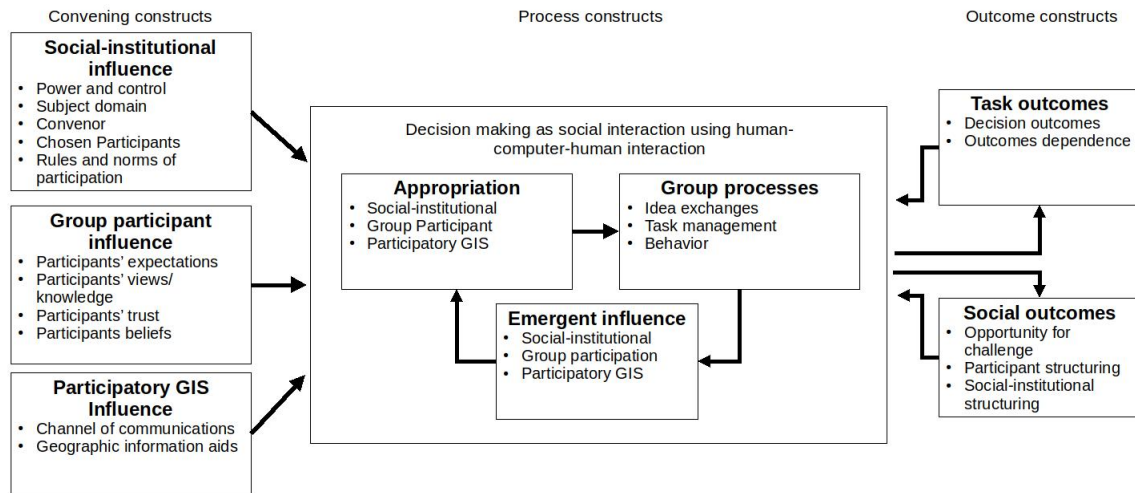


Figure 2-7: Enhanced Adaptive Structuration Theory 2 (EAST2). Adapted from [60]

There was thus reason to seek ways to overcoming the limitations of the technology which, as was common sentiment at the time, meant that "for billions the possibility of accessing the best technology and information made available through digital communications network will always be a luxury. Cartographic information, digital or otherwise, becomes a commodity in its mass production and marketing" [31]. This desire motivated the growth the public participation geographic information system (PPGIS) field, which sought to directly involve the public, and broader field of participatory geographic information system (PGIS), which also included other stakeholders, including government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private corporations, etc. It should be noted that these fields seek involvement in both the production of data and in its application, not merely one or the other [64]. For example, in Washington state in 2002, several American Indian tribes were using GIS technology to "inventory, analyze, map, and make descisions regarding tribal resources... includ[ing] timber production, grazing and farm land, water rights, wildlife, native plants, cultural sites, environmental data and hazardous site monitoring, his-torical preservation, health and human resources" [65]. This dual involvement pro-motes, as Michael Curry put it, both "knowing *how*" (the "ability to do something") and "knowing *that*" (the "knowledge about how something works") [66]. Having only

the former forces the user to rely upon blind trust, instilling a sense of complacency or alienation and preventing creativity. Knowing only the latter, enables discourse about a topic but prevents the user from actually implementing new ideas. It is only with both together that a person becomes a true participant in a field and make their own choices. This is important as expansion of choice is valuable for both intrinsic (for its own sake) and instrumental (to attain preferred positions) reasons [67].

PGIS has thus naturally been widely adopted over the past three decades. A relatively early project in this vein, for example, sought to try and overcome issues of inequal access and use of GIS technology in South Africa in the early 1990s through the pursuit of five specific objectives [63]:

1. Enhanced community/development planner interaction in a research and policy agenda setting
2. The integration of local knowledge with exogenous technical expertise.
3. The spatial representation of relevant aspects of local knoweledge.
4. Genuine community access to, and use of, advanced technology for rural land reform.
5. The education of "expert" rural land use planners about the importance of popular participation in policy formulation and implementation.

Such objectives are common across PGIS projects and the success of this pursuit has come to be recognized even by many entrenched institutionalists. The former vice-mayor of New York City, for instance, argues that digital GIS tools that provide open data (1) free data from bureaucratic constraints, allowing real time combination of data from different souces; (2) construct a loop between government and the community in which cooperation builds respect continuously; (3) enable two-way communication, promotiving collaboration [56].

Many PGIS implementations still relied upon closed source, proprietary code for the underlying software. Participants made have been able to generate new data and perform analyses, but they often could not access the code itself or change the models directly. This was due to a combination of factors: limited diffusion of programming

knowledge; a limited selection of software tools, many of which were closed source; and limited collaboration tools, particularly for geographically distributed collaborations. Over the past couple decades however, all three of these limitations have been greatly mitigated, due to the growth of the internet and the related diffusion of programming knowledge and rise of the open source movement. As two leaders of the *theirwork* PPGIS project in 2011 put it [68],

The open source movement at its core stands for the development of source code... in a completely open and free way. Pragmatically, this manifests itself as a methodology of making code freely available to anyone who may wish to access it for any purpose, unconditionally. Concurrently, open source is for many a philosophical approach to software development, and is seen as the only truly sustainable approach to software development... In both its execution as a model for making possible new forms of collaborative work, and its philosophical underpinnings of sustainability and openness, it is an essential component in and influence upon a computer-based mapping solution.

This passionate call for open source software is about more than a philosophical ethical stance. It is also about enabling critique and improvements. "Map studies needs to open the 'black boxes' of mapping software, to start to interrogate algorithms and databases, and in particular to investigate the production of ready-made maps that appear almost magically on the interfaces of gadgets and devices we carry and use everyday, often without much overt thought about how they work and whose map they project onto their interface" [69].

## **Why Scenario Planning and Decision Support?**

Levels of decision support [60]:

1. *Basic information handling support*
  - (a) Information management
  - (b) Visual aids
  - (c) Group collaboration support
2. *Decision Analysis Support*
  - (a) Option modeling



- (b) Choice models
  - (c) Structured group process techniques
3. *Group reasoning support*
- (a) Judgement refinement/amplification techniques
  - (b) Analytical reasoning methods

"Scenario planning is a method of long-term strategic planning that creates representations of multiple, plausible futures of the system of interest." It arose in military and corporate strategies [70]

Scenario Planning arose from two independent sources: Herman Kahn at the RAND Corporation working for the Air Defense System Missile Command and Gaston Berger at the Centre d'Etudes Prospectives [71]. These in turn were further developed in the private sector by Shell and GE, with the former publishing more openly on the topic. Numerous forms of scenario planning exist. For instance, Kahn's original formulation was probabilistic, focusing on the most likely scenarios. Berger's, on the other hand, was normative, focusing on the scenarios to be aimed for. Lastly, Shell's has eschewed both of these, focusing instead on capturing a range of potential future scenarios and using them to explore responses and to educate decision-makers. Regardless of the focus, scenario planning centers around the construction of some number discrete "future worlds" that consist of a set of both quantitative and qualitative parameters. Impact on the organization and potential responses are then explored. While the exact methodology varies and different organizations use scenario planning for different purposes, most private corporations use it primarily for long range business planning [71]. That said, scenarios planning has also been used to construct early warning systems, by identifying the important areas and trends to monitor to inform decision-making [72].

"A scenario-based strategic plan is... appropriate for vision, framework, comprehensive, system, and redevelopment plans and for those with long time horizons and low or moderate detail" [70].

*Oregon Scenario Planning Guidelines* proposes a six-step process for scenario planning ( [73] as paraphrased by [70]:

1. Create a framework for the scenario planning process.
2. Select evaluation criteria.
3. Set up for scenario planning: evaluation tools ,data, and building blocks.
4. Develop and evaluate base-year conditions and reference case.
5. Develop and evaluate alternative scenarios
6. Select the preferred scenario

Goodman describes four primary kinds of planning support models [70]:

1. Generic Systems Models: Developing a typically non-spatial abstract representation of a system and analyzing how it functions. System dynamics is a classic example.
2. Economic and Demographic Models: The set of techniques that focus on changes in employment of particular sectors and in population of different characteristics. Klosterman is the classic text on these methods. [74]
3. Place-Type Development and Analysis: Tools used to simulate future outcomes based on land use, zoning, population density, etc. CommunityViz is an example of this [75].
4. Urban Systems Models: Essentially a combination of generic systems modeling and place-type development and analysis models to accurately represent spatial phenomena over time, such as transportation networks and organic growth. Examples include cellular automata and spatial interaction models.

Jankowski and Nyerges lay out seven common design requirements for spatial decision support tools [60]:

1. A spatial decision support system for collaborative work should offer decisional guidance to users in the form of an agenda.
2. A system should not be restrictive, allowing the users to select tools and procedures in any order.
3. A system should be comprehensive within the realm of spatial decision problems, and thus offer a number of decision space exploration tools and evaluation techniques.

4. The user interface should be both process-oriented and data-oriented to allow an equally easy access to task-solving techniques, as well as maps and data visualization tools.
5. A system should be capable of supporting facilitated meetings and hence, allow for the information exchange to proceed among group members, and between group members and the facilitator. It should also allow space- and time-distributed collaborative work by facilitating information exchange, electronic submission of solution options, and voting through the internet.
6. A system functionality should include extensive multiple criteria evaluation capabilities, sensitivity analysis, specialized maps to support the enumeration of preferences and comparison of alternative performance, voting, and consensus building tools.
7. A system should provide necessary functionality to support needs of an advanced user without overwhelming a novice who needs a user-guiding interface.

PGIS: Refer to macro-micro framework from Table 2.1, pg.17. What parts this thesis covers and what parts we envision EVDT covering in the long term.

### 2.1.5 Why Systems Engineering?

Refer to Crawley, deWeck, de Neufville, Rhodes, my earlier papers, etc.

Computational models have been closely linked to the pursuit of sustainable development and with its definition, stemming from the World3 system dynamics model underlying the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* report in 1972 [76].

Sustainability first enters engineering literature in the 1970s and its frequency rises in a logarithmic fashion over the course of the subsequent decades [77]. This rise is mirrored by a similar rise in other domains (such as architecture) and in the popular consciousness. For example, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program was founded in 1994 and has since become commonplace around the world.

"Sustainable development is also a science of complex systems" [12]

Table 2.2: Generic macro-micro, participatory decision strategy. Adapted from [60]

<i>Micro-activities in a decision strategy</i>	<i>Macro-phases in a decision strategy</i>		
	<b>1. Intelligence</b> about values, objectives, and criteria	<b>2. Design</b> of a set of feasible options	<b>3. Choice</b> about recommendations
<b>A. Gather...</b>	issues to develop and refine <b>value trees</b> as a basis for objectives	<b>primary criteria</b> as a basis for option generation	<b>values, criteria, and option list scenarios</b> for an evaluation
<b>B. Organize...</b>	<b>objectives</b> as a basis for criteria and constraints	and apply approaches(es) for <b>option generation</b>	approaches to <b>priority and sensitivity analyses</b>
<b>C. Select...</b>	<b>criteria</b> to be used in analysis as a basis for generating options	the <b>feasible option list</b>	<b>recommendation</b> as a prioritized list of options
<b>D. Review...</b>	criteria, <b>resources</b> , <b>constraints</b> , and <b>standards</b>	<b>option set(s)</b> in line with resources, constraints, and standards	<b>recommendation(s)</b> in line with original <b>value(s), goal(s), and objectives</b>

"Sustainable Development involves not just one but four complex interacting systems. It deals with a global economy...; it focuses on social interactions...; it analyzes the changes in complex Earth systems...; and it studies the problems of governance". [12] [Compare this to the EVDT framework]

The growth and development of cities is a complex system. Much work has been done using cellular automata and fractals to model them [78]

Urban planners have been seeking to develop useful indices and indicators akin to those used in engineering and remote observation contexts for decades (Section 1, Chapter 3 of [79])

"Futures planning as described and prescribed by futurists is different from planning *for* the future; it is an attempt to manipulate or plan *the* future. A basic characteristic of this orientation is the use of such terms as "designing," "inventing," or even "making" the future. When the future is being planned for, rather than designed, the

implication is that the planner is trying to make specific and limited accommodations to the broad and overall characteristics of the future he considers either immutable or too formidable to be fundamentally rearranged or restructured" [80].

"If alternatives are not carefully related to goals and objectives there is the real danger that they will either fail to reflect certain important issues which the planning process to being used to study, or worse still, be almost irrelevant... Alternatives must reflect the goals sought; the means must reflect the ends" [81].

Position EVDT using the different dimensions of models proposed in [82]:

Sachs argues that two specific tools are important for implementing the SDGs: backcasting and technology road-mapping [12]. Systems engineering is well equipped to address both of these.

1. descriptive vs. analytic
2. holistic vs. partial
3. macro vs. micro
4. static vs. dynamic
5. deterministic vs. probabilistic
6. simultaneous vs. sequential (directly calculate the output or go through intermediate phases)

In order for cost-benefit analysis to maximize economic welfare, the following conditions must be met [83]:

1. Opportunity costs are borne by beneficiaries in such wise as to retain the initial income distribution
2. The initial income distribution is in some sense "best"
3. The marginal social rates of transformation between any two commodities are everywhere equal to their corresponding rates of substitution except for the area(s) justifying the intervention in question

More details modeling, as well as breaking down specific costs and benefits (as opposed to converting them to monetary terms and summing them) and attribut-

ing them to specific goals, can circumvent these constraints, though at the cost of increased complexity [84].

This work does not directly incorporate mechanisms for multi-stakeholder negotiation or tradespace exploration, but it is amenable to extension with such mechanisms (refer to SEAr research)

The Law of requisite variety from the field of cybernetics says that the variety (the number of elements or states) of the control device must be at least equal to that of the disturbances [85]. Any development plan is going to fall far short of the variety expressed by human society and the natural environment. Planning efforts must then make reliance on the natural homeostasis behavior of such systems and of more flexible, ad hoc measures not specified in the plan in order to make up the difference in variety. [86]

Refer to epoch-era analysis and tie that in to scenario planning history.

Goodchild defines six different GIS data field model types and states that "no current GIS gives its users full access to all six":

1. Sample randomly located points (e.g. weather stations, light detection and ranging (LIDAR) data)
2. Sample randomly from a grid of regularly space points (e.g. many data validation studies)
3. Divide the area into a grid in which each rectangular cell records the average, total, or dominant value; i.e. raster data (e.g. satellite imagery)
4. Divide the area into homogenous regions and record the average, total, or dominant value in each area (e.g. census data, soil maps)
5. Record the locations of lines of fixed values (e.g. contour or isopleth maps)
6. Divide the area into irregular shaped triangles and assume the field varies linearly within each (e.g. some Digital Elevation Models (DEMs))

In the mid 90s, GIS had several limitations [49]:

- Two-dimensional, with some excursions into three
- Static, with some limited support for time dependence

- Limited capabilities for representing forms of interaction between objects
- A diverse and confusing set of data models
- Dominated by the map metaphor

## 2.2 EVDT Framework

Is not itself a means of planning and implementing projects. It is not a full life-cycle tool such as Planning-Programming-Budgeting System (PPBS) [87]

The motivation for combining so many variables from different disciplines stems from both push and pull factors. The push factors are the simple increase in availability of data, as has already been described, along with the increase in the interoperability of the variables (which the work described in this thesis is trying to help contribute to). The primary pull factor is our increased understanding of - and appreciation for - the complex relationships between these domains, relationships that were previously ignored in analyses [88].

## 2.3 Intended Use Cases / Applications

While EVDT does not include any concrete spatial scale requirements, it is often the most straightforward to apply to it at a relatively local scale, like much of the early history of GIS applications [59]. Most of the applications to date have been at the area of a metropolitan area or that of a small province.

Commonly has to do with common-pool resources (CPRs). Talk about the three common ways of managing CPRs: Central management, privatization, self-management. Bring in Table 2.3 showing design principles of long-enduring self-management institutions. Refer to successful aspects of the water basin in California (incremental and sequential process to reduce the costs of local institutional supply, shared information at each step, intermediate benefits from initial investments were realized prior to larger investments, transformed structure of incentives within which future strategic decisions can be made) (pg. 137. [2])

Table 2.3: Design principles illustrated by long-lasting CPR institutions. Adapted from [2]

1.	Clearly defined boundaries
2.	Congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions
3.	Collective-choice arrangements
4.	Monitoring
5.	Graduated sanctions
6.	Conflict-resolution mechanisms
7.	Minimal recognition of rights to organize
	<i>For CPRs that are parts of larger systems:</i>
8.	Nested enterprises

We also

Harris et al. have pointed out that reliance on mapping products to designate certain geographic areas for conservation has several negative consequences, including:

- solidifying a notion that humans and non-human others are, and should be, separate.
- privileging those voices and perspectives that have access and expertise related to Western cartographic approaches and GIScience in conservation debates.
- favoring those spaces, ecosystems, and natures that may be "more mappable" for protection over other areas.
- cementing an overly-limited territorial approach to conservation, in ways that potentially sideline non-territorial approaches.
- consolidating an overly-fixed and static approach to conservation, rather than enabling approaches that may be more seasonal, fluid, or appropriate for shifting and evolving ecological conditions and needs.

## 2.4 Critiques

- Technology itself is at best a major contributor, if not the source of most of the problems you seek to address. It is inherently elitist, colonialist, racist, and/or



authoritarian. If you truly want to save the Earth and stop oppression, you should abandon technology rather than doubling down on it.

- Western-run technocratic planning and international development perpetuates colonialism, typically fails in its own goals, and merely destroys traditional communities.
- Sustainable development, as it is commonly used, is essentially meaningless and the SDGs are likewise such a potpourri of targets and indicators that they have little influence on what would have happened anyways.
- The effectiveness of scenario planning and most other forms of decision support is ambiguous at best, despite their long history. Another research project in this vein is thus fundamentally flawed and is not real science.
- Systems engineering is an inherently elitist methodology whose primary use is to defend the oppressive status quo and eke out greater "efficiencies" with little regard for societal consequences.

#### **2.4.1 Technology is inherently elitist, colonialist, racist, etc.**

It may not be clear why I am including this section. After all, most readers and certainly the evaluators of this thesis are certainly not of this opinion, or else they would not be working at the forefront of their respective fields, all of which heavily involve the use of technology. Nonetheless, I am reluctant to discard this argument out of hand, particularly when technology has been so integrally involved with so many of the evils of the past several centuries.

While the opinion of society about technology has gone through cycles of optimism and pessimism since the start of the Industrial Revolution, prior to the second half of the 20th century, it was common for the scientists and engineers who were most directly involved with the development of technology to consider it either as neutral tools, extensions of human will, or as deterministic mechanisms of progress towards a better future. Questions of morality are either shifted to the human users (and thus outside the jurisdiction of the designers) or resolved entirely. For example, John Maynard Keynes, one of the more influential thinkers of the early 20th century,

explicitly linked technology to progress, as part of his sketching a utopian future: "This slow [historical] rate of progress, or lack of progress, was due to two reasons - to the remarkable absence of important technical improvements and to the failure of capital to accumulate" [89].

It was only in the late 1980s did scholars of geography, informed primarily by Michel Foucault and Karl Marx, start challenging the idea that "cartography produces maps of truth in an objective, neutral, scientific fashion." [90]. John Pickles was one of the more articulate purveyors of such an argument [58]:

The Western trope of a public space in which people (usually "men") of good faith join in debate about their future, appropriated by industrial and urban forms of modernity as a mythic image of a democratic culture of debate and negotiation predicated on individual autonomy, private property, and state power has more recently been further appropriated by the news and communication media through their claim to be the embodiment of the modern civic arena. This trope of public space is now being reappropriated by the electronic age as its wish image - the promise and possibility of "information." The putative openness of new electronic information media and the rhetoric of "voice," "openness," and "information" - the trope of reasoned, open, uncoerced discourse in a public place - is appropriated to the project of social development and private profit.

But, like all highways, the information highway requires points of access, capital investment, navigation skills, and spatial and cultural proximity for effective use. Like the automobile highway, the information highway fosters new rounds of creative destruction and differentiates among users and between users and nonusers. It brings regions of difference under a common logic and technology, and through differential access and use exacerbates old and crates new patterns of social and economic differentiation. While for some, information means the provision of alternatives and the satisfaction of choice (even if a "choice" signifies a socially constructed yet now naturalized whim of the wealthy consumer), for others this postindustrialism (and its attendant postmodern cultural forms) must still be seen in the context of a political economy of graft, monopolism, and uneven development.

Such processes of territorial colonizations, globalization, and production of new scales of action contrast sharply with a technocultural ideology of enhanced autonomy and self-actualization, and severely complicates the assessment of the relationship between technological innovation and social change.

Amid the dilemma of "the disempowering habit of demonizing technology as a

satanic mill of domination" and "the postmodernist celebrations of the technological sublime," however, emerged scholars seeking to provide "a realistic assessment of the politics - the dangers *and* the possibilities - that are currently at stake in those cultural practices touched by advanced technology" [91]. Chief among these were Lewis Mumford and Langdon Winner. The former theorized that technology came in two different essential stripes, neither good or evil, but instead authoritarian and democratic, that "from late neolithic times in the Near East, right down to our own day, two technologies have recurrently existed side by side: one authoritarian, hte other democratic, the first system-centered, immensely powerful, but inherently unstable, athe other [hu]man-centered, relatively weak, but resourceful and durable" [92].

For examples of these two types, Hayes suggested the inherently bulky and centralized nuclear power with inherently decentralized solar power [93] (though Hayes neglected the immensely centralized nature of the production of solar panels). Winner extended this theory, arguing that many technologies had politics embedded in them, regardless of the intent of either the creator or use. "It is neither correct nor insightful to say, 'Someone intended to do somebody else harm.' Rather, one must say that the technological deck has been stacked long in advance to favor certain social interests, and that some people were bound to receive a better hand than others" [94].

The ideas of Mumford and Winner have become commonplace. Even self-admitted technological optimists like Jeffrey Sachs [95] feel it necessary to qualify their optimism: "*Choosing the right technologies*, we can achieve continued economic growth and also honor the planetary boundaries" [emphasis mine] [12]. Similarly, the largest developers of new technologies, such as Google, find it necessary to put effort into studying the ethics of their systems (though there is some evidence that this is mere lip-service [96]).

The question then is, which category do the technologies used in this fall into? That is what the following sections will address.

## GIS and Mapping

It is undeniable that the history of mapping and thus of GIS is one of centralization and authoritarianism. National mapping in the US originated in motives that were explicitly of means for resource exploitation and control [31]. Furthermore, as pointed out by Pickles, historically within the GIS research community and its predecessors, there has been a certain "technocratic myopia" and unwillingness to consider novel, insurgent uses of GIS that has led critics to label it as an "inherently conservative form of analysis" [97], or as McHaffie put more movingly, "Perhaps the 'frightened Africans' who once 'threw spears at an Aero Service aircraft' or the 'suspicious moonshiners in Appalachia' who 'took a few rifle shots' at aerial mappers did so not because the intentions of the mappers were 'not always understood,' but because those intentions, and the powerful forces being them, were understood only too well" [31].

That said, even Pickles himself did not feel that this was not necessarily so moving forward, that centralized, authoritarianism was 'baked into' GIS. "GIS and informatics do open virtual space of 'real' social interaction, new communities of dialogue, and new interactive settings... Systems of informatics provide a potential source of counterhegemonic social action, and GIS... offers a diverse array of practical possibilities... Informatics are seen as a potential liberator of socially and politically marginalized groups, and thus a source of democratizing power for these newly networked groups" [97]. Meanwhile Tulloch argued that GIS is naturally developing through phases, seen in Figure 2-8, while the inherently problematically simplistic outcomes of efficiency and effectiveness were the primary result of earlier stages, future states, including democratization of GIS will instead produce equity.

One of the consequences of the Mumford-Winner view, however, is that it implies that the designers of technology have both agency and responsibility to determine what politics are embedded in their designs. To reject either the agency or the responsibility is highly problematic. Many designers of digital tools seek to reject the former and commit themselves to a sort of technological determinism. For example, Stephen Goldsmith and Susan Crawford, who did a great deal to implement such

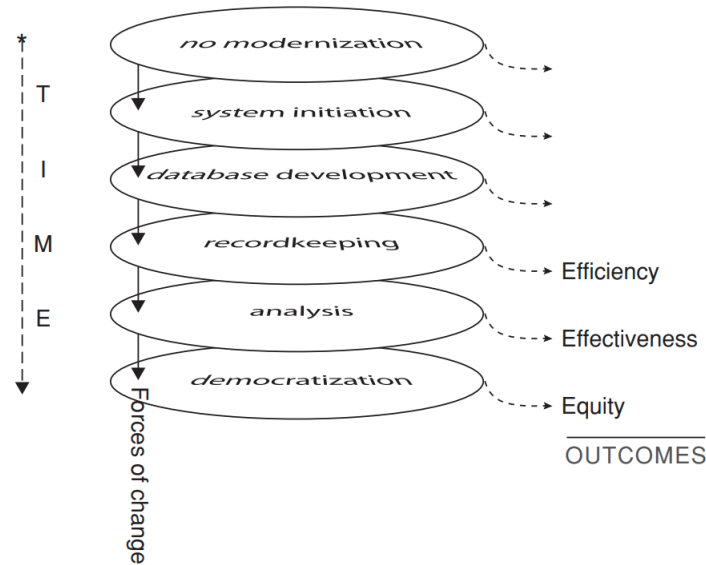


Figure 2-8: Development of GIS development and associated outcomes. From [98] as reprinted in [59]

technologies in New York City and Indianapolis, wrote that "the process of collection is *not going to stop*. We think, in fact, that it would be shortsighted and *probably impossible to halt this natural evolution*. That is all the more reason, then, to carefully establish policies covering data access, data security, and transparency with respect to its collections" [56]. They thus divorce themselves of responsibility for the design of the technology itself and restrict themselves for seeking to govern who uses it.

Meanwhile Goodspeed writes about the opposite problem, "Planning theorists have too often accepted Habermas's view that technology is primarily associated with technical rather than moral rationality, which leads them to overlook technology's potential normative dimension... Even choosing a digital tool requires making value-laden judgements about what issues matter enough to be analyzed. Because digital tools typically inherit the worldviews and assumptions of their creators, even well-meaning applications of them can inhibit potentially valuable new ideas or critical perspectives." He then proposes the term *tool of inquiry* to "describe the ideal in which tools are continually shaped, used, and tested by public users," [70] thereby aligning it with the democratic, human-centered type of technology.

We must recognize that, as Krygier and Wood so playfully illustrated, maps (and

all GISs) are, fundamentally, propositions about that world that are asserting a fact and promoting an action. Because of this "you must accept responsibility for the realities you create with maps" [99]. And this is not limited to maps. Design itself is purposeful in that it forges both pathways and boundaries in its instrumental and cultural use" ([100] as paraphrased in [101]).

And there are clear examples of geospatial data being using for positive impact. For instance, there is NASA's famous Blue Marble image, which, while perhaps more iconic than cartographic, is still undeniably a geospatial object, a map even, that has essentially created both "one-world" discourse and "whole-earth" discourse [102]. If that seems to much of a reach or too incidental, we can look at how Laura Kurgan and others used their "Million Dollar Blocks" project to powerful visualize the impact of mass incarceration upon particular, primarily black, American communities, helping to shift public perception and policy discussions [103]. Or how the Sierra Club has made significant use of Google Earth in their efforts to garner support for conservation efforts in the US Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and elsewhere [102].

Additionally, in some ways, we want to avoid making a seamless tool, as "the most significant impacts of technology tend to occur when the technology becomes indistinguishable from the fabric of every day life" ([104] as paraphrased in [51]). This is not, unfortunately, not sufficient. "We all tend to defer to machines, which can seem more neutral, more objective" even when they are actively warning us of their limitations and fallibility [105].

I do align myself with those who feel that "Even though the funding or research and development... of GIS and other imaging systems has come primarily from business, state, and military sources, advocates of the progressive potential information and imaging technologies argue that access is hard to deny, networks are difficult to control, information is readily accessible and used by individuals and groups with limited budgets and expertise, and the ability to use the technology in depth permits groups like environmental organizations to counter claims by polluters about their environmental impacts, by developers about likely local effects of runoff and ground water, and so on... GIS enables communities to make better decisions by

providing access to more and better information. It offers more powerful tools for local planning agencies; it offers exciting possibilities for data coordination, access, and exchange; and it permits more efficient allocation of resources, and a more open rational decision-making process" [97]. That said, I don't believe that any of this is guaranteed or effortless. It requires intentionality and reflection on the part of the designers, as well as a humble willingness to listen to criticism from anyone, including those who are not 'experts.'

As we proceed, we must keep in mind that "the very notion that technologies are neutral must be directly challenged as a misnomer," [101] and that, as Smithsonian curator Lucy Fellowes said, "Every map is someone's way of getting you to look at the world his or her way" [106].

## **Technocratic Planning and International Development**

By "technocracy" we mean the basic idea that "the human problem of urban design has a unique solution, which an expert can discover and execute. Deciding such technical matters by politics and bargaining would lead to the wrong solution" [16]. It is typical for a believer of this idea to quickly put themselves in the role of the "expert [who] can discover and execute." That said, they quickly find themselves beset by complexity and gaps in the data that frustrate their efforts. For such aspirants "legibility [is] a central problem," one that must be solved prior to addressing urban design itself. To this end, "exceptionally, complex, illegible, and local social practices" must be turned into "a standard grid whereby it [can] be centrally recorded and monitored." This, of course, requires immense simplification. These "state simplifications... have the character of maps. That is, they are designed to summarize precisely those aspects of a complex world that are of immediate interest to the map-maker and to ignore the rest. To complain that a map lacks nuance and detail makes no sense unless it omits information necessary to its function." And the interest of these would-be-technocrats tends to be their "unique solution." Taken together, there are five specific characteristics of these simplifications [16]:

1. They are interested and utilitarian, aimed at a particular end.

2. They are nearly always written, as opposed to visual or verbal.
3. They are typically static and thus, perpetually out-of-date to at least some extent. "The cadastral map is very much like a still photograph of the current in a river."
4. They are typically aggregate facts, not individual ones.
5. They are standardized, so as to enable comparison and longitudinal analysis.

These individuals are what Easterly calls "Planners," to be distinguished by "Searchers," those who seek for bottom-up solution to specific, addressable needs [107]. The Planners, meanwhile, fashion themselves into benevolent dictators (though they would eschew being called as such) focused on implementing their solution [108]. Beyond outright failure, such endeavours have not infrequently caused immense social harms, including famines, cultural destruction, and environmental collapse.

James Scott argued that four elements were necessary to precipitate the most tragic of social engineering disasters [16]:

1. The "administrative ordering of nature and society." This includes items like cadastral maps, surnames, census records, and a standardized legal system. As Theodore Porter put it, "Society must be remade before it can be the object of quantification." [109]
2. A "high-modernist ideology," which Scott defines as a "strong," "muscle-bound" "self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature... and the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws."
3. An authoritarian state that is both "willing and able" to wield power to enact the high-modernist ideology.
4. A vulnerable civil society that "lacks the capacity to resist" the plans of that authoritarian state.

In essence what is "truly dangerous to us and our environment... is the *combination* of the universalist pretensions of epistemic knowledge and authoritarian social



engineering" [16]. Such a combination often takes the form of undue focus being places on specific metrics, with little interest in underlying causes and dynamics. "Many studies involve ranking places on one or more criteria, and allocating policy benefits accordingly. At its crudest this applied geography merely provides a list of winner and losers with no understanding of why the differences occur" [46].

With regard to the second element a key aspect is that, as Scott notes, high-modernist ideology is not scientific practice exactly. Rather, it is a "faith that borrowed from the legitimacy of science and technology." In fact, it was more an aesthetic predilection than anything scientific. Furthermore, the underlying ideas were in fact quite sympathetic. "Doctors and public-health engineers who did possess new knowledge that could save millions of lives were often thwarted by popular prejudices and entrenched political interests" [16]. The dangers were when an authoritarian state adopted the aesthetic veils of such ideas to justify actions, in the way that Social Darwinism used evolutionary theory to justify horrid actions. In this way "the classism and racism of elites are mathwashed, neutralized by technological mystification and data-based hocus-pocus." [105] This ideology could also be considered a "dangerous form of magical thinking [that] often accompanies new technological developments, a curious assurance that a revolution in our tools inevitably wipes the slate of the past clean." [105]

The details lost in the necessary simplifications that the technocrat must make often turn out to not be so negligible after all. In the USSR, "a set of informal practices lying outside of the formal command economy - and often outside Soviet law as well - [arose] to circumvent some of the colossal waste and inefficiencies built into the system. Collectivized agriculture, in other words, never quite operated according to the hierarchical grid of production plans and procurements." [16] The technocratic leaders were often aware of this but so committed to their ideology that they had no alternative but to maintain a sort of pretense, which anthropologist Alexi Yurchak called 'hypernormalization' [110], that served to compound problems until the Soviet Union eventually collapsed. Such a phenomena is particularly visible in strictly planned capital cities that have, "as the inevitable accompaniment of [their] official

structures, given rise to another, far more ‘disorderly’ and complex city *that makes the official city work* - that is virtually a condition of its existence" [16].

Even the ‘successful’ development projects often came at a high cost and raised the question of "successful for whom?" After all "Haussmann’s Paris was, *for those who are not expelled*, a far healthier city" (emphasis mine) [16].

So, with all of this said, do we think that the field of planning still has a positive role to play in society? I will propose three arguments in favor of such an idea, none of which are wholly satisfactory, but together may amount to something credible.

First, we may attempt to avoid fulfilling the conditions proposed by Scott above. We may, for instance, refuse to do work in areas with authoritarian governments, though this would certainly neglect many in dire need. We may also reject the high modernist ideology in our planning. This is certainly easier, as I have been doing exactly that, but it should not be taken as trivial either. In many ways such an ideology is the default of the technologist, and it requires active self-reflection to avoid falling into that trap.

And the unfortunate matter is, even if we assume that Scott is correct in that his conditions are the necessary and sufficient conditions, what are they conditions for? "The *most tragic* episodes of state-initiated engineering" (emphasis mine) [16]. The egregiously racist influence that Robert Moses had the design of New York City [94] happened in at least somewhat democratic society, not an authoritarian one. While it did not directly lead to mass famine and death, it is hardly something that we would want to replicate. I daresay that we want to do more than avoid the most tragic outcomes and instead want to do active good. We must therefore look beyond merely avoiding Scott’s conditions.

Second, we may argue that planning has simply "come a long way from focusing on single page map and a timescale of 20-30 years" [111]. It is certainly true that many of the tools have changed over the past few decades. Systems engineering, for instance, is a substantionally different field than it was in the middle of the 20th century, as is discussed in Sections 2.1.5 and 2.4.1. Sachs meanwhile proposes that prescriptive economics should be modeled on clinical medicine and should not seek to

attribute all negative outcomes to the same cause nor to prescribe the same solution to all problems, but instead to "make a differential diagnosis for the economic case at hand." He lays out several different conditions of poverty, for example, and proposes different solutions to each. Foreign aid is effective at treating the "poverty trap" condition (wherein "the country is too poor to make the basic investments it needs to escape from extreme material deprivation and get on the ladder of economic growth"), but less so for other conditions [12]. In this way, he seeks to distance himself from the high modernist ideology, with its affinity for singular, simple solutions, while still doubling down on the technocratic approach in general.

It should be noted, however, that Sachs has been a senior advisor to numerous states and the UN dating back to the mid 1980s and thus has had ample time to demonstrate his ideas. Nonetheless, many of the critiques referred to already are addressing this time period and some, such as Easterly [107], were specifically aimed at Sach's efforts, with some arguing that many of his projects have left people worse off than before [112].

I do think that many of the methodological and technological changes over the past several decades are meaningful, but it also seems undeniable that these changes seem insufficient to ensure good outcomes. So we must look elsewhere for means of shoring up the deficiencies.

The third argument we may make that planning still has a positive role to play is involves collaborative and participatory forms of planning, similarly to what was done for GIS DSSs in Section 2.1.4. After all even one of the proponents of high modernist ideology recognized that "rational, hierarchical, closed-door decision strategies" had negative consequences and that "more democratic process might produces worse results, but it would respond to the increasing sense of alienation among the nation's urban population" [6]. This avenue is not without its flaws, unfortunately. By providing tools for more participation, we are not necessarily changing anything fundamental. "Participation is not power; its reform is not radical" [113]. Even if participation is quite extensive and includes actual political power, "democracies rarely end up expropriating and redistributing capital" [114].

Not only is participation evidently insufficient on its own, but some argue that neoliberalism in factor prefers to use participation as a means of undermining resistance, rather than violence, though this has the risk of providing a structure for coalition building and radicalization [115]. In fact, increased community involvement can result in more restrictive, unambitious goals that are not in the interests of certain minorities [116]. A key aspect of participatory planning is that mere participation does not magically eliminate power hierarchies. Such pre-existing hierarchies can wield their power in planning discussions in three primary ways: "by promoting formal decisions, setting the agenda, and influencing the broader ideological context of the debate" ([117] as paraphrased by [70]).

Despite this, there is evidence that, with proper creation of the structures of participation or in the wholesale rejection of the state-led participatory structures, that planning can be used to promote equity and development. Goodspeed points out several examples of how participatory and even insurgent scenario-based planning helped address injustices such as racism in urban development [70]. I discuss further evidence to this effect in Section 2.4.3.

This suggests that, while technology-based collaborative or participatory planning efforts are unlikely to effect radical change, they can, *if done well*, still affect positive change.

In line with some of Easterly's arguments, Virginia Eubanks proposes two gut check questions to ensure that a planning tool avoids harmful consequences [105]:

1. Does the tool increase the self-determination and agency of the poor?
2. Would the tool be tolerated if it was targeted at non-poor people?

Jonathan Furer, meanwhile, proposes three strategies for developing such tools ([118] as paraphrased by [101]):

1. Admission on the part of designers that bias in classification schemes exists, and indeed is an inevitable result of the ways in which they are currently structured.
2. Recognition that adherence to a policy of neutrality will contribute little to eradication of that bias and indeed can only extend its life.

3. Construction, collection, and analysis of narrative expressions of the feelings, thoughts, and beliefs of classification-scheme users who identify with particularly racially-defined populations.

So, while I argue that a combination of new methodologies and technologies, collaborative and participatory design, and a general intellectual humility are sufficient to avoid the harmful outcomes of the past (and present), Eubank's and Furner's points are worth keeping in mind as we continue.

## **Systems Engineering**

"Many who seek to harness computational power for social justice tend to find affinity with systems engineering approaches to social problems. These perspectives assume that complex controversies can be solved by getting correct information where it needs to go as efficiently as possible. In this model, political conflict arises primarily from a lack of information. If we just gather all the facts, systems engineers assume, the correct answers to intractable policy problems like homelessness will be simple, uncontroversial, and widely shared. But, for better or worse, this is not how politics work." [105]

US Vice President Herbert Humphrey said in 1968 that "The techniques that are going to put a man on the Moon are going to be exactly the techniques that we are going to need to clean up our cities." [6]

"Trying to solve 'earthly problems,' especially urban problems through aerospace innovations had shown that 'transporting the astronauts from terra firma to land on the lunar sphere, travel hither and yon over its surface, and then back home to Houston' was a comparatively simple task." [6]

In 1968 the RAND Corporation established a multi-year attempt to bring systems analysis and engineering to urban planning. Around the same time the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) hosted meetings on urban technologies to bring aerospace expertise to bear on the urban crises of the time [6].

These applications were justified by several different rationales, chief among them were [6]:

- Computer simulations and related techniques were simply advances on the statistical models already widely used by the urban planning profession.
- The rise of cybernetics, with its cross-disciplinary control analogies, promised to unify disparate fields within urban planning and analysis, resulting in a unified understanding of cities.
- The use of these military innovations would transform urban planning and decision-making into scientific endeavors.

As was discussed in Section 2.4.1, however, this last rationale tended to be more of an aesthetic argument, rather than one grounded in fact. It is a preference for the simple, regular, controlled, and "rational", all of which are, in fact, hideously artificial. Thankfully, among systems engineers this perspective is a view that is largely considered to be outmoded. Instead, in the guise of theories of complex systems and chaos, they have adopted Jane Jacob's view that "intricate minglings of different uses are not a form of chaos. On the contrary they represent a complex and highly developed form of order." [5]. Systems engineering has moved away from prescription, embraced multi-stakeholder analysis and negotiation, and uses chaos and complexity theory, uses probabilistic modeling.

There were certain factors that contributed to the lack of success during this era [6]:

- These new techniques, heavily dependent on quantification, suffered from a lack of relevant data, particularly on wellbeing.
- There was a lack of prior goal setting by decision makers. Technical experts were driven by a desire to use the tools available to them rather than to actually address the specific needs of the community.
- Technocratic systems and defense analysts displaced professional urban planners and others with detailed subject knowledge, rather than seeking to cooperate and learn from them. Some urban planners went so far as to complain that "their work had been hijacked by refugees from aerospace."

There are many possible causes of this arrogance. James Scott argues that "the

willful disdain for local competence... was not, I believe, simply a case of prejudice (of the educated, urban, and Westernized elite towards the peasantry) or of aesthetic commitments implicit in high modernism. Rather, official attitudes were also a matter of institutional privilege. To the degree that [local] practices were presumed reasonable until proven otherwise, to the degree that specialists might learn as from [locals] as vice versa, and to the degree that specialists had to negotiate with [locals] as political equals, would the basic premise behind the officials' institutional power and status be undermined." [16]

This era of systems engineering applications on urban planning was also marked by significant secrecy, as was the cultural norm of these military-connected organizations [6].

"From cybernetics to computer simulation to satellite reconnaissance, techniques and technologies originally developed for military users in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s thus became the focus of efforts to better plan and manage U.S. cities in the 1960s and 1970s" Ultimately however, they "rarely served as sources of solutions" and instead resulted in the "creation and maintenance of an urban 'power elite' whose influence on the ways Americans conceptualize cities and their problems has persisted to the present day. [6]

Figure 2-9; Systems engineering is positioned on the far left of the figure, indicating that the field (or at least the authors listed associated with it) "look to the confirmation and reproduction of existing relationships of power in society. Expressing predominantly technical concerns, they proclaim a carefully nurtured stance of political neutrality. In reality, they address their work to those who are in power and see their primary mission as serving the state." [119]

"The engineer's sense of certainty (and his ignorance of history) informed some of the most prominent of later planning theorists... all of whom were enthralled by the idea of "designing society" [119]

"There was a moment in time when aeronautic and space engineers thought that, having reached the moon, they could now turn their energies to solving the problem of growing violence in cities along with other urban "crises." [119]

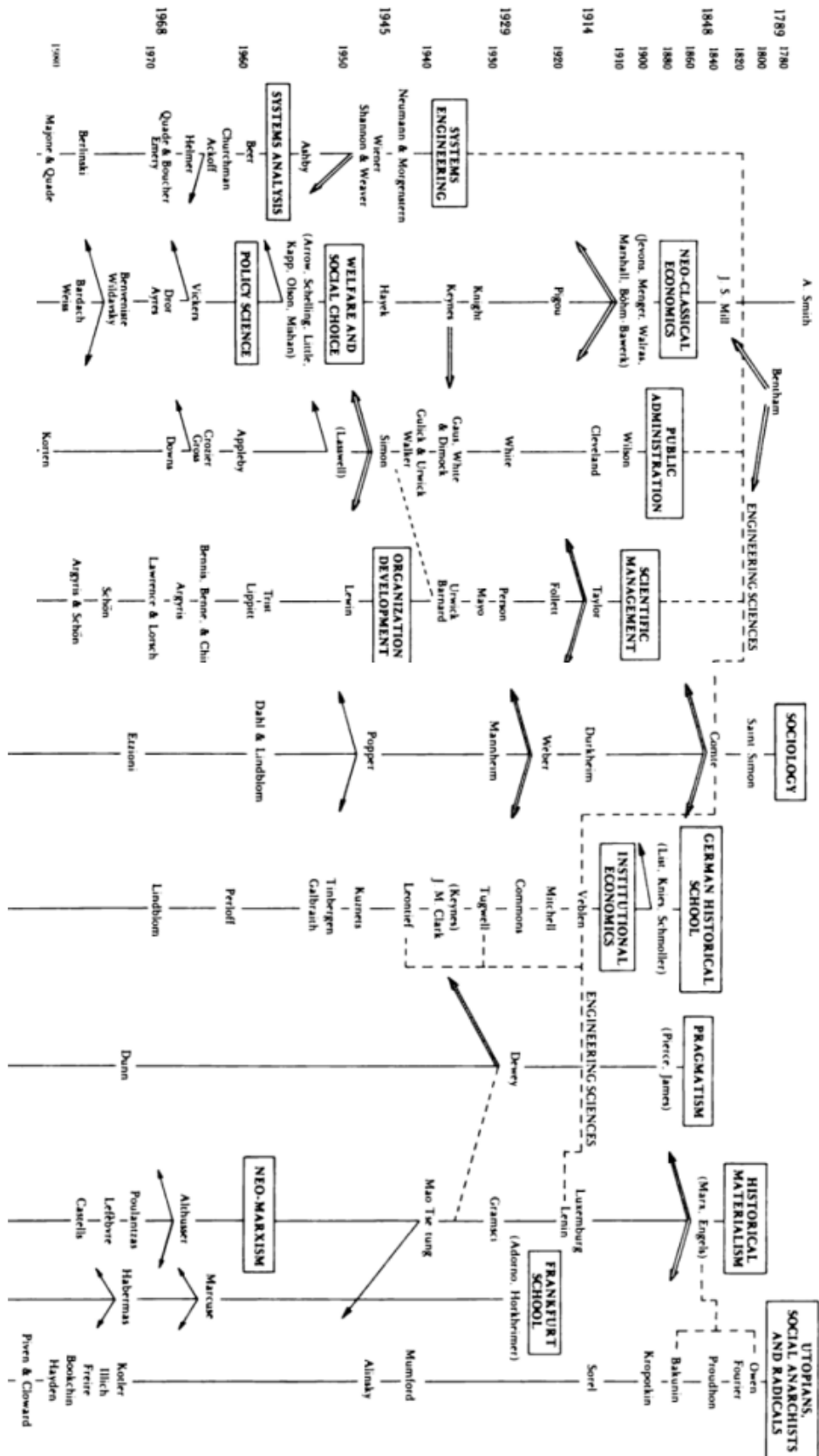


Figure 2-9: Timeline of intellectual influences on American planning theory. From [119]



Also use diagram/framework from [113]:

- **Technicist:** Planning focused on maximizing efficient of the system being planned. The planner is a technical professional with specialized knowledge. The "technicist is inherently conservative: it is to serve an economic and social and policital order in which its role is to make that order function smoothly."
- **Social Reform:** Planning grounded in social ideas and values while viewing the necessary changes as possible within the exisiting framework of social, political, and economic order. The exact values of concern have varied over the years, with environmental sustainability coming to the rise more recently.
- **Social Justice:** Planning by grass-roots groups and social movements, putting values ahead of efficiency, and willing to work outside of existing systems to accomplish its goals.

Table 2.4: Axes of currents of city planning. Based on [113]

		<i>Stance towards existing relations of power</i>	
		<b>Critical</b>	<b>Deferential</b>
<i>Primary concern</i>	<b>Social</b>	Social Justice	Social Reform
	<b>Efficiency</b>		Technicist

"The systems engineers bring some expertise and substantial pretensions to the problems of the city. Their prinicpal system expertise seems to be relative to complex organizations that are mission oriented. There is in any case a good deal of difference between the mission of reaching the moon, and the mission of surival and welfare for socociety and the city. The systems engineer can in general deal best with subsystems and specific tasks, and he therefore suboptimizes. This is a charitable description." [80]

Goldman suggests that many of these issues can be avoided by paring complex systems theory with collaborative planning theory. [70]

Goodman notes that "systems dynamics models are not widely used in urban practice" [70]

Nostikasari notes how assumptions in a transportation planning model can perpetuate inequality [120]

"Are decision makers less likely to incorporate subjective values and humanistic concerns in policy decisions because of the seeming remoteness of the world in which these policies have an impact?" [51]

This historic preference of the impersonal and "objective" versus the personal and "subjective" is by no means unique to systems engineering. It can also be found in economics, jurisprudence, education theory, political science, and even moral philosophy [121]. The development of stakeholder analysis has helped to bridge the gap between these two and thus rectify this traditional deficiency.

Participatory models were not unheard of even in earlier decades however. For example, the Dayton Neighborhood Achievement Model dates back to the early 1970s [6].

The use of stakeholder analysis in contemporary systems engineering is, in a way, a step away from the world view that sees "human beings as unknowable black boxes and machines as transparent," a viewpoint that "surrenders any attempt at empathy and forecloses the possibility of ethical development" and is a tacit "admission that we have abandoned a social commitment to try and understand each other." [105]

Sufficient deficiencies certainly still remain within the systems engineering community. "One cannot know about the history of media stereotyping or the nuances of structural oppression in any formal, scholarly way through the traditional engineering curriculum of the large research universities from which technology companies hire across the United States. Ethics courses are rare." [101]

It should be noted that, while PPGIS developed as a means to avoid some of these concerns, it also arose out of intra-academia discussion and arguments, not as a result of vociferous demand from communities themselves [64].

### 2.4.2 Sustainable Development and the SDGs

"Substantive goals, the achievement of which are hard to measure, may be supplanted by thin, notional statistics - the number of villages formed, the number of acres plowed." [16]

"The pessimistic thought is that sustainable development has been stripped of its transformative power and reduced to its lowest common denominator. After all, if both the World Bank and radical ecologists now believe in sustainability, the concept can have no teeth: it is so malleable as to mean many things to many people without requiring commitment to any specific policies." [122]

"Yet there is also an optimistic interpretation of the broad embrace given sustainability: the idea has become hegemonic, an accepted meta-narrative, a given. It has shifted from being a variable to being the parameter of the debate, almost certain to be integrated into any future scenario of development." [122]

"To... critics, the prospect of integrating economic, environmental and equity interests will seem forced and artificial. States will require communities to prepare "Sustainable Development Master Plans," which will prove to be glib wish lists of goals and suspiciously vague implementation steps. To achieve consensus for the plan, language will be reduced to the lowest common denominator, and the pleasing plans will gather dust." (written in 1996, pre MDGs and SDGs) [122]

"The danger of translation is that one language will dominate the debate and thus define the terms of the solution. It is essential to exert equal effort to translate in each direction, to prevent one linguistic culture from dominating the other... Another lesson from the neocolonial linguistic experience is that it is crucial for each social group to express itself in its own language before any translation. The challenge for planners is to write the best translations among the languages of the economic, the ecological, and the social views, and to avoid a quasi-colonial dominance by the economic *lingua franca*, by creating equal two-way translations... Translation can thus be a powerful planner's skill, and interdisciplinary planning education already provides some multiculturalism. Moreover, the idea of sustainability lends itself nicely

to the meeting on common ground of competing value systems." [122]

Williamson and Connolly point out that "the term sustainability exists and operates within a number of governmental hegemonic discourses, i.e. the term itself is continually produced within legislative power structures," and argue that we should not "centre mapmaking praxis on generic or legislative definitions of sustainability, but rather encourages dialogue that supports the re-formation of self, community, and place." Importantly, they do not "seek to overturn generic understandings of sustainability, but rather seek a more complex understanding and proliferation of the term via local 'grounded' definitions. [68]

"That view is much too pessimistic... Investing in faireness may also be investing in efficiency, and... attention to sustainability can be more fair and more efficient at the same time." [12]

"MDG goal setting has energized civil society and helped to orient governments that otherwise might have neglected the challenges of extreme poverty... the MDGs have been important in encouraging governments, experts, and civil society to undertake the 'differential diagnoses' necessary to overcome remaining obstacles." [12]

Goals accomplish several things [12]:

- Global goals are critical for social mobilization and coordinated orientation.
- Global goals provide global peer pressure for adoption, monitoring, and action.
- Global goals mobilizing epistemic communities (experts, researchers, etc. These in turn can help map pathways to achieving the goals, making them seem more manageable and less remote.)
- Global goals mobilize stakeholder networks and thereby leverage capital and other resources.

Even Sachs, a booster of global goals like the MDGs and SDGs, admitted that the impact of the MDGs was uneven, with public health receiving the most attention, while sanitation and education were largely sidelined. [12]

Respond to critiques of MDGs/SDGs [123, 124]

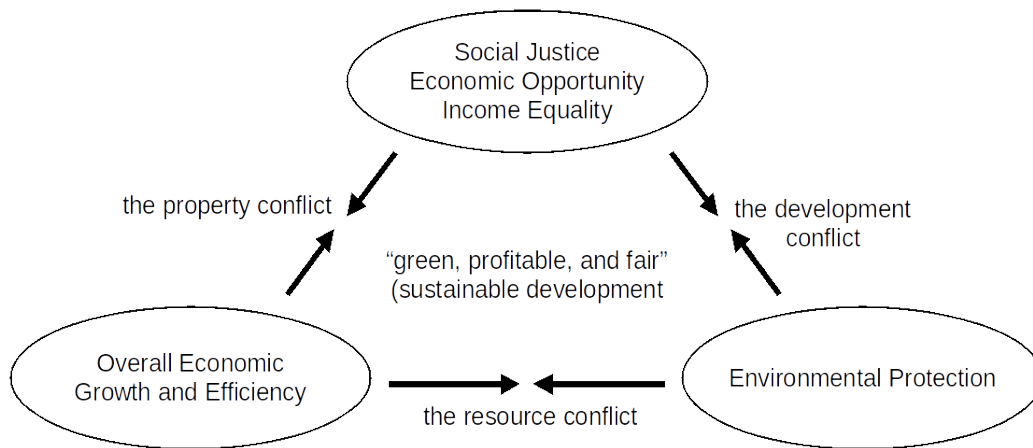


Figure 2-10: The triangle of conflicting goals of sustainable development. Adapted from [122]

### 2.4.3 Scenario Planning and Decision-Support is unfounded

Often, however, so-called "strategic planning" is anything but. "A strategic plan might more closely resemble a project plan, with long lists of specific proposals and policies... many have relatively short time frames. Scenario planning may not make sense for these plans." [70]

Many projections have been bad

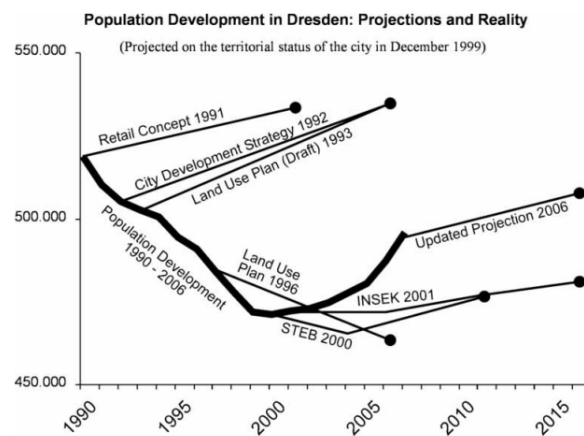


Figure 2-11: Population changes in Dresden compared to various projections. From [125]

While forecasting can be problematic as it constitutes "someone else's under-

standing and judgement crystallized in a figure that then becomes a substitute for thinking," scenario planning instead allows users to "develop their own feel for the nature of the system, the forces at work within it, the uncertainties that underlies the alternative scenarios, and the concepts useful for interpreting key data." [126]

The evidence for such practices as scenario planning is decidedly mixed. Goodspeed's review of scenario planning use in urban planning and environmental research resulted in only modest benefits, with use in management being more unambiguously positive [70]. His own study of impact of a scenario planning project in Lockhart, Texas, which corrected some of the flaws he identified in many previous studies, confirmed that modest, but real positive changes are the result of scenario planning.

I readily acknowledge and embrace the fact that this work is predominantly a piece of design science, which aims to "design propositions, which inform specific practices, artifacts, or tools", rather than 'conventional' science, which "primarily aims to describe, explain, or predict the world but not to change it." [70]

In fact, there are significant reasons to avoid practicing "conventional science" in these domains as treating society as a laboratory can lead to significant harms and a "vivisectionaist" mentality [127].

Evidence that collaboration improves DSS functionality and usability [128, 129, 130, 131]

"Dewey famously distinguishes between a *planned* society, which subordinates the present in pursuit of a rigid planned future, and a *planning* society, which is intellectually preoccupied by the future but knows that only the present - and not the future can be controlled." ([132] as paraphrased by [70])

Notably, one of the early successes at combining remote observation imagery with socioeconomic data, Land Use and Natural Resources Inventory (LUNR), elected in 1968 to not use the military-developed land use classification schemes, but instead to interview future users about their needs and to use the results from these interviews to develop a classification system tailored to the application.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### 3.1 Mapping and Visualization

"A single map is but one of an indefinitely large number of maps that might be produced for the same situation or from the same data." [133]

Data maps have a long history. Tufte dates them to the seventeenth century and cites Edmond Halley's 1686 chart of trade winds as "one of the first data maps" [134] though arguably Polynesian knot maps are a data map that long predates this [CITE].

Choropleths are one of the more common types of non-imagery geospatial data that EVDT uses. These are maps that express "quantity in area" (i.e. some statistic tied to a particular geographic area with color, texture, or shading). It should be noted that choropleths have a few well-known limitations, including the ecological fallacy and the modifiable areal unit problem [135]. It is for these reasons that EVDT does not rely entirely on choropleths and why we strive to store data with the finest geospatial resolution available.

Initial versions of EVDT and Vida featured quite large graphics. Tufte argues that graphics in general should be significantly shrunk and that "many data graphics can be reduced in area to half their current published size with virtually no loss in legibility and information." [134] In accordance with this Shrink Principle, these graphics were greatly reduced in later versions.

Early versions of EVDT were structured as entirely object-oriented, and later versions remained primarily object-oriented. This has many advantages but also comes at certain costs, the most important of which include (a) difficulty in recording continuous spatial variables and (b) a requirement to pre-identify the different classes (objects) to sort phenomena and relationships into [53].

It is recognized that this desktop version comes with numerous downsides. *theirwork*, an early collaborative, open source GIS platform, specifically "decided at an early stage to make the software Web-based to allow for a process of rapid development and iteration and allow a maximum number of potential participants." [68] It should be noted, however, that *theirwork* was a UK-based project (an area with high internet connectivity penetration) and started in the mid 2000's, a period with significantly diversity of internet browsing methods, which simplified the task of ensuring accessibility.

the meeting arrangement that EVDT supports, Table 3.1



Table 3.1: Different types of meeting arrangements. Adapted from [60]

	<i>Same time</i>	<i>Different time</i>
<i>Same place</i>	<b>Conventional Meeting</b>	<b>Storyboard meeting</b>
	<i>Advantage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• face-to-face expressions</li> <li>• immediate response</li> </ul> <i>Disadvantage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scheduling is difficult</li> </ul>	<i>Advantage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scheduling is easy</li> <li>• respond anytime</li> <li>• leave-behind note</li> </ul> <i>Disadvantage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meeting takes longer</li> <li>• difficult to maintain in the long run</li> </ul>
<i>Different place</i>	<b>Conference call meeting</b>	<b>Distributed meeting</b>
	<i>Advantage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no need to travel</li> <li>• immediate response</li> </ul> <i>Disadvantage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limited personal perspective from participants</li> <li>• meeting protocols are difficult to interpret</li> <li>• difficult to maintain meeting dynamics</li> </ul>	<i>Advantage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scheduling is convenient</li> <li>• no need to travel</li> <li>• submit response anytime</li> </ul> <i>Disadvantage:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meeting takes longer</li> <li>• meeting dynamics are different from normal meeting ("netiquette" instead of face-to-face etiquette)</li> </ul>



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