

Equity within Limits: introducing Convergence Mapping and initiatives with Contraction as well as Equity processes

This is a contribution to SCORAI - RCC - GreenDependent Special Session: Respecting planetary boundaries while enhancing the well-being of all

Key words: Sustainability; Contraction and Convergence; Case studies

Convergence Mapping was developed and tested in the CONVERGE research project¹. It is designed to show how various types of initiatives and organizations are managing to address the imperatives of 1) living within the limits of the planet and 2) sharing its resources more equitably.

In the presentation first the theoretical background of the CONVERGE project is introduced briefly. Our research focused on rights-based approaches to managing resources, and originated with the carbon reduction framework called 'Contraction and Convergence'TM developed by Aubrey Meyer and the Global Commons Institute². Our objective was to link the scientifically-validated need to reduce (i.e. to 'contract') resource use with a justice-based approach to apportioning the responsibility for doing so (to 'converge'). This focus was further strengthened by the need expressed in the literature³ – which was re-emphasized in the run up preparations for the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development – to re-couple environmental goals with the goals of proponents of human development.

Following this, a summary description of the methodological approach taken when developing Convergence Mapping is provided. Convergence Mapping employs 2 five item scales and can be used to illustrate, and to a certain extent, evaluate, the 'limits' (essentially, environmental) and 'equity' (broadly, social sustainability) components of various sustainability and development initiatives.

The two scales of Convergence Mapping can be described as follows. The *Limits/Contraction* scale is used to examine progress, development or movement towards ensuring that resource as well as ecosystem or planetary limits and boundaries are observed and respected. The scale extends between numbers 0 and 4: 0 denoting a lack of awareness and no mention of resource, ecosystem or planetary limits and boundaries, and 4 standing for an explicit awareness of limits and the initiative having targets that have been defined based on available (scientific) information. Furthermore, scale 4 also requires that clear efforts are made by the initiative to connect limits-related science with practice as well as having transparent and accountable methods in place for contracting resource use and tracking the results (e.g. use of indicators).

At the same time, the *Equity/Convergence* scale is used to examine progress, development or movement towards more equal sharing of both the benefits (e.g. food, fuel, clean air) and burdens (e.g. responsibilities to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, adverse impacts) of resource use, and thus relates to normative concepts such as justice and rights. The scale applied also extends between 0 and 4: 0 denoting a lack of awareness and no mention of 'equity' or 'justice' in core mission statement or in prominent, contemporary textual, or programmatic material, and 4 standing for both intra- and intergenerational equity and justice appearing in core textual, or programmatic material, and the initiative's activities focusing on issues related to justice/equity. Furthermore, there should be transparent and accountable methods for fostering equity and tracking the results (e.g. use of indicators).

The methodology for mapping included a document review and examination of the actual activities of the initiative. In some cases, interviews were also concluded with initiative owners and/or participants

In the third part of the presentation an overview of the 28 initiatives which were studied in detail in the CONVERGE project is provided with the help of an "Initiatives Map". Then specific initiatives from different fields and of different scales (e.g. a small grass-roots carbon club, the EU level Covenant of

Mayors initiative, a Bangladeshi Bank, a faith-based movement, a local exchange system and a mineral water bottling SME) are introduced to show how Convergence Mapping can be used. When introducing the initiatives, details relating to the following issues are provided:

- motivation for contraction/limits (or degrowth) and convergence/equity processes;
- details of contraction/limits and convergence/equity processes;
- indicators used;
- progress achieved and challenges encountered.

The primary outcomes of the process are a) a visual representation of the activities of the initiatives which could be used for benchmarking, and b) the mapping process itself, which can be used as a tool for developing their limits/contraction and/or equity/convergence elements as well as general level of awareness.

Finally, an overview of initiatives that are placed high on both scales and thus are explicitly assigning importance to both living within ecological and planetary limits and observing the principles of intra and intergenerational equity are presented. In the CONVERGE database of 28 initiatives, there are 5 that were found to be successfully attempting to move in this direction and thus scored highly on both scales of the Convergence Map. These include a non-profit initiative that helps provide community-owned renewable energy, a legally established position of ombudsman for future generations, a community-developed and implemented sustainability planning approach for a tourist resort, and developing country initiatives that assist communities to satisfy their needs in an environmentally sustainable way.

To conclude, it is important to recognize that, supported by recent literature, a more holistic approach towards sustainability is needed, one that calls for more integration and cross-fertilization between social and environmental aspects, or, in other words, between equity and limits. Further research would be needed with a specific focus on cross-fertilization between limits and equity to investigate the different ways it occurs as well as how it could be facilitated. Identifying more examples which explicitly focus on both of these aspects of sustainability is also necessary to provide guidance, best practice and inspiration for others.

It is our hope that Convergence Mapping could contribute to achieving these aims. Identifying initiatives that observe both principles can be made easier with its help. It could also be used as an awareness-raising and engagement, or (self-)assessment tool to discuss the positioning of different Environment and Development initiatives and organisations to help them reflect on their own efforts and commitment. Finally, Convergence Mapping could be employed to find ways in which these initiatives could be developed to better promote the observance of planetary limits and equity.

¹ CONVERGE was funded by the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme. More information is available from <http://www.convergeproject.org>

² Meyer, A. (2000). *Contraction and Convergence: The Global Solution to Climate Change*, Schumacher Briefings 5, Green Books, Schumacher Society.

³ See, for example, Bührs, 2008; Kitzes et al., 2008; Jackson, 2009, 2011; AtKisson, 2012; Melamed et al., 2012; UNDP, 2012