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# Strategic sustainability assessment of the Pacific Islands

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# Strategic sustainability assessment for the Pacific Islands – project phase 1 and 2

- Project phase 1 will establish a series of principles about (i) natural resource conditions and trajectories, (ii) economic conditions and trends, and (iii) emergent social issues.
- The principles will be used to inform policymakers and improve planning and governance throughout a region in which there is a paucity of quality information.
- Project phase 2 will deliver a comprehensive strategic sustainability assessment of the region which will (i) assemble all available information on the social, economic and natural resource conditions of the countries and the region as a whole, (ii) identify the key pressures on social, economic and natural resource sustainability, and (iii) assist in the identification of priorities for developmental assistance and improved planning and governance throughout the region.

# General context and aim of the project

- The ultimate aim of this project is to conduct an assessment of the combined economic, environmental and social impacts of proposed policies within the sustainable development context
- Such assessment is meant to assist decision-making throughout the entire policy cycle
- Sustainability assessments are meant to be an integrated element of National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) as well as sustainability strategies at sectoral, regional and other levels.
- *“Sound analysis is important in helping to identify the underlying trade-offs between economic, environmental and social objectives in priority-setting and policy making for sustainable development. Such assessments seek to develop information on changing economic, environmental and social conditions, pressures and responses, and their correlations with strategy objectives and indicators” (OECD, 2006).*

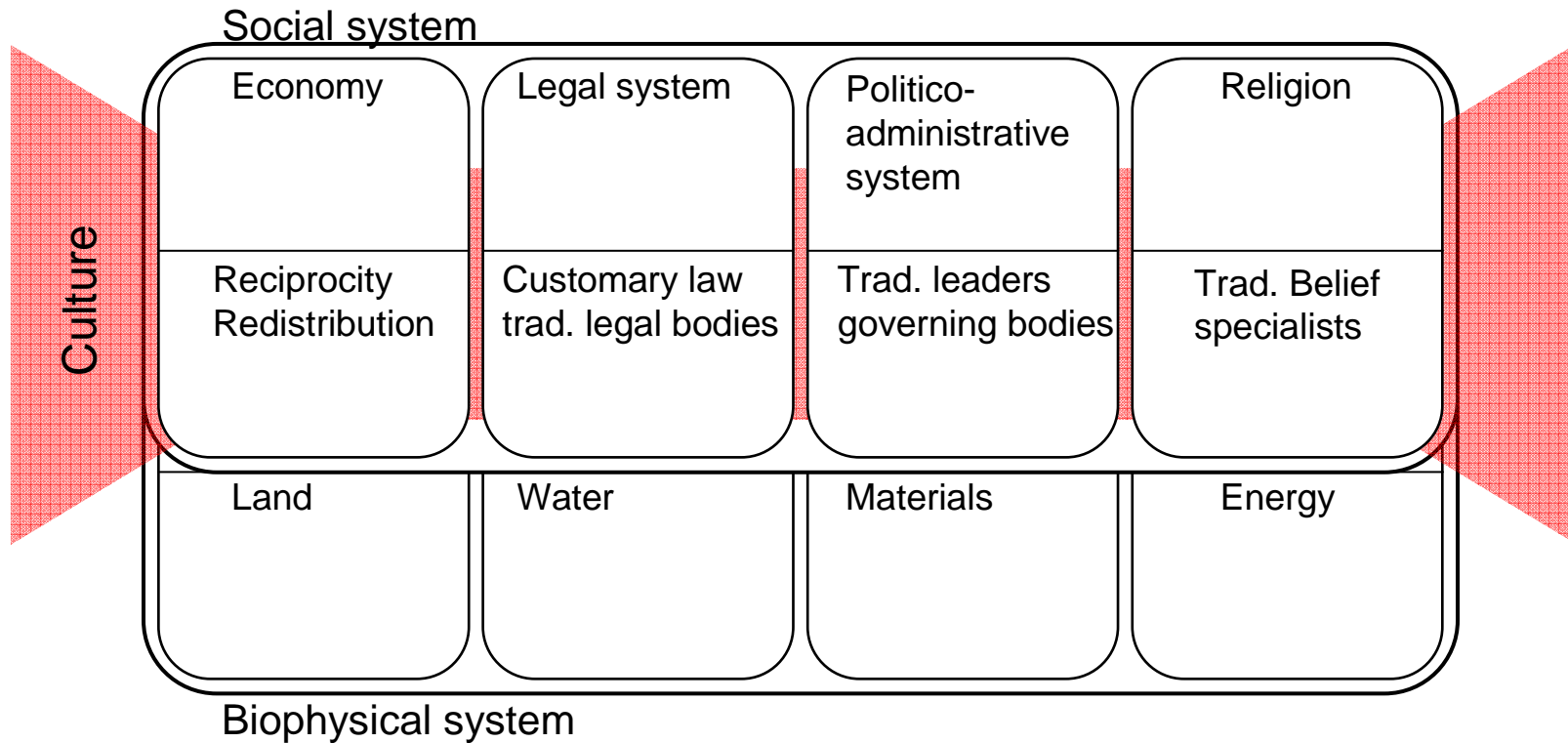
# Basic characteristics of sustainability assessment

- Timing – early stages of policy formulation
- Participation – broad input into the assessment
- Integration – considering the broad economic, environmental and social impacts of policies
- Trade-offs – between different dimensions of sustainability
- Long-term perspective – acknowledge path dependency and avoid lock-in
- Policy design – identification of mitigation or compensation mechanisms

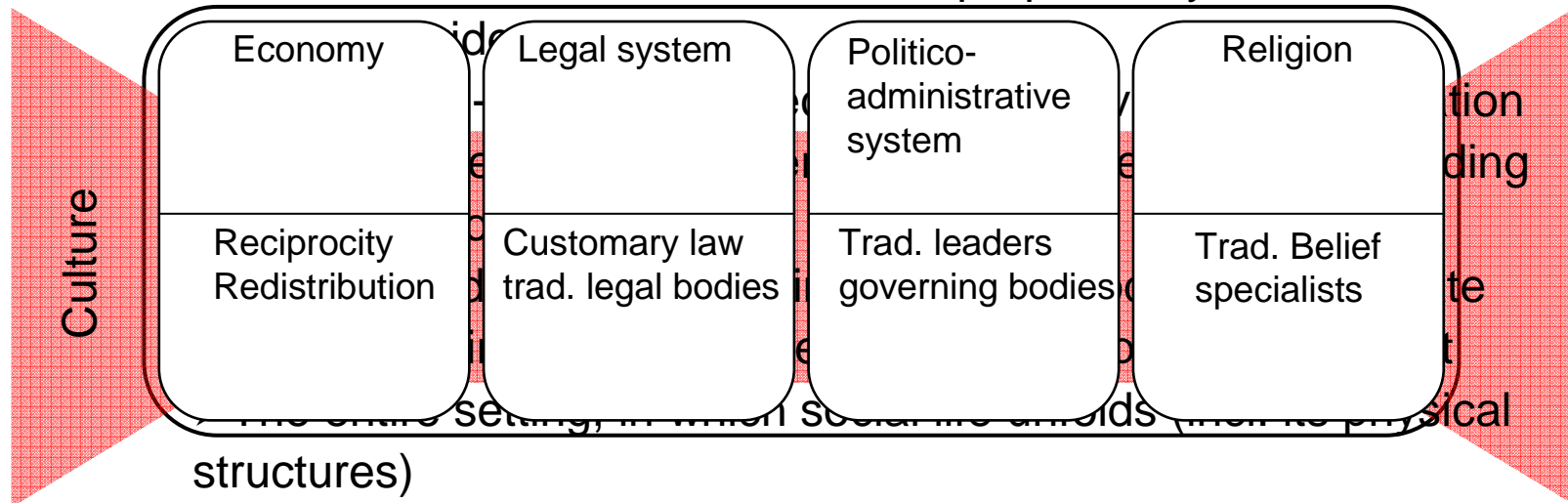
# Major steps in the assessment process

- Relevance analysis determines if and to what extent a sustainability assessment is required
- Delineation, where tools and methods are selected as well as means for involving stakeholders
- Impacts analysis, where tools are applied to identify economic, environmental and social conditions, trajectories and impacts and their interactions and trade-offs
- Optimisation, where favourable options that would maximise sustainable development outcomes are discussed with decision-makers

# Social systems, resources & decision making



- The result of human activities that purposefully adds to what is



- A self-organising system, coupled to the bio-physical system

# A controversy over growth

- Development has been associated with economic growth, seen as a necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for it.
- 4 types of economic growth:
  - Savage, socially inequitable and environmentally disruptive growth
  - Socially benign but environmentally disruptive growth (of the kind experienced in Europe between 1945-1975)
  - Environmentally benign but socially inequitable growth (a possible scenario for the future)
  - Socially equitable and environmentally benign growth, corresponding to the concept of development
- However, it is unrealistic to propose a meaningful strategy of poverty eradication in the context of non-growth
  - In a first phase, concentrate on eradication of poverty and the reduction of social inequalities while paying attention to environmental aspects of growth.
  - Once this has been achieved, the phasing out of material growth should become a more realistic proposition.

# Partial sustainabilities and whole sustainability

- Sustainable development requires to meet the following criteria simultaneously:
  - Social sustainability and its corollary, cultural sustainability
  - Ecological sustainability (conservation of natural capital) supplemented by environmental and territorial sustainability, the former relative to the resilience of the natural ecosystems used as 'sinks', the latter evaluating the spatial distribution of human activities and rural-urban configurations
  - Economic sustainability in its broad meaning of the efficiency of economic systems (institutions, policies and rules of functioning) to ensure continuous socially equitable, quantitative and qualitative progress
  - Political sustainability providing a satisfying overall framework for national and international governance
- It will be difficult to progress simultaneously in all areas. The real world is full of trade-offs. Reject trade-offs that are unacceptable and tolerate some trade-offs for a limited period of time.

# Sustainability domains identified for project phase 1

- Natural resources, mining, water, climate change
- Land use, agriculture and forestry, food security, carbon
- Economics, economic growth, economic sectors, employment, disposable income, poverty
- Social, demography, labour force, education, social stratification
- Governance, institutions, social cohesion
- Chapters on each of those dimensions as well as an overview chapter presenting the analytic framework and summarising major findings

# Chapter structure

- **Objectives**
- To provide an overview of the economic situation of the 14 Pacific Island nations selected for this desktop review.
- To compile overview information from existing documentation and to identify the key pressures on the economic sustainability of the Pacific Island nations. Information to be sourced from the international scientific literature and from reports by international organisations and agencies.
- To identify economic trajectories and emerging industry sectors of the Pacific Island nations.
- **Structure**
- General introduction about the economic conditions of the Pacific Island nations as a whole.
- For each Pacific Island nation: Analysis of economic structure, economic growth areas, overseas trade, labour market, poverty (as an economic concept), investments and savings, foreign aid, trajectories (see topics a to h below).
- Summary section: Comparison and synthesis of the information into a summary section. Discussion of emerging patterns and trajectories. Possible grouping of Pacific Island nations based on commonalities and similar trajectories.

# Criteria for sustainability

- Social: social homogeneity, equitable income distribution, full employment and/or self-employment creating decent livelihoods, equitable access to resources and social services
- Cultural: change within continuity (balance between respect for tradition and innovation)
- Ecological: Preserve or enhance the potential of 'natural capital' to produce renewable resources, rational use of non-renewable resources, respecting or enhancing the capacity of ecosystems to restore themselves
- Territorial: balanced urban-rural configurations, overcoming interregional disparities
- Economic: balanced inter-sectoral economic development, food security, capacity for modernization of capital, sovereign position in the global economy
- Political: democracy defined in terms of universal appropriation of the whole human rights compact, capability to implement national project in partnership with all stakeholders, social cohesion

# Contrasting policy options

- Effectiveness – the extent to which a policy option can achieve the objectives of the proposal
- Efficiency – the extent to which the objectives can be achieved with a given level of resources
- Consistency – the extent to which the option limits trade-offs across economic, environmental and social domains

## And more practical

- Identifying those economic sectors which have the greatest potential for environmentally sustainable and socially equitable regional economic development
- Establishing a framework for capacity building requirements including areas such as infrastructure, capital and investment, land management, environmental management, water management, markets and institutions, technology and innovation, governance and regulation, human resource development
- Identifying principles, assessing and evaluating policies, plans and programmes on their sustainability outcomes

# Principles and outcomes of sustainable development

