The ‘Efficiency’ document series

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Abstract
The Efficiency ‘competence lab’ gathers experience from diverse practice to showcase how efficiency has been achieved in each case, geared towards mastering the art of efficiency.

1 Efficiency

As a general concept, efficiency is ‘doing things well and fast’ — where ‘fast’ typically extends to time, materials, and/or other resources. This general concept of efficiency can be put into a formal mathematical expression like Equation 1 (adapted from Perdicoúlis, 2011, p.25).

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\text{Efficiency} = \frac{\text{Intended Outcomes} - \text{Unintended Outcomes}}{\text{Required Resources}}
\] (1)

The equation form should not lead to deception: more than anything else, efficiency is an art to be mastered — not unlike poetry, presenting distilled knowledge — and, as an art, requires an extensive familiarity with quality (Perdicoúlis, 2013).

It takes hard work to achieve efficiency, but ‘practice makes perfect’ is not enough: appropriate education or instruction must exist beforehand as an ‘orientation framework’ — practicing in the wrong subject or way may even prove dangerous. As an orientation, let us consider three aspects of efficiency: simplicity, elegance, and goodness (Perdicoúlis, 2014).

Simplicity — an intrinsic attribute of objects or situations. After gaining an understanding about the structure and function of systems or phenomena, these do appear simple; and after thoughtful design, forms and working systems alike reach perfection when they can be made no simpler.

Elegance — our appreciation of grace or style. After acquiring appropriate skills, performing tasks becomes a breeze, gives good results, and it looks good from the outside, too. After thoughtful design regarding structure, function, and form, works become ‘cool’ or classic.

Goodness — a perceived attribute. Things ‘done well’ should have this ‘goodness’, or good quality. The sense or references of goodness differ greatly among people, so these must be discussed or negotiated explicitly.
2 The journal

The Efficiency ‘competence lab’ is geared towards mastering the art of achieving efficiency. The journal showcases noteworthy examples of efficient practice from the experience of people/institutions in a variety of fields and through alternative methodologies, regarding one or more objects of interest.

**People/Institutions** (a) practitioners (e.g. in-house planners, consultants); (b) end-users (e.g. organisations, stakeholders, civil society, industry); (c) academics (e.g. researchers, instructors); (d) students (e.g. of planning or management).

**Fields** (a) city (e.g. spatial planning/public administration); (b) state (e.g. public policy/administration); (c) enterprise (e.g. strategic planning/business administration); (d) civil society (e.g. praxis — science, engineering, law, medicine, literature, journalism, education).

**Methodologies** e.g. Systems Planning\textsuperscript{TM} (Perdicoúlis, 2010, 2011); Systemic Approach to Planning (McLoughlin, 1969; Chadwick, 1978); Procedural Planning Theory (Faludi, 1973); Strategic Planning (Bryson, 1995); Plan-Process-Results (Oliveira, 2011); Balanced Scorecard/Strategy Maps (Kaplan and Norton, 1996); Strategic Choice Approach (Friend and Hickling, 2005); SWOT Analysis (Mintzberg et al., 1998); PSR/ DPSIR (OECD, 2003); System Dynamics (Forrester, 1969; Sterman, 2000); Systems Thinking (Senge, 2006); Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland, 1981).

**Objects of interest** (a) system (e.g. organism, building, city, region, institution, situation, circumstances, state of affairs, substance); (b) process (e.g. operation, project, agenda); (c) plan (e.g. policy, strategy, action plan, measure, to-do).

3 The articles

The articles are geared towards mastering the art of efficiency: narratives report noteworthy attempts structured as ‘XYZ’ problems (Figure 1), and always searching the way to the refinement of efficiency. The expository writing is styled after the Systems Planning\textsuperscript{TM} journal suite.

![Figure 1](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 1** The problem expressed in an ‘XYZ’ form (Perdicoúlis, 2010, pp.58–66)

**Abstract** ‘A noteworthy example of efficient practice, where the application of [the method/technique] [enhanced/improved] the [system/process/plan].’

**The problem** (a) Overview of the successfully solved problem (Figure 1); (b) the broad concern (Y); (c) objective (Z); (d) typical responses; the specific task (X); methods and/or techniques; (e) outcome (Z’).

**Contribution to efficiency** Assessment: effectiveness of the operation, fulfilment of purpose, efficacy of the action, efficiency of the operation, etc. (Figure 2).

**Close** (a) Discussion: ‘thus far’; ‘even better’; (b) Conclusion: wrap-up.
References


