

Integrated Assessment: A new international journal

Aims and scope

Integrated Assessment is the practice of combining different strands of knowledge to accurately represent and analyze real world problems of interest to decision-makers. Since these problems rarely observe disciplinary boundaries, Integrated Assessments usually involve interdisciplinary research. Unfortunately, the body of existing disciplinary knowledge is often insufficient for the construction of an accurate representation of real world problems. Integrated Assessment offers a systematic approach to identification of the gaps in disciplinary knowledge that have often frustrated realistic policy analysis in the past. Thus, Integrated Assessments have increasingly been the source of critical questions and new directions of research in the disciplinary sciences. Ultimately, what distinguishes Integrated Assessment from interdisciplinary research is its policy dimension, aiming to inform decision-makers on the complexity of real world problems.

Integrated Assessment is particularly useful for analysis of real world problems that are complex, operate at different levels in time and space, are immersed in uncertainty and for which the stakes are high. Because there are no simple solutions to these complex problems facing humankind, Integrated Assessment aims at conveying innovative and sometimes counterintuitive insights into the issue(s) at hand rather than ready-made solutions. It is a real challenge for the rapidly evolving field of Integrated Assessment to broaden its field of application, ranging from global problems like global climate change, land use and land cover, and water use, to regional and local problems in the field of urban planning, transport, infrastructure and health care. The journal will cater to this burgeoning field and the rapidly expanding scope of studies being conducted.

This journal is aimed at three communities:

- The community of interdisciplinary researchers engaged in developing Integrated Assessments.
- The community of users of Integrated Assessments, in particular the decision-makers.
- The community of disciplinary partners contributing to the practice of Integrated Assessment.

Integrated Assessments are bridges between these three communities and this journal's editorial policy will foster the strengthening of these connections. The challenge of developing IAs for a realistic description of real world problems often reveals exciting disciplinary challenges that can only be addressed through collaborative efforts.

Editorial policy

There is always a plurality of perspectives in how the world is perceived and a plurality of methods for its study. There can be little doubt that social and natural science knowledge is not being as widely applied as it could be in solving the problems faced by humanity. There is no one "right" way to represent and analyze the world, therefore diverse methods and approaches to Integrated Assessment are needed, ranging from model-based methods to participatory methods. Generally these methods are, in varying degrees, in their relative infancy. The aim of this journal is to support a broad array of approaches and hence nurture the emerging field of Integrated Assessment.

The journal will publish high quality papers on the methodologies and applications of Integrated Assessment, as well as disciplinary contributions to the practice of Integrated Assessment. Submissions will be peer reviewed and where controversies are irreducible, accepted papers will be accompanied with invited counterpoints and editorials about the substance of such controversies. Integrated Assessments often involve elements from a wide range of disciplines. The exposition of these elements can often lead to more lengthy manuscripts. The journal is structured to allow publication of longer articles describing such research.

Integrated Assessment is a newly coined label for a variety of processes in problem structuring and solving with a long history of anonymous occurrence. The journal will commission and publish reviews of these earlier efforts bringing to the community lessons from these earlier studies.

Ultimately, the purpose of Integrated Assessment is to improve the process of solving complex policy problems. The journal will seek contributions from real-world decision-makers on issues that shape their decisions and factors that they find missing in the scientific information they try to employ in trying to inform their choices.

New start

Five years ago the new journal “Environmental Modeling & Assessment (EMA)” was launched. The journal appeared to fulfil the needs of many readers, and we were stimulated by the many encouraging and positive reactions we received. In particular the “Integrated Assessment” section turned out to be quite successful, which was a major reason for the publisher and ourselves to transform the “Integrated Assessment” section into a separate, independent journal. This while EMA continues to exist, under the skilful leadership of professor Jerzy Filar.

We present you with the new journal “Integrated Assessment” with the intent to provide a broad platform for lively debates on complex societal issues considered from an integrated viewpoint. It should be of interest to both the developers of IAs, often interested in technical aspects, and to users of IAs, often interested in practical results. The rapid developments in the field of Integrated Assessment are creating excellent opportunities for learning and communication of findings. The ultimate challenge of this journal is to build a bridge between disciplinary scientists, IA-practitioners and IA-users such as decision-makers. We are confident that our journal can contribute successfully to this long-term bridge-building process.

Hadi Dowlatabadi
Jan Rotmans
Pim Martens

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