Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Virtual Training programme for high-level decision-makers in Thailand

SEA concept and process

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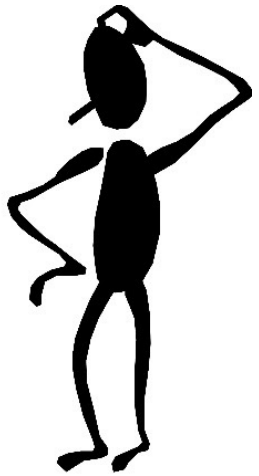
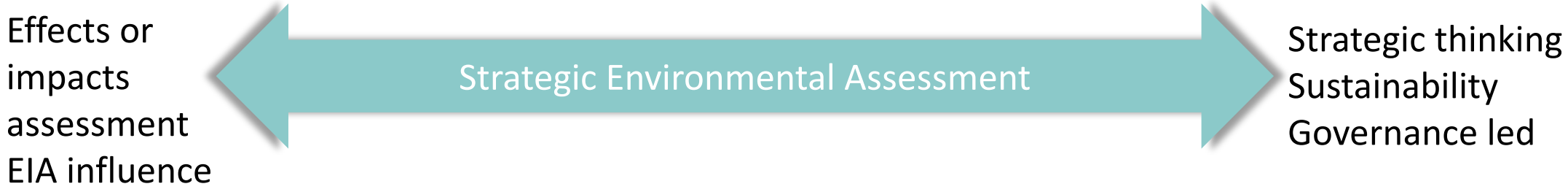
1. What is SEA and why is it important?
2. How does it relate to decision-making?
3. What can SEA bring to your decision?
4. SEA role in relation to global challenges and the SDG
5. Strategic Thinking for Sustainability (ST4S)



Strategic Environmental Assessment - a spectrum of understandings

Maria Rosário Partidário

Ch2, in Handbook of EIA, Kevin Hanna (Ed) (in press)



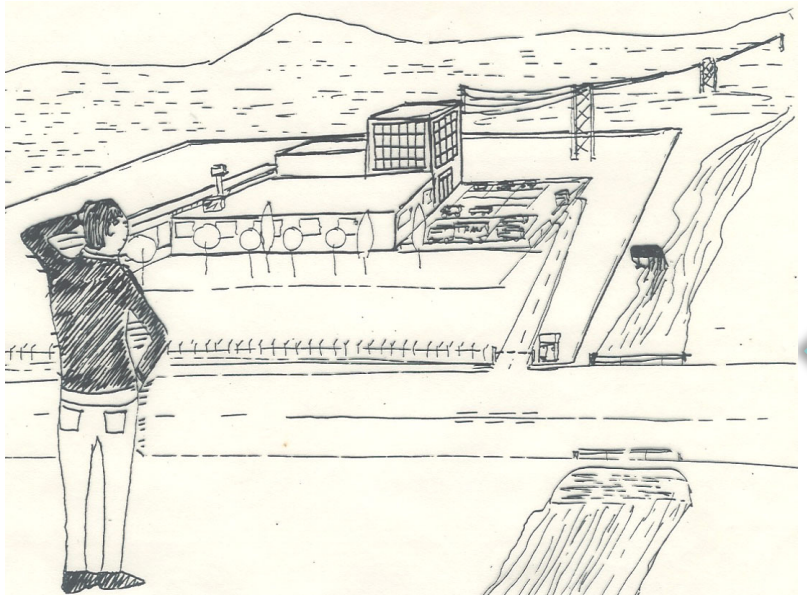
Spectrum of SEA perspectives (after Partidário 2005)

Impact based practice vs strategic thinking

- Impact based – seeks impact assessment – assesses effects on existing values, corrects situations, looks back into what may be lost, mitigating loss

- Strategic thinking – seeks creating contexts for sustainability – opens opportunities, explores new values, looks forward into what can be gained, adding value

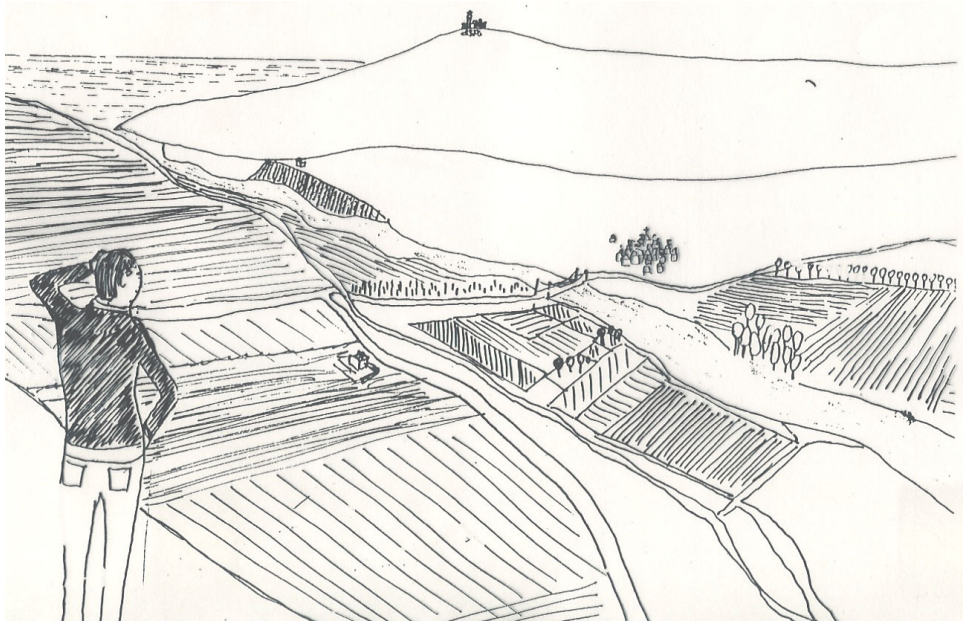
Impact-based



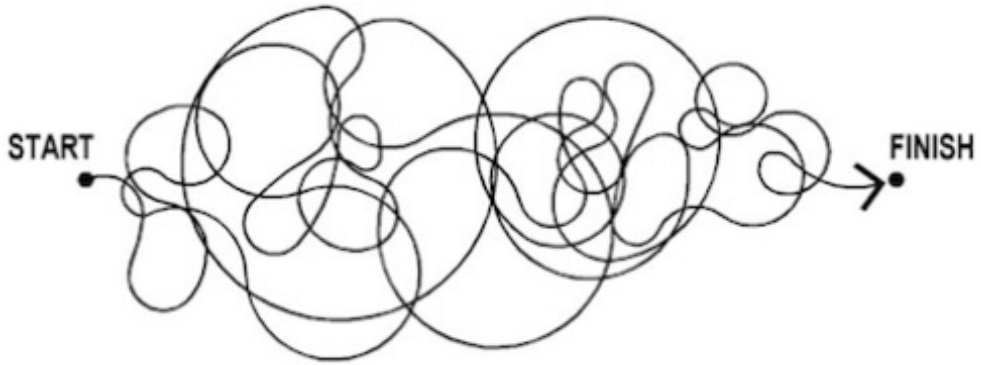
Good design

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic thinking



Good strategy



Strategic planning

Strategic approaches in policy and planning **are not intended to find out what can happen in the future** but aim **to plan and steer actions that make up possible routes to a desirable future** (Mintzberg 1994)

Strategy making involves **shaping future development trajectories** (Healey, 2009)

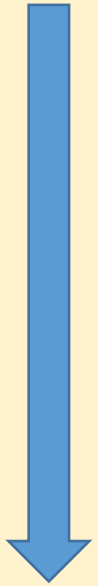
Strategy - Intended means that aim to achieve long-term objectives driven by a vision, accommodating its pathway to changing circumstances (Partidário, 2012)

SEA – the two models

Impact based SEA

(logic: control of effects)

DEVELOPMENT



Scoping
Prediction
Assessment
Mitigation
Monitoring

Environmental effects

Strategic thinking SEA

(logic: develop options/building futures)

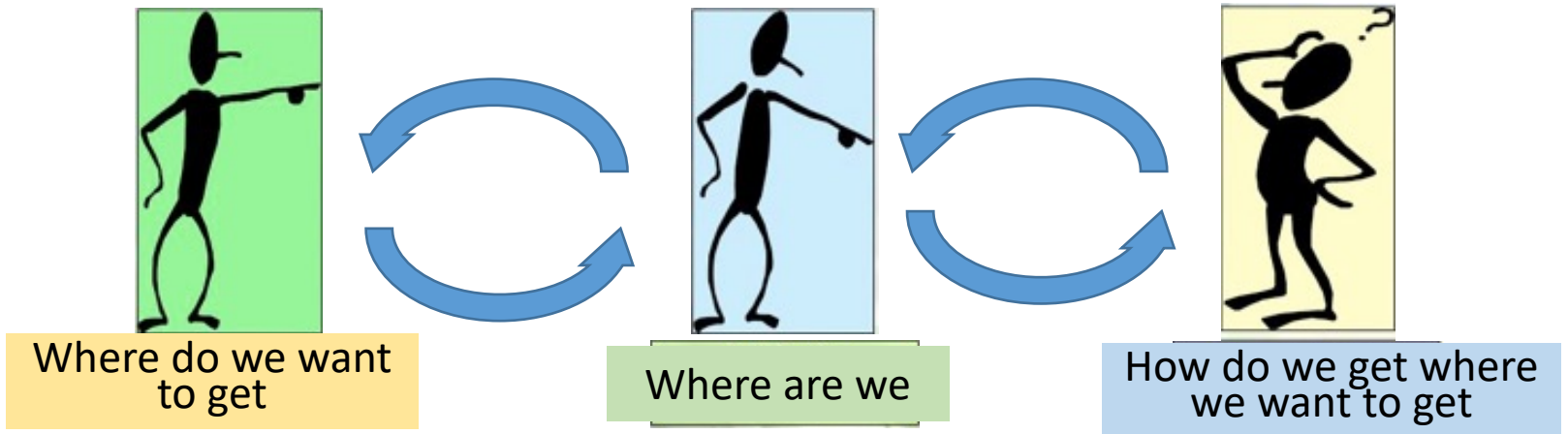
DEVELOPMENT

Focus
Strategic options
Assessment
Guidelines
Monitoring
Evaluation

Potential environmental and social value

Strategic Thinking SEA

A strategic decision support instrument for how to get where we want to get with the best results for the environment and for sustainability



With strategic thinking SEA recognizes:

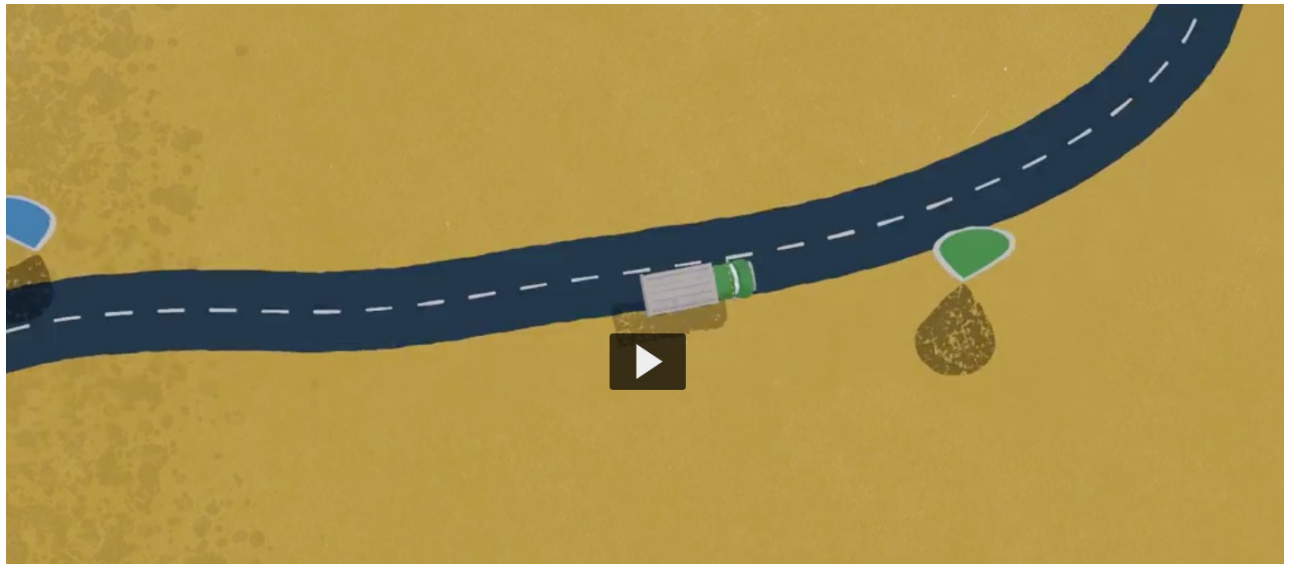
- the incremental, often unstructured, flexible and changing nature of strategic decision processes

- the socio-political nature of decisions (and not only technical)

How do we recognize strategic thinking SEA?

- When it focus on the strategy, rather than on the outcome
- When it works with processes, not with products

Change of paradigm – transition from products to services/objectives



A highway that connects point A to point B

Transport / market strengthening

Change of paradigm – transition from products to services/objectives

School / social infrastructure

Education; capacity-building;
Inclusion of vulnerable groups

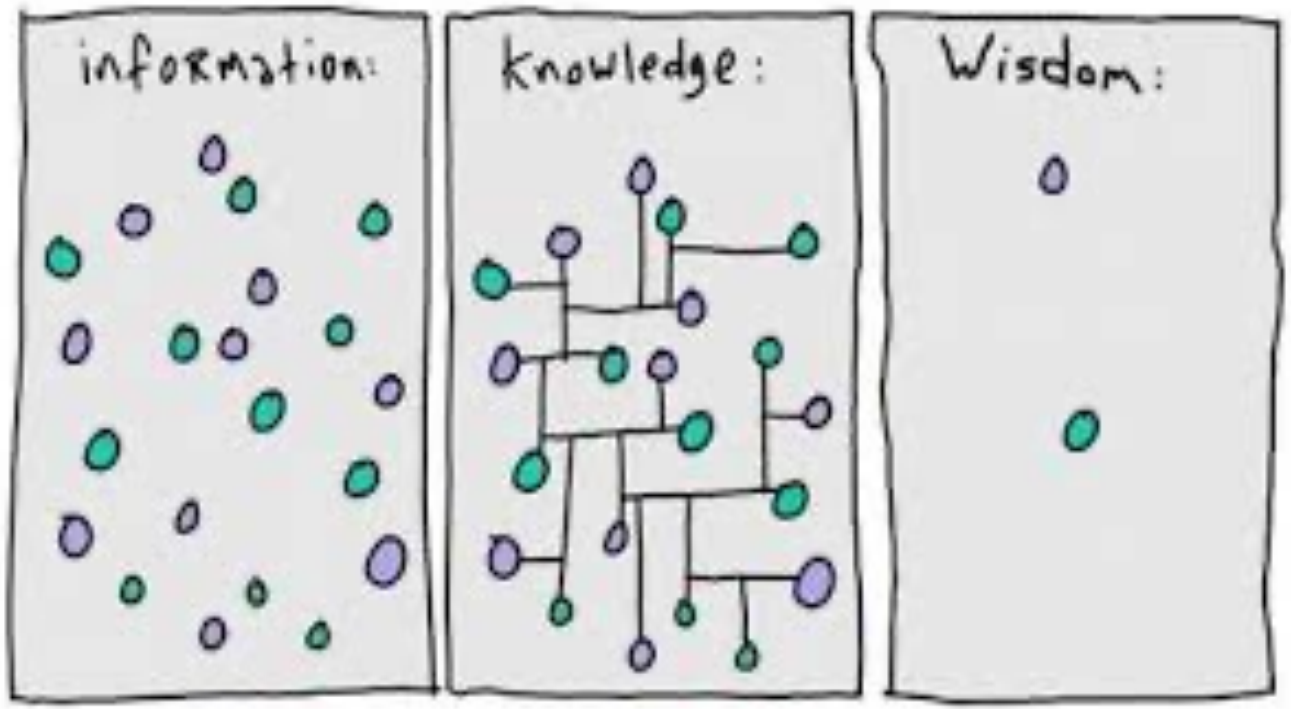
Philosophy

Strategic thinking
seeks creating contexts for sustainable development
Uses positive, constructive, proactive attitude, looks into what is desired, is forward-looking and a facilitator

Facilitate sustainable development

Method

Strategic thinking
systems analysis based on interdisciplinary complexity science (adaptive systems)
to provide hints and directions to encourage change based on critical, non-descriptive, issues and trends



A system is not a sum of the behavior of its parts, it’s the product of their interactions

Output

Strategic thinking
Learning processes, driven by the need to encourage change, based on dialogues, knowledge creation, mind shift

Why is SEA important?

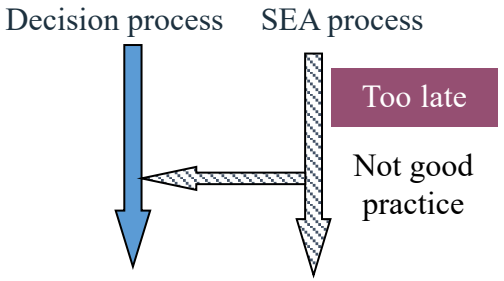
SEA can add value to strategic decision-making by:

- integrating environment and sustainable development issues in the decision
- identifying strategic options as opportunities
- antecipate and clear sectoral policy conflicts
- promote institutional cooperation
- facilitating cost-effective strategic decisions

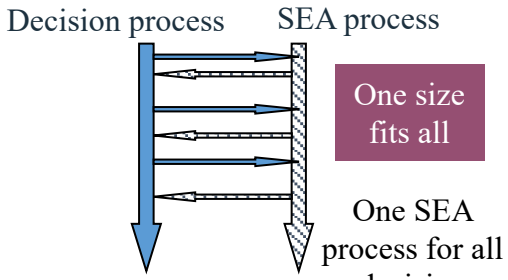
How SEA can fit in the decision process - four models

(adapted from Partidário 2004 and 2007)

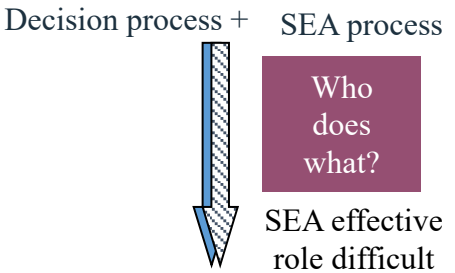
1. Single opportunity model



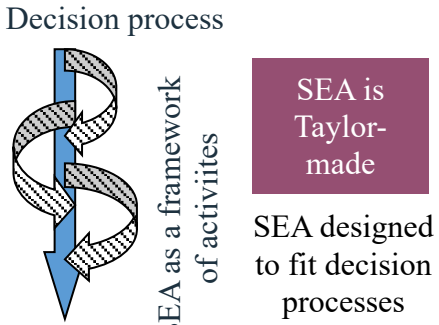
2. Parallel model



3. Fully integrated model



4. Decision-centred model



Impacts assessment
- Formal procedures -

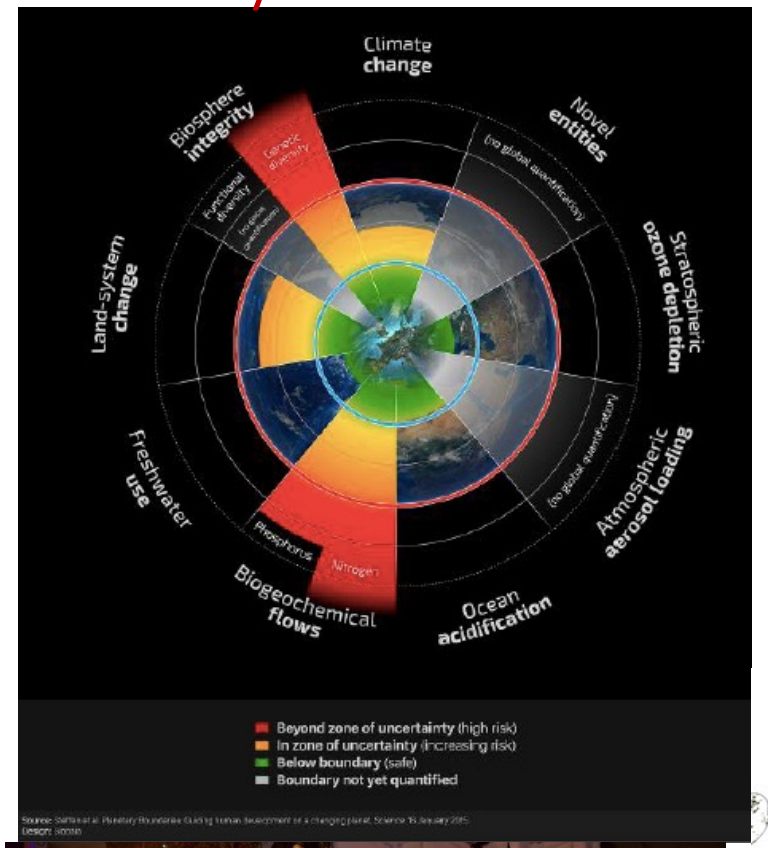
Strategic thinking
- No standard procedures -

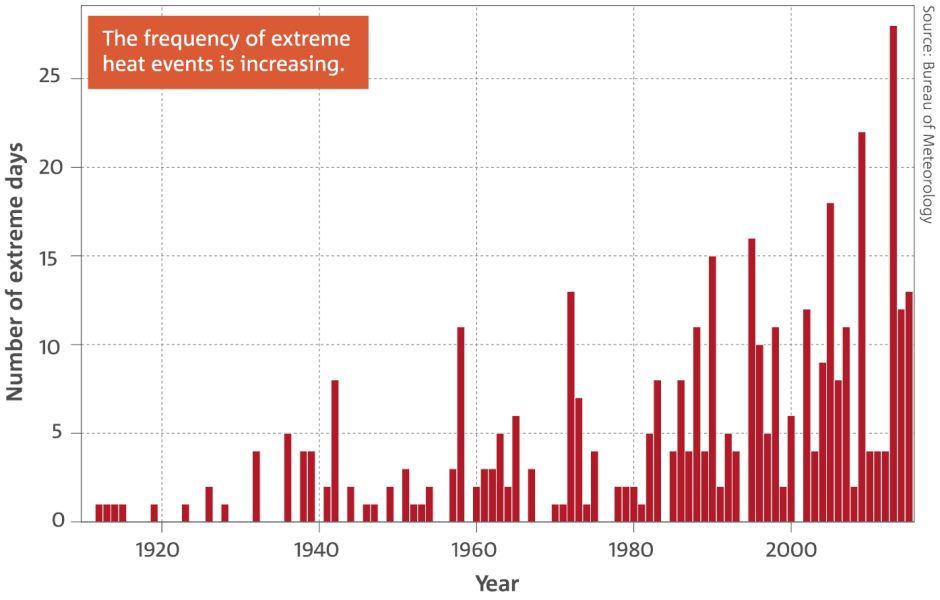
The essence of SEA to improve decisions

- asking key questions
- helping to set environment and sustainability issues as decision factors
- engage institutions and stakeholders in understanding the problem and in building collective wisdom to face uncertainty and complexity
- understanding policy/planning objectives and discussing strategic options while still open
- consider environmental and sustainability opportunities and risks while it is time
- enabling a strategic mind set, changing the way decisions are made

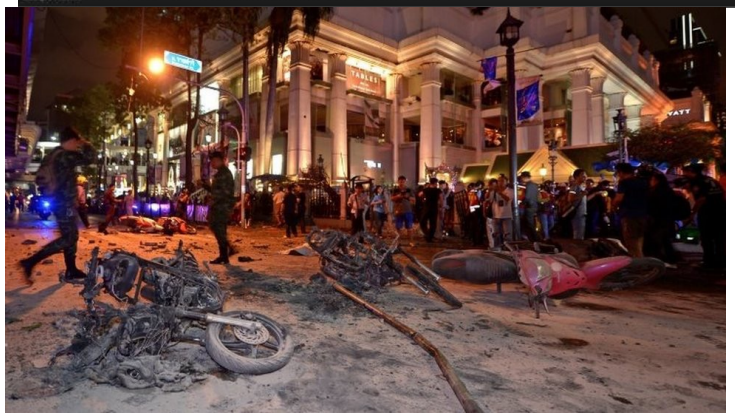
Global changes are complex and call for new attitudes and actions

Planetary boundaries





Source: Bureau of Meteorology



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

As a strategic assessment framework for achieving sustainable development

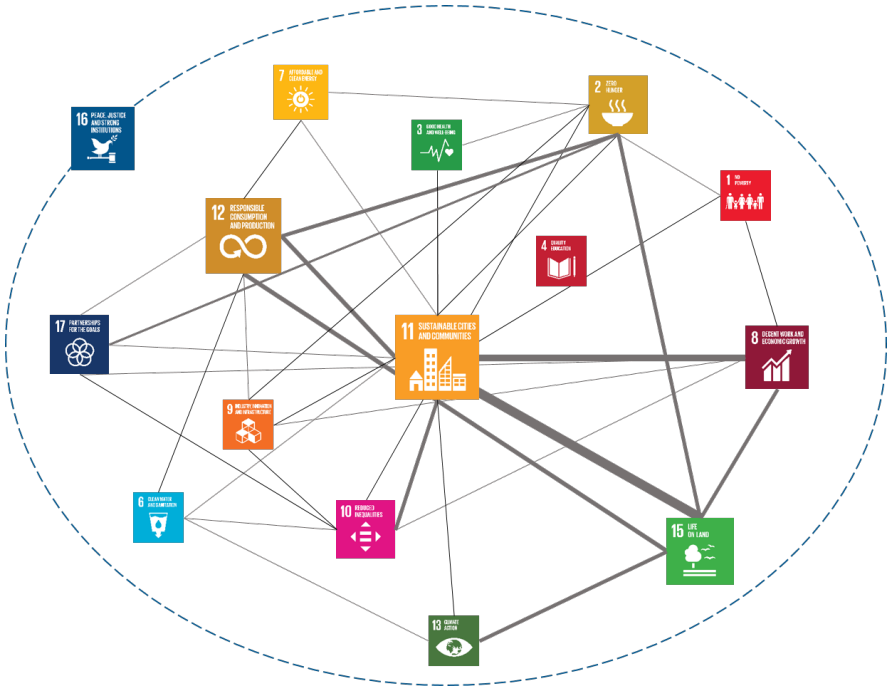
Strategic Reference Framework – macro-policies that set the reference for strategic assessment

Questions
- Which SDG / targets are relevant for this strategic assessment?
- How can strategy S contribute to achieving SDG X, Y and Z?

Examples of use of SDG in Strategic thinking SEA

SEA of the revision of the Montijo municipal master plan

Focus



Ecosystem services, Governance, Environmental Systems (terrestrial, underground waters and estuarine), Rurality, Urban Dynamics, Economic Growth, Territorial Balance

Strategic Options
- Workshop / Team meetings

Partnerships– Communication - Marketing

Food safety

Preservation and valorization of the aquifer – Hidrogeological park

Education centres and youth training – skilled word demand

Promotion of sustainable local tourism activities

Plan for underground water management

Transport network

Commercial structure – Value chain

Innovative agroindustrial infraestructures

Follow-up

Incorporating SDG in monitoring indicators.

with Margarida Monteiro, 2018

Strategic Thinking for Sustainability (ST4S)

a methodology (Partidário 2007, 2012, 2021)

Key elements

- Focused on the strategy
- Prioritization framework – selective systemic (CDF)
- Collective intelligence – Dialogues, Collaboration, Negotiation
- Starts early, keeps continuity
- Follow-up for control (find points of connecting to EIA)

A socio-political and governance exercise more than doing technical studies

ST4S - Creating contexts for sustainable development

Concluding, successful SEA is

- a facilitator of decision-making
- tailor-made to, and/or well articulated with, decision-making
- focussed on strategies – which route to take to achieve long-term objectives
- works with strategic options
- governace led: enables stakeholders engagement and institutional cooperation
- an added-value to decision-making