

# Strategic environmental assessment: Academic considerations

Ex ante policy evaluation: focus on Impact Assessment

Brussels, April 30th, 2010

Luc Hens

Vakgroep Menselijke Ecologie -Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Laarbeeklaan 103 - B-1090 Brussel - België Tel: +32/2/477.42.81Fax:+32/2/477.49.64

E-mail: human.ecology@vub.ac.be Homepage: http://www.vub.ac.be/MEKO

4/05/2010 | pag. 1



### Aim

- 1. Considerations on SEA
- 2. Application on mobility issues (HIA and SEA)

Strategic environmental assessmen



# Origins of SEA

- Uncovered aspects (time, scale) by project EIAs
- 2. EIA comes late in the decision record
- 3. Avoid repetitive EIAs
- 4. Improve effectivity, efficiency, quality of decision making, taking the environment into account

Strategic environmental assessmer 4/05/2010 | pag. 3



# Uncovered aspects

- 1. Origins: cumulative aspects
  - over time (e.g. cancer),
  - in space (e.g. water pollution in the same river / lake / basin)
  - faster impact on the effects
- 2. SEA responses:
  - strong in theory
  - limited to the planning level / limited interpretation of 2001 EU SEA Directive

Strategic environmental assessment



# Timing of the decision record

#### 1. Origins:

some mitigating measures(e.g. mobility modi, location) and alternatives (e.g. other projects) are determined at the moment the EIA is submitted

#### 2. SEA responses:

- no study in Flanders on SEA effectiveness (internationally: Fischer & Gazolla, 2006; Jha-Takur et al., 2009)
- difficult to define the appropriate moment (the dynamic nature of the decision record)

Strategic environmental assessme



# Avoid repetitive EIA

#### 1. Origins:

- Some EIAs with a repetitive outcome have only a limited effect on environmental quality
- Examples in Flanders: animal breeding facilities; waste water pipeline sections..

#### 2. SEA responses:

- E.g. Region wide SEA
- SEA of strategic plans (e.g. Strategic harbour development plans)

Strategic environmental assessment



### Added value

1. Origins:

no longer and more expensive actions, but better documented decisions

SEA responses:no systematic evaluation of SEA in Flanders

Strategic environmental assessmer 4/05/2010 | pag. 7



# SEA for Mobility plans

- 1. 1st and future (?) Mobility Plans in Flanders
- 2. HIA of the mobility development in Hai Phong, Vietnam

Strategic environmental assessmen



### Mobility Plans in Flanders

#### 1. 1st Flemish mobility plan (2002)

- 1st SEA in Flanders: experimental character
- SEA had limited impact on Mobility plan

#### 2. Future Flemish mobility plan(s)

- SEA is not legally compulsory
- no indication of SEA or Sustainability assessment, yet the Policy Note for 2004-2009 mentions the need for an 'integrated impact assessment' (Van Brempt, 2004)

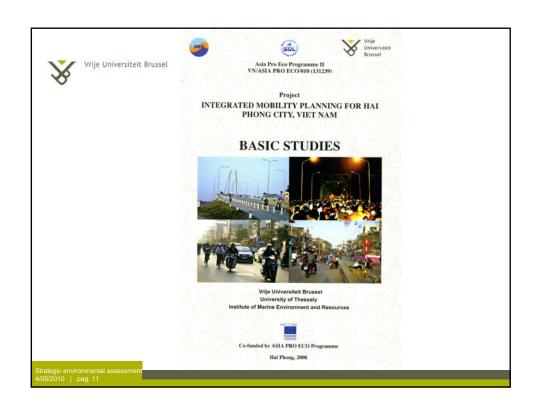
Strategic environmental assessmental 4/05/2010 | pag. 9



#### SEA for harbour areas

- 1. SEA of the Strategic Plan of the Ghent Harbour (2004)
- 2. SEA of the Strategic Plan concerning the delimitation of the Antwerp Harbour and its surroundings (2006-2007)

Strategic environmental assessment





# Rationale of HIA for SEA

- 3 scenario's of traffic development (based on measured data)
- 2. effects of air pollution, noise, safety (based on observed incidencies)



#### Conclusions of HIA for SEA

- 1. HIA is possible (major uncertainties)
- refinement of exposure assessment: models - combination with biomonitoring

Strategic environmental assessmental 4/05/2010 | pag. 13



### Conclusions

- 1. SEA in Flanders is subject to a quite narrow interpretation (scope; contents)
- 2. Many opportunities for SEA are un/ under-used
- 3. Profiling of Flanders as a logistic hub necessites impact assessment (SEA and/or Sustainability Assessment)

Strategic environmental assessmen



#### References

- BBL & Natuurpunt, 2006. Reactie BBL-NP op plan-mer Antwerpse Haven.
- Fischer, T. & Gazolla, P., 2006. SEA effectiveness criteria equally valid in all countries? The case of Italy. EIA Review 26: 396-409.
- Jha-Thakur, U., Fischer, T., Peel, D., Kidd, S., 2009. Effectiveness of SEA – the significance of learning. Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal 27: 133-144.
- Van Brempt, K. 2004. Beleidsnota Mobiliteit 2004-2009.
- www.mobielvlaanderen.be

Strategic environmental assessmental 4/05/2010 | pag. 15