

# SEA's Untapped Potential

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# Starting Points, Approach, Limitations

- SEA's scope of application, do we apply SEAs in the "right" decision-making processes?
- 'Shadow list' of presumably missing SEA applications *in Germany*
- Interested in SEA's 'off the beaten tracks' potential
- Preliminary research; no safe conclusions to be drawn, mostly providing hypotheses, 'strategic thinking' contributions

# Cross-Checking our Research Questions

- Which PPPs do we develop without considering SEA's potential, and where are others seemingly ahead of us?
  - Why no SEA for the **natural gas infrastructure** network **plan**<sup>[1]</sup> or for the **national strategy plan for aquaculture**<sup>[2]</sup> in *Germany*, yet done so for the former in *Portugal* and the latter in *South Africa*?
  - Why in *Germany* not like *Italy*<sup>[3]</sup> and *Latvia*<sup>[4]</sup>, for example, an SEA to support the **National Climate and Energy Plan** (NCEP)<sup>[5]</sup> making?



## Excursus: „Gips nicht mehr so viel“

- **German Coal Phase-out Legislation** <sup>[6]</sup> (‘Kohleausstiegsgesetz’) will result in loss of ca. 50% of Germany’s annual gypsum production
- Forecasting a vast expansion of gypsum mining in sensitive German landscapes, call for national strategy on gypsum resources
- Thus, shouldn’t we apply SEA for environmentally positive PPPs?  
*Hypothesis: perhaps but the details matter!*

Hanke 2020. „Gips nicht mehr so viel“. Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten, 20 August 2020

# Agriculture / Fishery / Aquaculture

- The *German* Ministry for Agriculture has developed a draft **Crop Farming Strategy 2035** <sup>[7]</sup> ('Ackerbaustrategie 2035'). Being no formal plan or programme no SEA initiated
- The *Irish* **Agri-Food Strategy 2025** <sup>[8]</sup> covers an agriculture strategy considering three scenarios (base case, base case +, sustainable growth)
- **Aquaculture Development** <sup>[9]</sup> in *South Africa*: SEA supported the identification of strategic focus areas for sustainable aquaculture development



# Energy Sector

- *German Gas Network Development Plan* <sup>[10]</sup> developed every second year by gas network operators determining the need for grid expansion; as no public agency plan, no SEA required
- In *Portugal* Redes Energéticas Nacionais develops SEAs for **National Gas Grid Investment Plans** <sup>[11]</sup>, considering alternatives and discussing crucial impacts with public and stakeholders
- The **Hawai'i Clean Energy** <sup>[12]</sup> PEIS (not required under NEPA) to develop guidance in meeting 70 % of the State's energy needs by 2030 through clean energy (energy efficiency, renewable energy, alternative transportation fuels and modes, transmission)

# Transport Sector

- **German Air Traffic 'Concept'** <sup>[13]</sup> comprised comprehensive scenarios for air traffic, supplementing the SEA inclusive Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan for road, rail and waterway transport
- **Civil Aviation Policy Memorandum** <sup>[14]</sup>, *The Netherlands*: sets course for sustainable aviation sector. SEA on four variants (Continuation, Standardization, Concentration and Dispersal)
- Medium- and Heavy-Duty **Fuel Efficiency Improvement Program** <sup>[15]</sup>, *USA*: PEIS related to fuel use, air quality, climate change. Life cycle impact assessment of vehicle energy, materials, technologies.



# Hypotheses & Recommendations

- Much of SEA's potential remains untapped so far in Germany: SEA screening processes tend not to happen or are quickly downturned as 'not EIA frame setting', vague PP terms providing loopholes
- Strategic and transparent consideration of environmental impacts while developing strategies or policies is often lacking
- SEA largely perceived as a legal formality, added value is not seen; third pillar of Aarhus Convention (access to courts in environmental matters) a blessing and a curse?



# Recommendations

- Develop database of 'talkative' SEA cases or SEA knowledge system (cf. Tethys\*)
- Single-case in depth studies presumably worthwhile endeavor - how did it come that pioneers set up outstanding, even voluntary SEA processes?
- Amend the EU Directive to clarify application of SEA; perhaps adopt a rather US or (Scottish) way: every policy/plan/program requires SEA unless initial (pre-)screening says other?

\* <https://tethys.pnnl.gov/>

A grayscale photograph of two women standing on a beach, looking out at the ocean. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored tank top and jeans, with her hands on her hips. The woman on the right is wearing a dark t-shirt and jeans, also with her hands on her hips. The ocean is in the background, with gentle waves. The text 'Thank you for your attention!' is overlaid in red on the left side of the image.

# Thank you for your attention!

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