

## Tallinn Forum 2020 – SEA conference: Advances in European SEA Practice Session E - SEA as an arena for conflict resolution in land use planning

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The groups were asked to discuss what some of the conflicts are today affecting the SEA, what potential for conflict resolution exists and what could be done better, as well as what the participants/the participants' organisations could do themselves in order to act as change agents.

The groups had a great amount to say, and in short, the answers to these questions touched upon:

- education** of students requiring teaching critical thinking, courses in SEA getting more attractive names and descriptions,
- the **language** and **communication** of SEA becoming more accessible,
- the lack of government **strategies** in place for land-use planning,
- what proper and meaningful **public consultation** and **participation** could look like,
- that SEA should not be primarily only a scientific process – but a **social process** with **scientific input**, and
- the political aspect of SEA, and the rural vs. urban divide.

**Q1. What are some conflicts you are aware of today?  
(Connected to the SEA-process)**

- Wind power and land-use conflicts in the Netherlands.
- SEA is really able to help local governments.
- Conflicting politics: factory politics and populist politics
- Rural vs. Urban divide on issues: in particular in wind power.
- Jurisdictions are varied – government systems can create their own conflicts.
- A very small country means more conflicts over land as there is less to play with, whilst Sweden has lots of land but many conflicting interests.
- Some countries do not handle planning well on the regional level.
- There is a ‘pushing of problems’ down to the regional level from higher i.e. just pushing the problems downwards, and the regions may not be able to handle them well.
- Lack of strategy in land use planning.
- Difficult to be prepared for the differences - for example different languages.
- Legal escalation in land use planning that creates conflict.
- Differences: different interests across different actors representing differing intentions/ Different environmental issues involved/Different legal backgrounds, and Some areas are regulated harder than others.
- The cumulative effects of land use are not considered.
- A reluctance to take on SEA and fear of not being able to control the outcome.
- ‘The devil is in the detail’ in a good assessment.
- ‘SEA washing’ issues.
- Training is very important.
- There is too much ‘box checking’ as opposed to adequate process being followed and good analysis being used. Accordingly, the methods and tools can be misused
- Consultation is not carried out appropriately – How could one do a proper SEA with proper participation? – For example, if your aim is to include indigenous people – How is this best done? Do you pay for them to come? Their input is different if they are financially recompensed to participate

- It is also difficult to participate for a community when it is not organised enough – for example in mining – One major issue involves how to get people to the table.
- SEA is a very intellectual-systems-thinking approach which is hard to explain to, for example, indigenous groups who have a different way to view/approach life.

**Q2. What potentials for conflict resolution do you see? How could it be improved? What is needed?**

- Potentials for conflict resolution where SEA listens to stake holders in the planning process.
- Landscape Character Analysis is a good tool to combine with the SEA.
- Many things are pushed into the SEA process from the other planning processes. This means that SEA is forced to cover too many aspects.
- Participation usually involves hearing mostly from the people *against* the activity. It is necessary to hear from pro or neutral interested parties too.
- We could learn from what people have as their wishes and dreams – locally.
- We could become less technical.
- We must acknowledge that SEA is also political and not only technical.
- SEA is given an additional burden to handle all sorts of issues handed over/down. Some issues that need to be handled with care, require different handling.
- The current power structures are often not challenged – but they often need to be. Leads to the question: Who is in charge of minding the silent interested parties?
- The education systems need to fill a bigger role!
- Public consultation needs to be increased.
- There is the importance to be very clear about the rules from the beginning of the process.
- We need to get better at involving and documenting the politicians and their views from the outset.
- Timing! – it is so good to begin early – is it really the main process that needs to be early or is it *the informal processes* that need to begin early? The informal processes are very important – Public participation!

- SEA should not be a purely scientific process – but a social process with scientific input.

**Q3. How can you be the change agent for what you see is needed?**

- SEA at university has to become more attractive - more interesting. Renaming for example.
- Stay happy and stay positive and stay in business when you speak of SEA.
- Communicate better and more enthusiastically – SEA is fun and sexy –
- What kind of change do we want to see? This needs clarity and needs to be linked to social innovation.
- Invest time in specific groups – groups of consultants coming together to improve the process together – setting precedents.
- Using the video- format so it is more accessible to more people.
- In Ireland there is a SEA forum wherein they try to improve the communication process – it provides a forum for research updates and this assists the agencies involved in Ireland, and it also provides a ‘SEA One Stop Shop’ there for all to use.
- Focus should be on social first and scientific second – but for this to occur we need a fully informed society = a question of a type of education that does not just impart knowledge but an education that teaches critical thinking
- Starting an outreach forum for communication and to reach people better.
- How do we see ourselves as change agents? It is important to acknowledge and see ourselves as change agents – we come from different backgrounds so we need to see ourselves in change agents in different ways – Bring in diversity thinking.
- Positive activities are actually happening – perhaps slowly but there are inspiring examples – but they are necessary to share more!
- Receiving up to date GIS Data.
- Advertising and holding alternative workshops for key players.
- Using non-technical summaries as selling points for the process – what went well and what did not go well.
- The question of the responsible authorities – Mexico: environmental authorities are not understanding the profile of the participants - they are merely politically elected.