



## Myth Busters – Reflections on Strategic Assessment in South Africa

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## OUTLINE

- Introduction to South African context
  - Definition of Environment
  - Key environmental issues
  - Key challenges facing assessment system
- 5 Myths about strategic assessment
- Contribution to sustainability?
- Bigger picture



## SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

## Constitutional Environmental Right

Section 24. Everyone has the right to

- (a) an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being and
- (b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that –
  - (i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
  - (ii) promote conservation; and
  - (iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

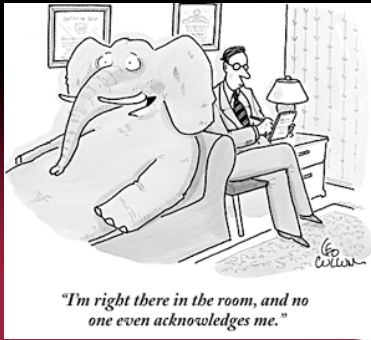
## Definition of the Environment

- Environment means the surroundings within which humans exist and that are made up of - NEMA (107 of 1998):
  - Land, water and atmosphere of the earth
  - Micro-organisms, plant and animal life
  - Any part or combination of the above, and the interrelationships among and between them and
  - The physical, chemical, aesthetic and cultural properties and conditions of the foregoing that influence human health and well-being
- SA legally adopted the extensive definition of the environment:
  - It challenges traditional reductionist perspectives and requires a holistic and integrated perspective!
  - "environment" is a complex system

## Evolution of SEA in South Africa



### Finding the elephant in the room



### Future Battlegrounds for Strategic Assessment



### Challenge 1: Efficiency / Streamlining

Overall regulatory compliance costs South African business R796b per annum (6,5% of total GDP for 2003) (SBP, 2005)



### Challenge 2: Complexity

- Comprehensive law reform has resulted in various authorization processes
  - Planning, EIA, Water Licenses, Heritage, etc.



### Challenge 3: Political expediency

"We cannot forever be held hostage by butterfly eggs that have been laid, because environmentalists would care about those things that are important for the preservation of the environment, while we sit around and wait for them to conclude the environmental studies." (Sisulu, 2006)



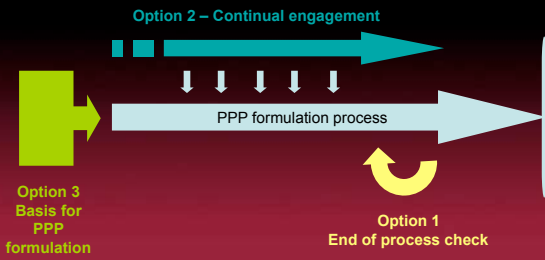
### Challenge 3: Political expediency

In the light of ASGISA, DEAT has stated with reference to EIA that:

"Government is concerned about any delay, costs and associated impacts on economic growth and development. This is why we need to improve efficiency and effectiveness without compromising basic environmental rights and quality." (Van Schaikwyk, 2006)



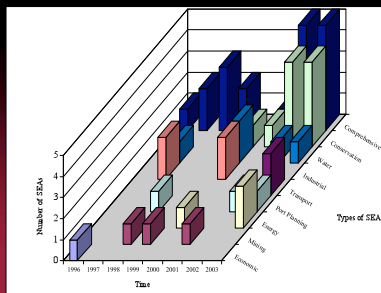
## Options for the application of SEA



## MYTHS ABOUT STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT



### Myth 1: You need legislation to introduce Strategic Assessment **X**



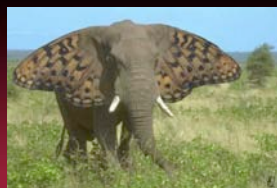
### Myth 2: Strategic Assessment is new and unique **X**

- Who is who in the zoo!?!?
- Duplication with planning and other environmental management tools
- Thinking behind strategic assessment is included in many other instruments and processes
- We are all thinking about 'sustainability'
- Should look for similar processes and promote integration and avoid duplication



### Myth 3: Strategic Assessment is mainly about conservation and biodiversity **X**

- Common misperception by the public and politicians
- Implications of this myth
  - Relegate assessment to green issues only
  - De-prioritize assessment outcomes
  - Vest implementation with marginalized departments
- Strategic Assessment should be about:
  - Hard hitting questions
  - Considering strategically important questions around poverty, energy, housing, etc.



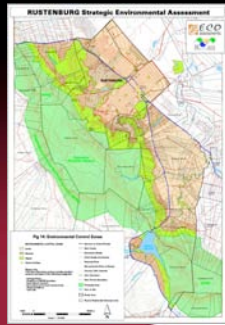
### Myth 4: Better information leads to better decision making **X**

- Technocratic
  - Reliance on 'scientific' quantitative outcomes which are conclusive
- Rational and information driven
  - More and better information leads to better decisions
- Objective
  - Reliance on 'objective' science
- Extensive and expensive
  - Timeframes and budgets
- Procedurally structured and isolated
  - Structured, isolated
  - Stand alone SEA processes



## Myth 5: SEA will replace the need for EIA **X**

- As scale change, issues change
- Boundaries – be careful!!
- Strategic information differs from project level information – and is open for abuse
- EIA will always be required to deal with project implementation and follow-up
- Strategic Assessment can add a lot of value to project level screening



## CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABILITY

## Areas for improvement

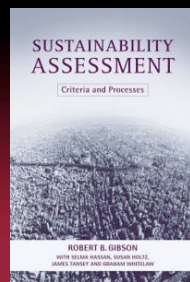
- Limited proof was found where contents of plans and programmes were influenced
- Sustainability objectives were not integrated into plans or programmes
- Limited examples where SEA directly influenced decisions it meant to inform
- SEAs not adopted as decision making guidelines
- SEA managed to miss key strategic issues
  - Difficulties in dealing with concept of sustainability and significance
- Lack of monitoring arrangements – could not establish if:
  - sustainability objectives were achieved
  - positive changes in environmental quality achieved

## Victories for Strategic Assessment

- 'Up-stream' influence on policy and legislation
  - Pointed out gaps in policy (i.e. Addo Resettlement Policy)
  - Introduced new concepts into policy (i.e. 'water for rural development')
- Capacity building and awareness
  - Multidisciplinary approach
  - Informing communities of their environmental rights (i.e water rights)
  - Representation of rural communities (i.e. tribal communities and farm workers)
- Information generation and sharing
  - Due to 'technical rational approach'
  - Biodiversity studies (i.e. C-plans)
  - Seems to be a misunderstanding on 'strategic information'

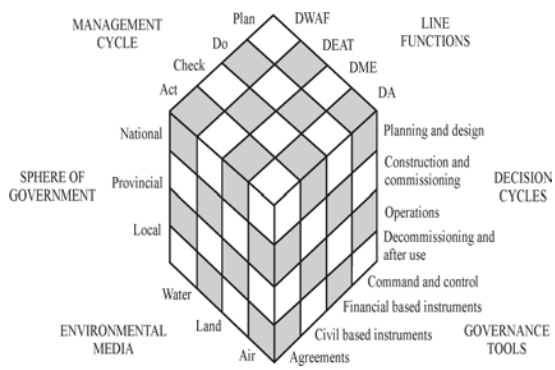
## Sustainability requirements as decision criteria

- To what extent do we consider the following decision criteria in strategic assessment?
  - Socio-ecological system integrity
  - Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity
  - Intra-generational equity
  - Inter-generational equity
  - Resource maintenance and efficiency
  - Socio-ecological civility and democratic governance
  - Precaution and adaptation

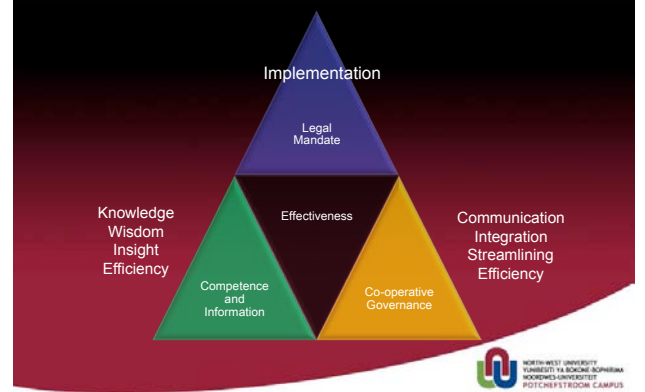


## REFLECTION

## CHALLENGE: DEALING WITH COMPLEXITIES IN STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT



## Prerequisites for Effectiveness: Effectiveness Triangle



## WAY FORWARD

