

Joy of just right EIA;

How to keep the EIA practice manageable and meet society's needs




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What if EIA and SEA become potential bottlenecks to solving many and urgent environmental, climate and social problems?

Story line:

- We're in Bologna as enthusiast of EIA
- Enthusiast because we care about environment, planet and society
- But what if EIA and SEA are potential bottlenecks to solving many and urgent environmental, climate and social problems ?'

Why are EIA and SEA potential bottlenecks?

- Way of working
- Not enough skilled professionals
- Too much to do

What can we do about this?



Story line:

- I would argue that EIA is potentially a bottle neck to solving environmental, climate and social problems. Why?
- 1) Way of working:
 - *We're exploring fancy technology (AI), but what about basics?*
 - *Proportionate EIA* has been a topic for long, *But we still have high expectations* of EIA **in practice**: many topic covered, much in detail, reliant mostly on proof by modeling and quantitative data
 - Result is: lengthy planning and decision making, difficult to find and grasp information, unhappy people, poor reputation EIA
- 2) There are not enough professionals (in Netherlands): number of skilled professionals declining, retirement, lack of education and specialized training
- In short: There's a lot of work to do, we have high expectations of EIA and too few skilled professionals → EIA bottleneck
- Question: what can we all do about this?



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Whitepaper on EIA and SEA in Netherlands



Some relevant findings...

Story line:

- Experienced and passionate IA consultant, but also increasingly *concerned*
- Whitepaper drafted for NL, and abroad
- Invitation to all parties involved in NL to discuss and explore solutions to EIA as bottleneck
- Whitepaper soon to be published
- Whitepaper not main focus of this presentation, but some specific point we came across



Education and training of professionals

- Virtually no education and training programs in NL
- EIA and SEA not well known?
- EIA and SEA bad reputation?
- Whatever the answer: need for training programs and education, and good reputation of EIA and SEA

Story line:

- Topic of training and education:
- Many of the 'old guys' soon retire
- Yet very few new professionals come up
- Hardly any courses at unis, or post academic
- Supposedly due to lack of demand or interest from students. Why?
- EIA little known? Or not perceived attractive career?
- Whatever the reason: we need new skilled people and so proper training and education and a good reputation of EIA are essential

PROPORTIONATE EIA AND SEA

- Topic for decades and many good suggestions made
- Mostly reliant on:
 - Awareness,
 - Skills & expertise,
 - Self-discipline and
 - Cooperation
- **Little progress** due to 'drama of good intentions' (Friso de Zeeuw)



Story line:

- Topic of proportionate EIA: has been topic for long, much has been said, many suggestions made
- Our impression: despite good suggestions, little has changed!
- Appears that suggestions rely on **actively pursuing proportionate EIA by all parties (individuals) in concrete projects** (reliant on awareness, skills & expertise, self-discipline, intention, cooperation)
- Seems as a weakness as individual contributions in practice are more likely aimed at thorough work, completeness and risk avoidance, professional reputation, information craving etc.
- **In other words, pursuing proportionate EIA is almost an unnatural thing to do!**
- Also; suggestions mostly show '**how to**' rather than '**will do**' instructions.
- So we still end up with massive EIA's, driven by all our thoroughness, risk avoidance etc.
- Phenomenon also called '**drama of good intentions**' (Friso de Zeeuw)



Proportionate EIA and SEA

- *System lacks incentives or mechanisms*
- *More radical measures needed*
- *We want your brilliant ideas*
- *Joy in just right EIA*

Story line:

- Our conclusion is that EIA system lacks in-built **incentive of mechanism** to limit scope and depth
- **In addition** to 'how to' measures, we need 'will do' instructions, an incentive, a mechanism
- We need out of box ideas, suggestions... E.g. financial incentives?
- We want to go from 'drama of good intentions' to **'Joy in just right'**

Let's make EIA and SEA effective and efficient



Let's continue the conversation!

Message me your questions or comments in the IAIA25 app.

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