strategic environmental assessment for governance enhancement

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keywords

sustainability
"has to deal with systems (…) capacity to keep development processes guided by universal and holistic goals of diversity, transparency, quality, timelessness and justice" (Partidário 2006)

governance
relational concept that provides legitimacy to the exercise of power. "interactions (…) aiming at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities" (Meuleman 2008)

strategic environmental assessment (SEA)
"strategic instrument that helps to create a development context towards sustainability, by integrating environment and sustainability issues in decision-making" (Partidário 2012)

power
Ability to intervene and make a difference (as a quality of a system of rules and resources), where its level of allocation is provided by actors knowledge, capabilities and resources (based on Giddens 1979)

institutions
"collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate actions in terms of relations between roles and situations" (March and Olsen 1989)
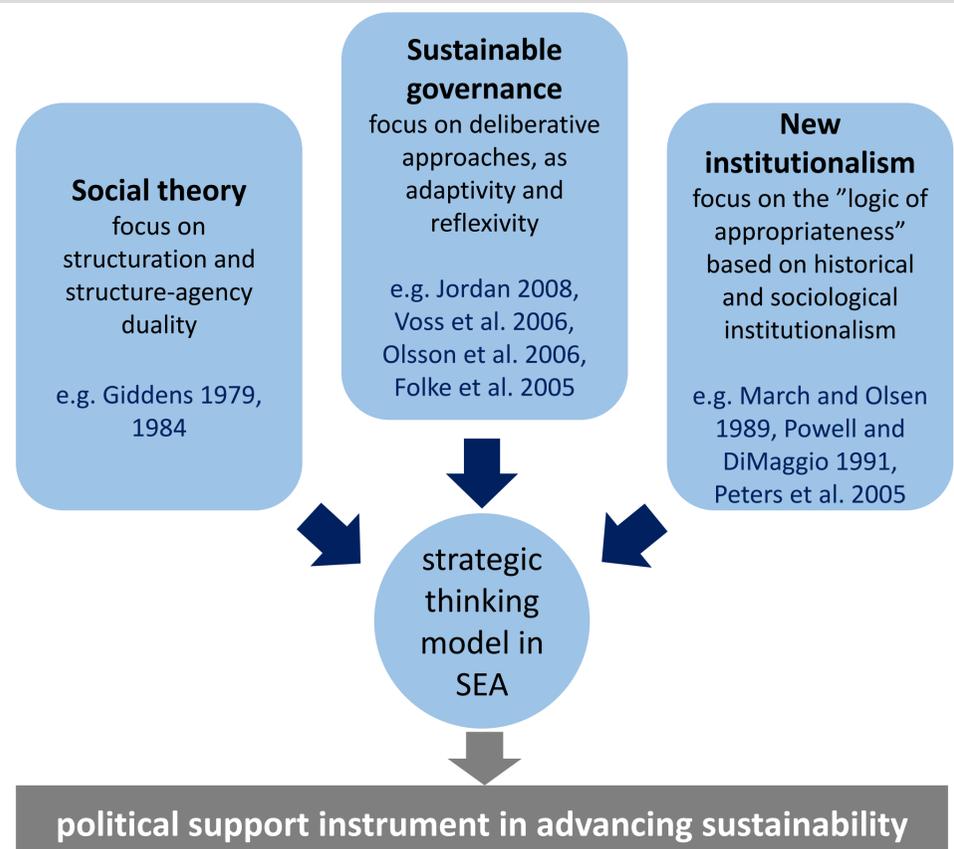
research design

aim: to investigate to what extent can SEA proactively contribute to the prosecution of sustainable governance
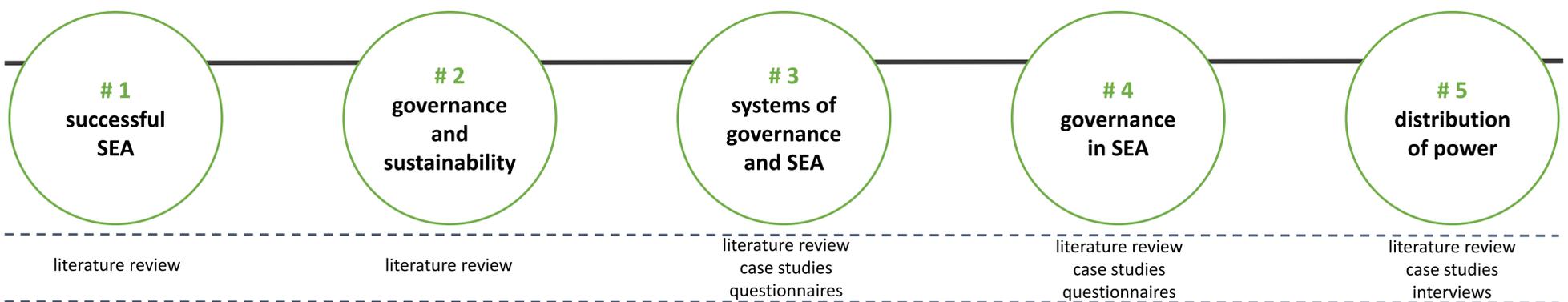
research objectives:
 # 1: explore the existing relationships between institutionalized decision-making practices of SEA and different governance systems
 # 2: investigate how institutional relations and power distribution can affect the success of SEA in enhancing greater accountability and legitimacy in development contexts towards sustainability
 # 3: explore what may be the necessary shifts in the institutionalization and practice of SEA to pursuit sustainable public policies.

research questions:
 # 1: how can SEA enables the integration of sustainability aspects in public policy formulation?
 # 2: how can SEA play a proactive role in securing legitimacy of decisions that promote sustainability?
 # 3: what influence has power distribution and institutionalized responsibilities in the success of SEA?

Social theory
focus on structuration and structure-agency duality

e.g. Giddens 1979, 1984

Sustainable governance
focus on deliberative approaches, as adaptivity and reflexivity

e.g. Jordan 2008, Voss et al. 2006, Olsson et al. 2006, Folke et al. 2005

New institutionalism
focus on the "logic of appropriateness" based on historical and sociological institutionalism

e.g. March and Olsen 1989, Powell and DiMaggio 1991, Peters et al. 2005

strategic thinking model in SEA

political support instrument in advancing sustainability

research papers and outputs

 # 1 successful SEA

 # 2 governance and sustainability

 # 3 systems of governance and SEA

 # 4 governance in SEA

 # 5 distribution of power

literature review	literature review	literature review case studies questionnaires	literature review case studies questionnaires	literature review case studies interviews

what is a successful SEA?

what is relevant from governance in situations of development proposals for sustainability?

to what extent different systems of governance can influence the success of SEA?

how is governance being addressed in SEA?

what is the influence of power in processes towards sustainability?

- No agreement on the aim and purpose (and approach!) of SEA.
- Effectiveness seen as a synonym for success.
- No agreement on how to 'measure' effectiveness: decision-makers focus on results and practitioners on the process.

- Successful SEA as context-specific.
- Adopt a upward approach since the outcome is not enough to analyze the success of SEA.

Key lesson # 1
adaptability and flexibility
Key lesson # 2
complexity
Key lessons # 3
reflexivity
Key lesson # 4
social coordination and collective choices
Key lesson # 5
flows of power

	china	denmark	netherlands	Vietnam
governance styles	hierarchy market	network market	network market, hierarchy	hierarchy market
objectives	comply legal requirements; impacts oriented	impacts oriented	impacts oriented	comply legal requirements; impacts oriented
disclosure of information	no requirements (high sense of confidentiality)	yes	yes	without compulsory requirements (weak)
authorities	under MEP authority (examination and approval)	under ME authority case-by-case approach	Under ME authority case-by-case approach	under MoNRCE authority
approach	traditional SEA	traditional SEA	traditional SEA	traditional SEA
alternatives	no	no	yes	no
public participation	one phase (prior to PEIA review)	two phases (scoping and ER) More in local planning	two phases (scoping and ER)	one phase (weak)
review process	under government coordination with governmental bodies	under ME coordination Authorities with environmental responsibilities (case-by-case)	independent review panel (NCEA)	under government coordination with governmental bodies
SEA integration in decision-making	late	late	late	late (planning process leads SEA)
Legal requirements	under EIA regulation	SEA act	under EIA regulation	under EIA regulation

Governance-related topics	Main results
Transparency	Planning goals vs. SEA goals
	Systematic application
	Public consultation
Accountability	Existing legal provisions
	Scope through decision-makers values
Uncertainty	Facts-based
	Narrow scope
	Quantitative assessment
Public participation	Public to be informed
	Public involved in near-ended processes
Monitoring and follow-up	Assessment indicators
	Control requirements
	Indistinct responsibilities
Relationship between actors	Rule-based (formal and institutionalised)
Institutional responsibilities	SEA provisions
Territorial management	Planning authority
Political lock-ins or facilitator	Transboundary relations

Structuralistic understanding of power as capacity

(Hansen 2011 based on Giddens 1984)

open-ended **questions** remains:
- how to deal with **uncertainty** in a **long-term perspective**?
- how to manage with different **expectations**?
- how to **provide legitimacy** to the development proposal?
- how the context of development is prepared to **deal with change**?