

Sustainability Assessment

-

some evidence and suggestions for its effective use



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Integrating different aspects through sustainability assessment

- Intensifying debate about most appropriate form of EA. Two questions:
 - whether economic and social aspects should be considered on a par with environmental aspects [?];
 - how [effective] impact assessment can be integrated better into decision making and what it can do to make it more sustainable.

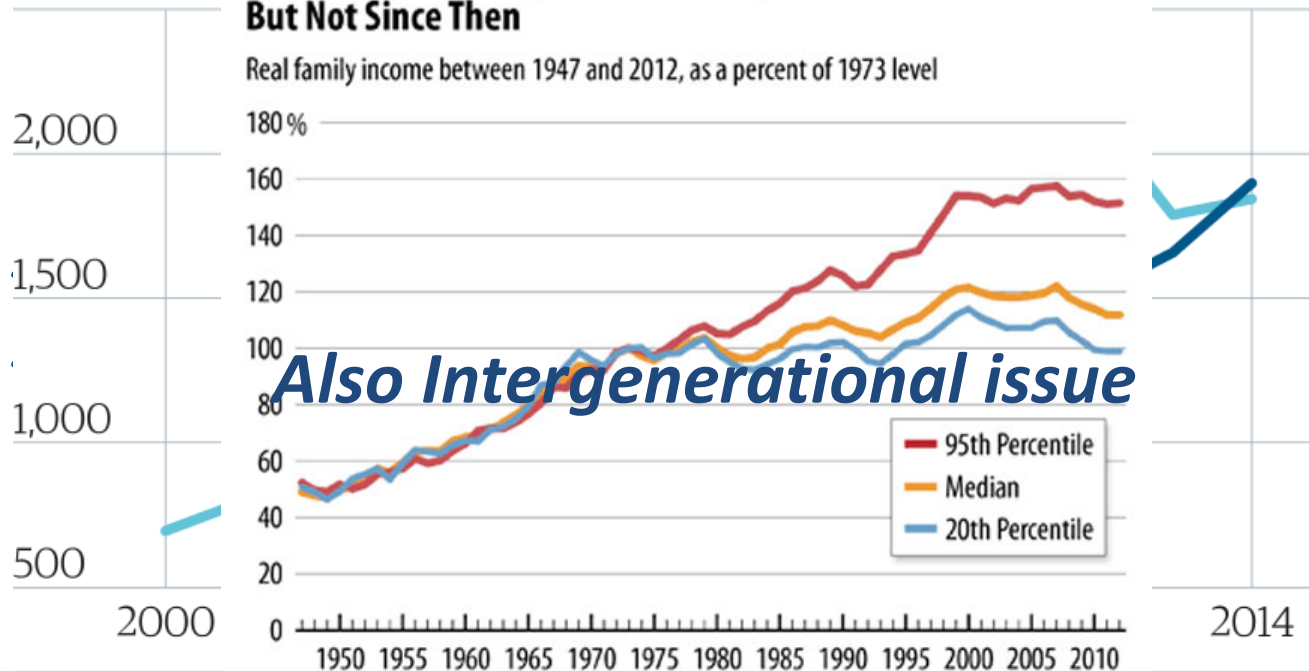
Sustainability assessment

A few key issue to start with

Sustainability assessment

Combined wealth in current \$bn

● Richest 8



GUARDIAN GRA

Source: CBPP calculations from U.S. Census Bureau data

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities | cbpp.org

AM, FORBES

Sustainability assessment



For adaptation and resilience?

Sustainability assessment

- Types of sustainability assessment:
 - ‘State-of’ reporting instruments; phenomena and products



- Ex-ante assessments of proposed policies, plans, programmes or projects



- Governmental institutions have been particular advocates of this development (UN, EU etc.).

Sustainability assessment

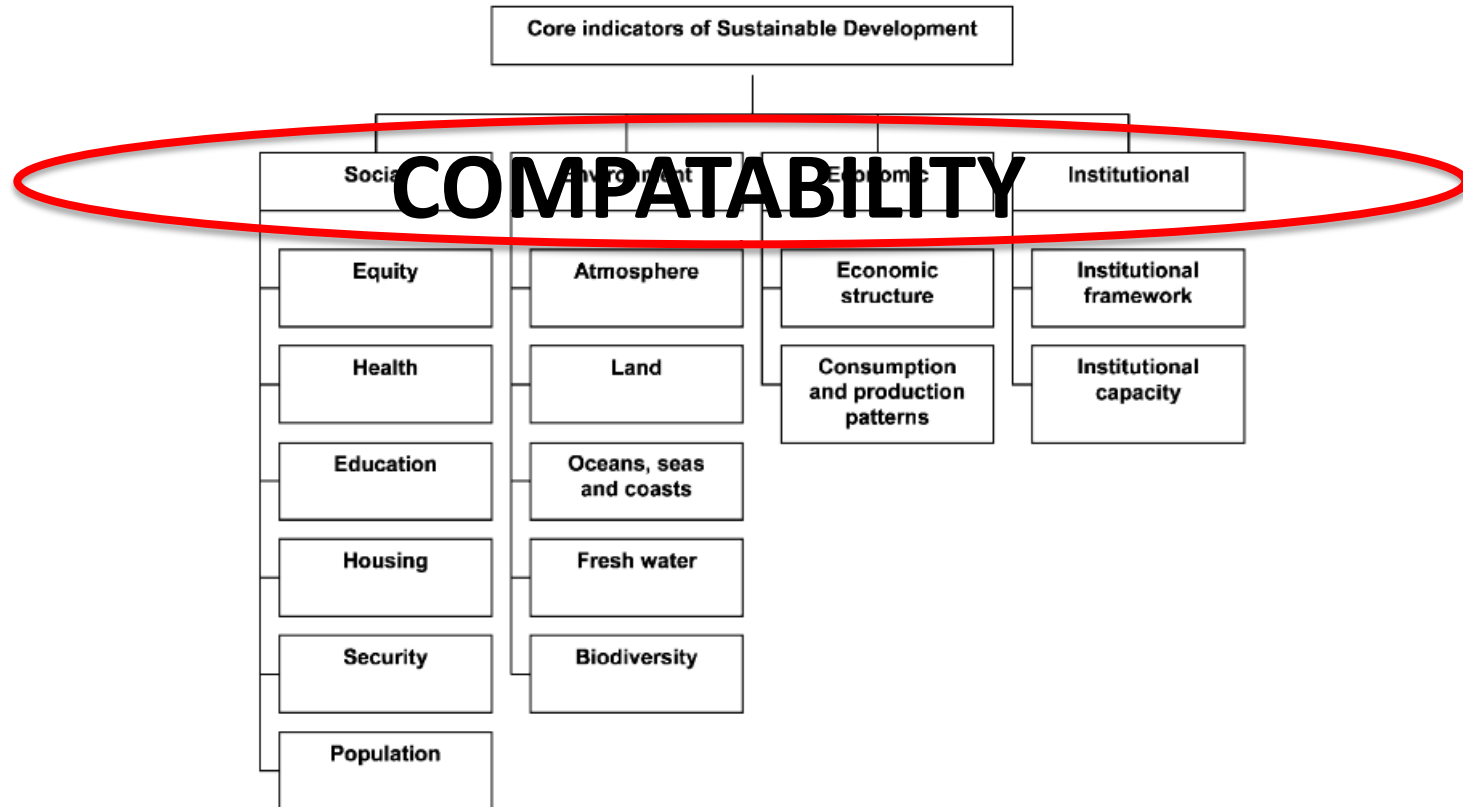


Fig. 2. The United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) theme indicator framework.

Arguments for sustainability assessment

Arguments for sustainability assessment

- Sustainability Assessment simplifies and reduces work for policy, plan, programme and project developers.
- Many of the issues covered in the different forms of assessment are the same.
- People working in governments are very busy and need to use their time as efficiently as possible.
- Champions for different issues can work together to ensure that “their” issue is properly considered.

Arguments for sustainability assessment

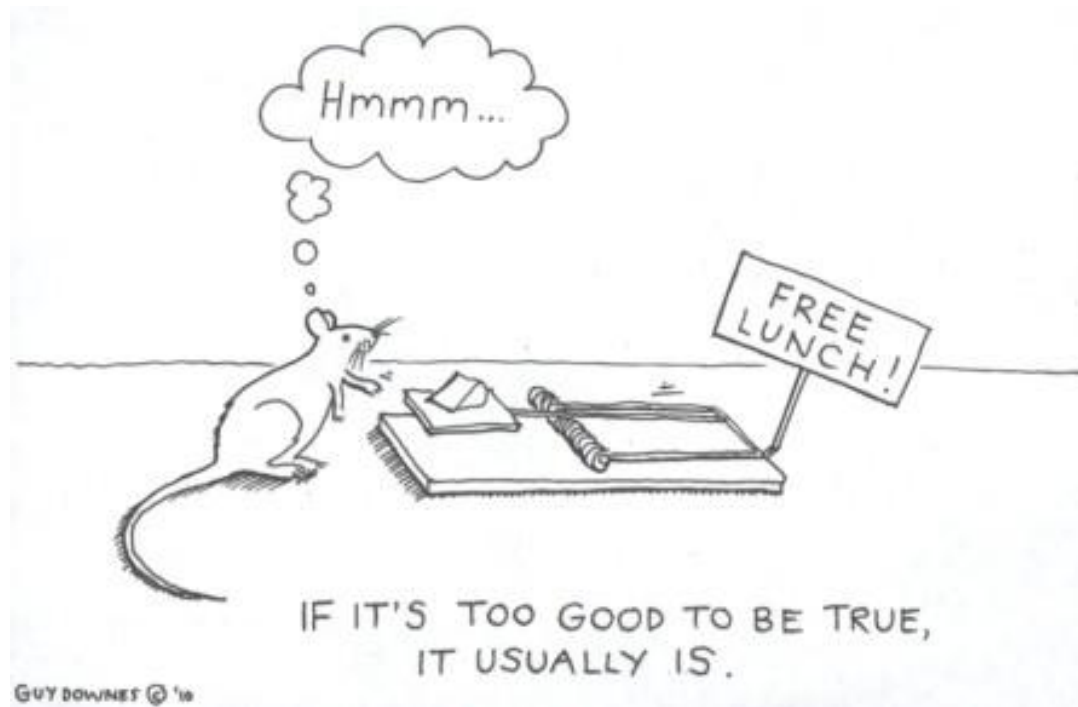
- “Impact assessment fatigue”. People are being urged to do too many different impact assessments.



“I’m tired—let’s call it tall enough.”

CN
COLLECTION

Potential pitfalls of sustainability assessment



Potential pitfalls of sustainability assessment

- Favourite / particularly important issues will not be properly considered or receive adequate attention.
 - *Incompatible values....*
- There is a danger of superficial treatment of issues and encouraging a “tick box approach”.

Potential pitfalls of sustainability assessment

- The need to involve people representing all areas covered by an SA could create additional work – rather than less.
- *A Sustainability Assessment can only be as ‘good’ as the people who contribute to it.*
 - *Expertise and experience*
 - *Integrity*
 - *Balanced / [or] sustainable views?*
 - *Independent*
 - ...

SA in England



SA in England

- Developing from environmental appraisal beginning of the 1990s to SA in the late 1990s
- SA of regional development plan guidance in 1999
 - Integration of economic, social and environmental aspects
 - open government and good governance
- SEA made mandatory in 2004 through SA

SA in England

- SAs carried follow a process described in government guidance (2005), consisting of five main stages (running in parallel to plan making...):
 - A) Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope; resulting in the production of a scoping report;
 - B) Developing and refining options and assessing effects (the SEA Directive requires for reasonable alternatives to be considered);
 - C) Preparing the SA report;
 - D) Consulting on the preferred plan option and SA report; preparing the final SA report;
 - E) Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the plan.

SA in England

Box 1: Typical example of SA framework composed of SA objectives (Leicester City Council 2007)

1. To ensure that the existing and future housing stock meets the housing needs of the City
2. To improve health and reduce health inequalities
3. To provide better opportunities for people to value and enjoy the City's heritage and participate in cultural and recreational activities
4. To improve community safety, reduce crime and the fear of crime
5. To support diversity, tackle inequality, and support the development and growth of social capital across the communities of the City
6. To increase bio-diversity levels across the City
7. To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of the natural, cultural and built environmental and archeological assets of the City
8. To manage prudently the natural resources of the City including water, air quality, soils and the minimising of flood risk through sustainable forms of development
9. To reduce the potential impact of climate change by minimising energy usage and to develop the City's renewable energy resource, reducing dependency on non-renewable resources
10. To make efficient use of existing transport infrastructure, help reduce the need to travel by car, improve accessibility to jobs and service for all and to ensure that all journeys are undertaken by the most sustainable mode available
11. To minimise waste and to increase the re-use and recycling of waste materials
12. To create high quality employment opportunities and develop a strong diverse and stable local economy
13. To raise the levels of educational achievement and develop a strong culture of enterprise and innovation
14. To reduce levels of deprivation

SA in England

- *Surveys Surveys Surveys Surveys Surveys Surveys*
 - For plan-making process, 42% felt that it was biased towards the economy, 36% that it was balanced, 15% that it was more social, and 7% more environmental.
 - 70 % of respondents felt that SA process changed the plan-making process to be more balanced, 24 % to be more environmental, and 6 % to be more social.

SA in England

- On the whole, SAs conclude that plans are positive in terms of social and economic issues, but somewhere between slightly positive and slightly negative for environmental issues
- In many cases, the only negative impacts identified in SA reports are environmental factors
- The environmental impacts of submitted plans are significantly more negative than those of the preferred option documents, suggesting that plans become less sustainable as they get closer to completion

Problems of integration in SA



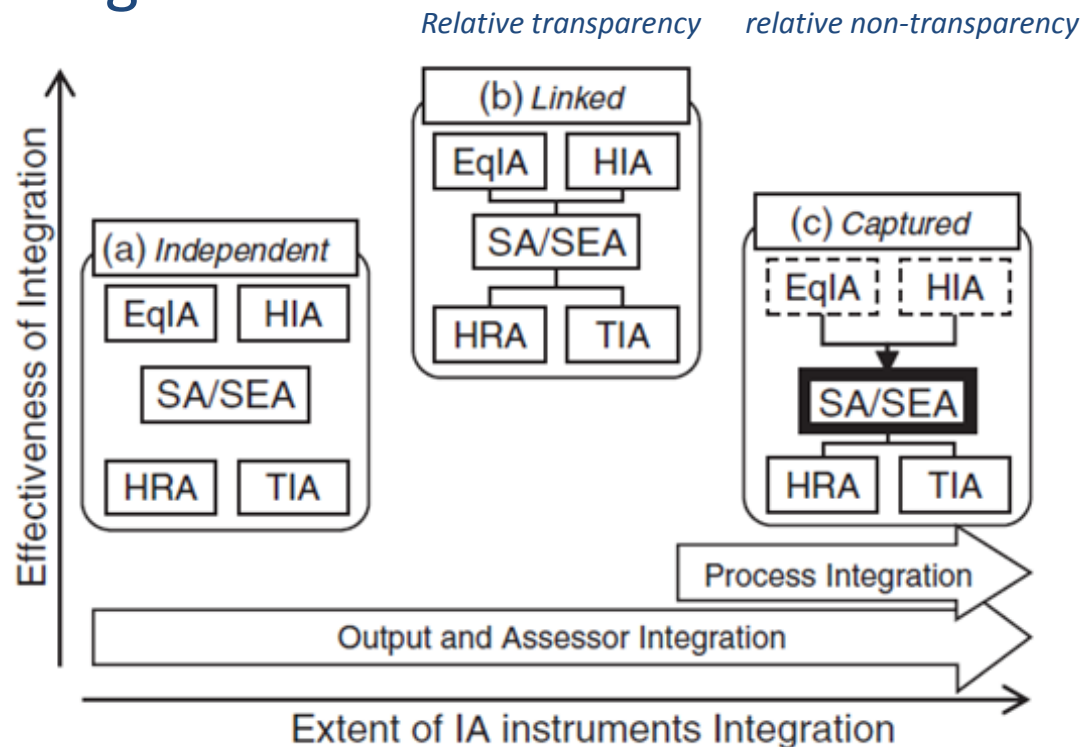
Problems of integration in SA



300 indicators??? Focus on the essentials in a specific SA...

Evidence and solutions

4. Loss in depth and concerns over the way in which the different components of sustainable development are integrated



Also: there is currently no need to include any of the recommendations of an SA.

Solutions...

- Identifying clear minimum threshold levels for economic, social and environmental criteria.
- Transparency and trade-off rules

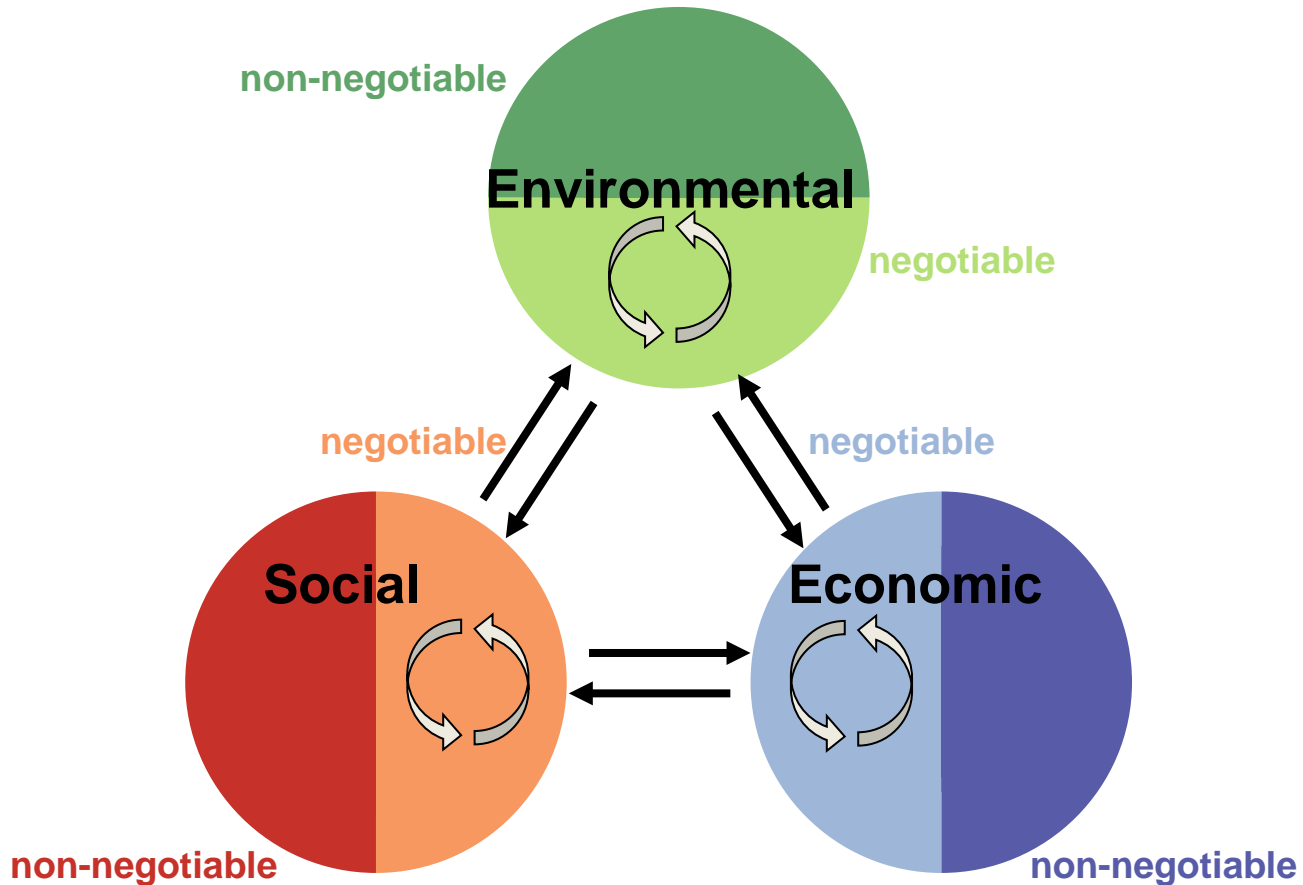


"Naturally, there's a trade-off for its exceptional fuel economy."

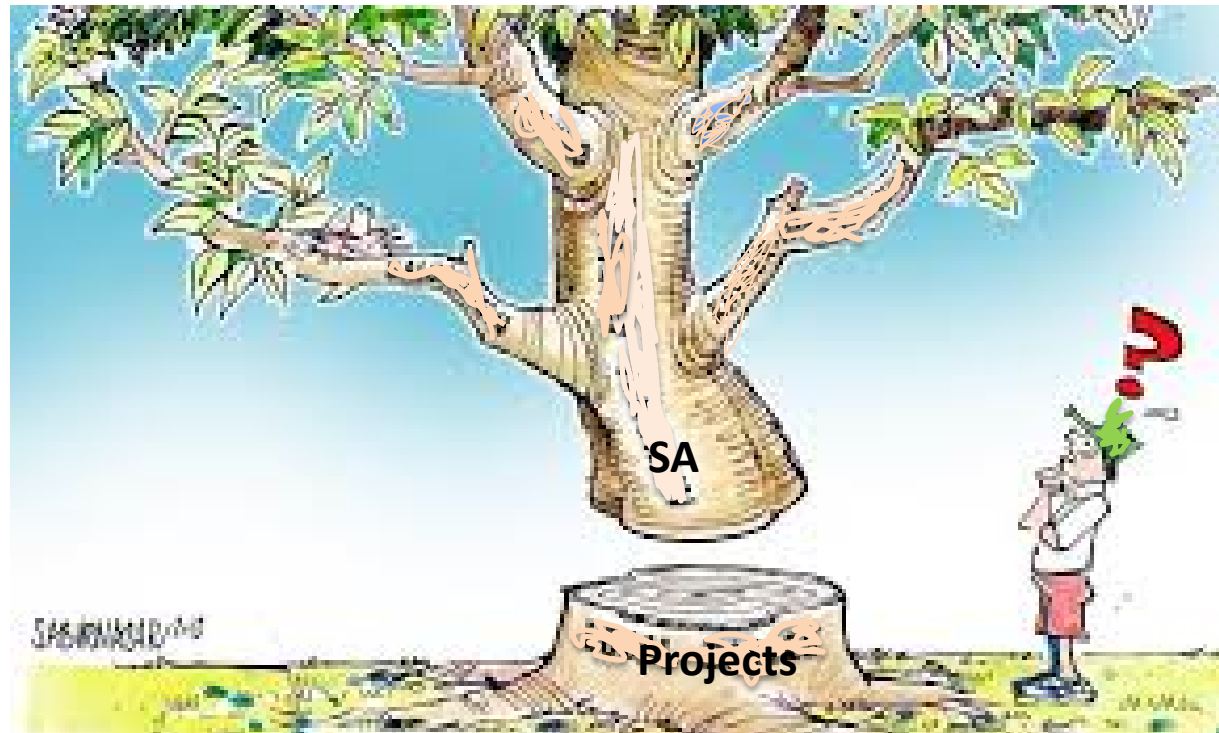
So, should you conduct SA rather than SEA?

- *Depends... need for a Strategy...*
 - a ‘solution’ for moving from where you are now to where you want to be ... what you want to happen to achieve an end:
 - Goals / Aims
 - Policies
 - Plans
 - Programmes
 - Projects

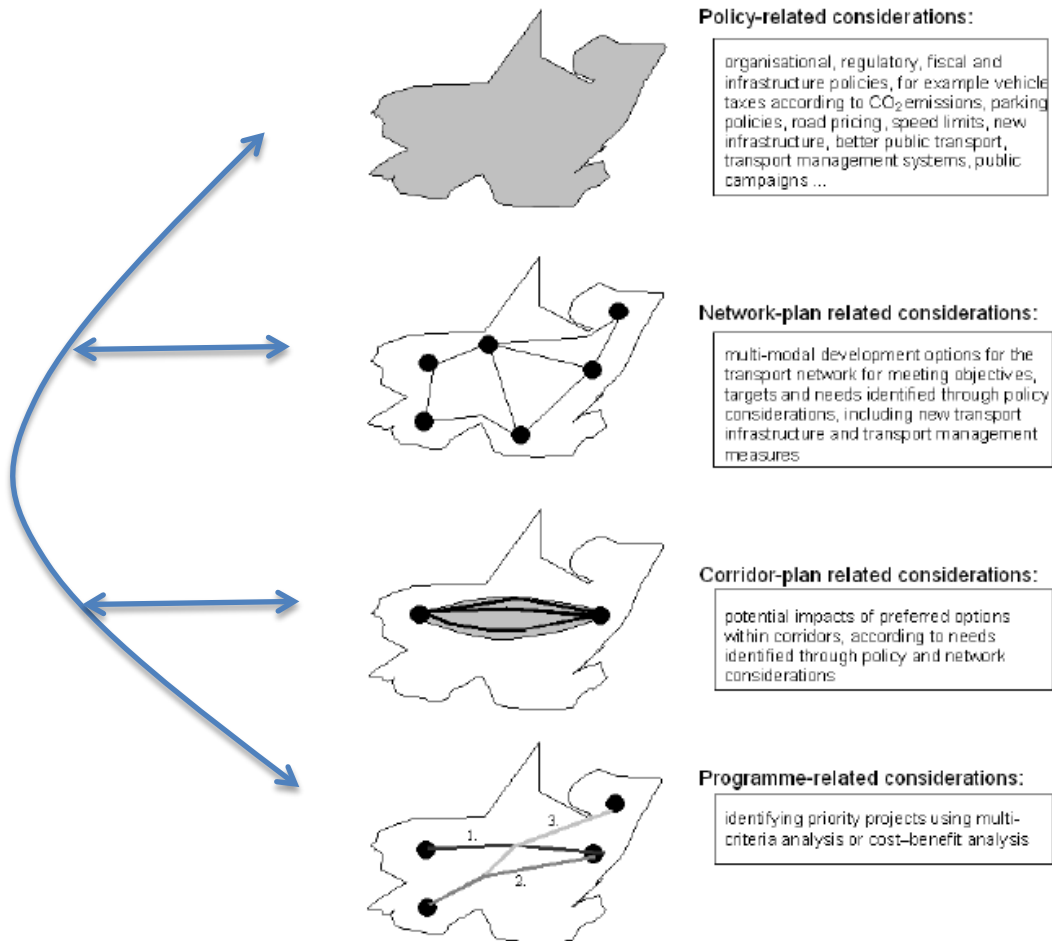
Key ingredients for success...



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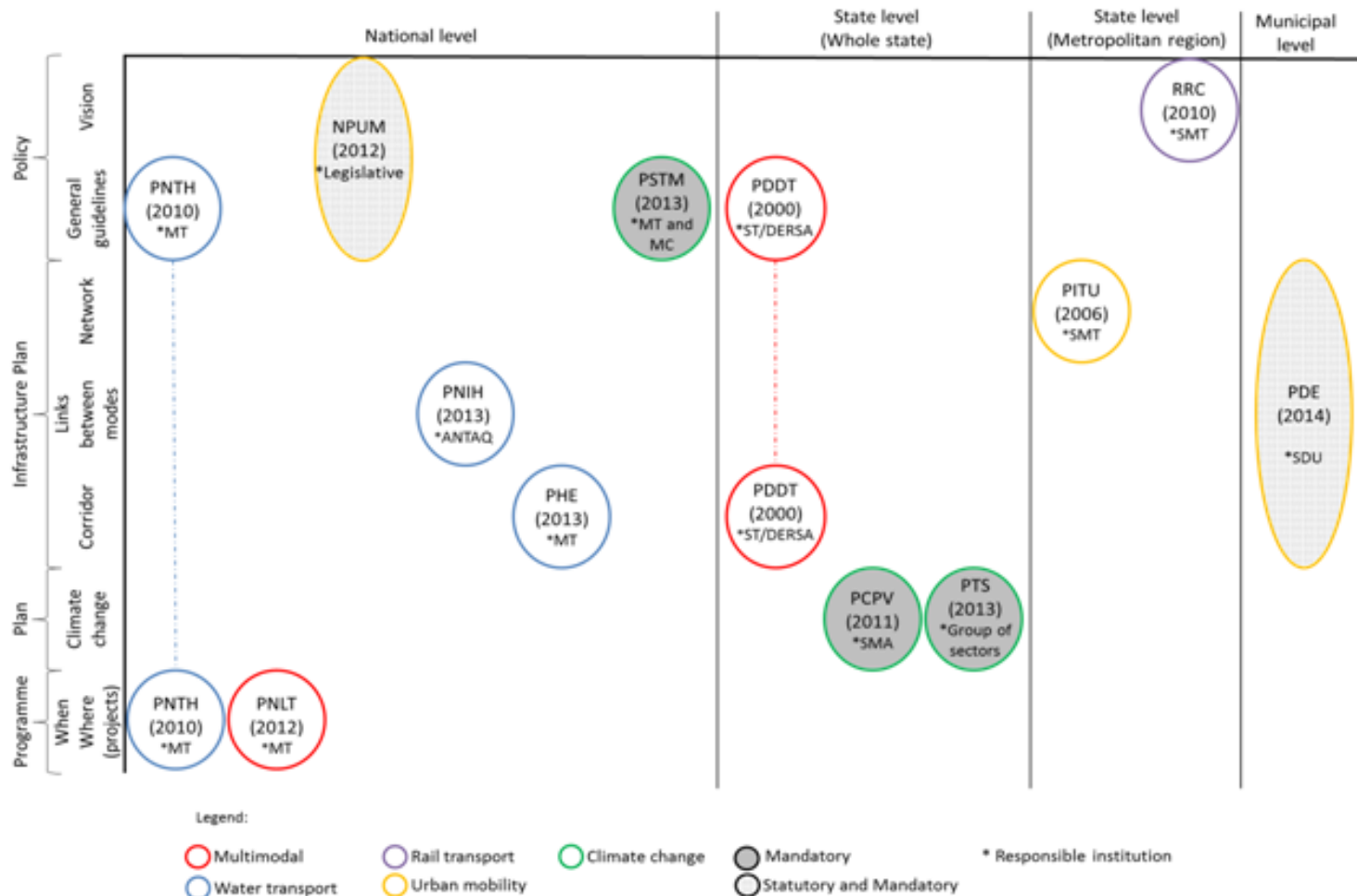


Figure 6 – Planning framework of transport in Brazil (national level), Sao Paulo State (state level), Metropolitan region of Sao Paulo (regional level) and Municipality of Sao Paulo (local level).

Key ingredients for success...

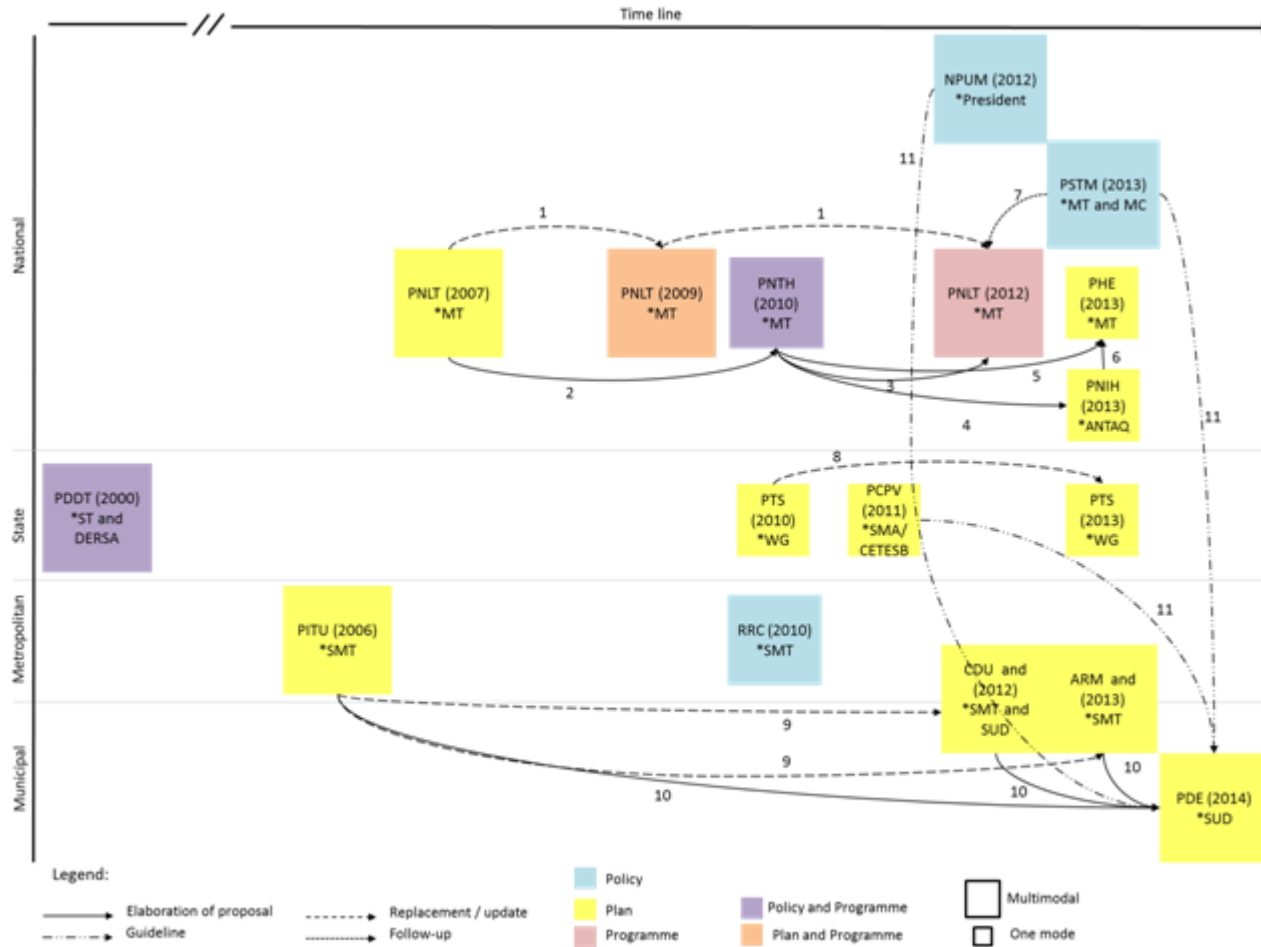
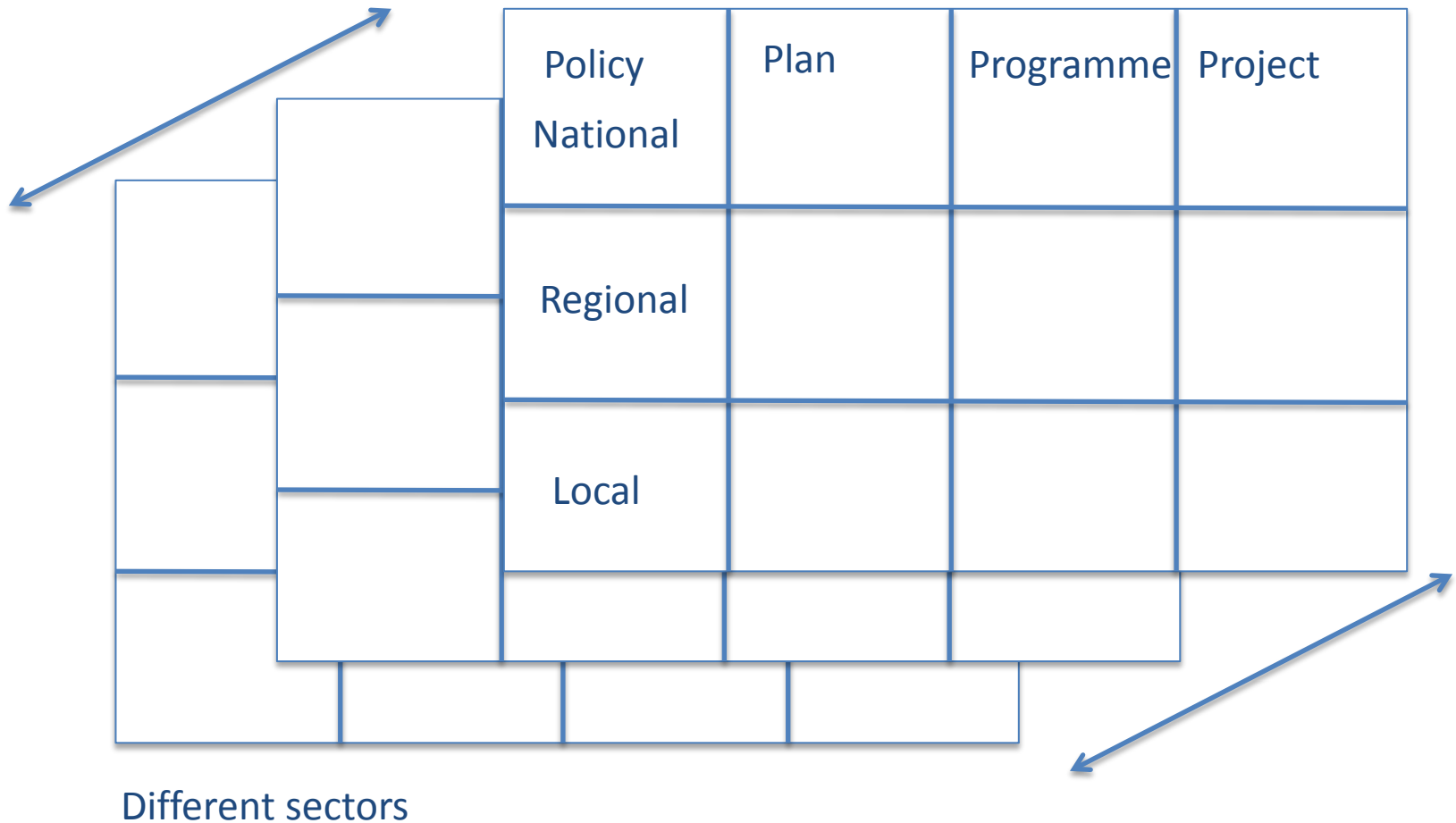


Figure 7 – Policies, plans and programmes (organized chronologically, by administrative level, strategic level and modal coverage) and the relations between them (the explanations for the relation identified by a number are presented in Box 1).

Source: After Arts (1998) and Arts et al. (2011).

Key ingredients for success...



So, should you conduct SA rather than SEA?

- Depends...



- And if we are not really looking for 'balance' (i.e. sustainability) there is still 'integrated assessment' e.g. for adaptation (even though a rich country like the NL doing it means it can hardly be equitable)

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