

**THE ART AND SCIENCE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
IAIA08 Session Chair's Report**

Session number and name: CS1.13 Tools and techniques for SEA and planning

Day: Tuesday **Date:** May 6 **Time:** 16:00-17:30 **# Persons attending session:** 40/50

Name(s) of Session Chair(s)

Paola Gazzola

Contributors*

Abe Francis, John Fry, Alan Chenoweth

* Sangbum Lee and Giuseppe Magro unable to attend

(a) Three current issues in application of assessment processes discussed in this session

1. Computer-based mapping methods have great potential in SEA and planning applications (landscape scale monitoring using a helicopter platform, GIS, landscape evaluation): they are rapid, cost effective, repeatable, they can be tailored to a variety of impact types and condition factors/landscapes, appropriate to landscape scale/cumulative impacts, they can be used with other methods to gain additional information (e.g. video footage), gain high familiarity with site and enhanced understanding, better information delivery and transparency. Furthermore, they allow for a rapid and spatially-specific identification of potential issues and systematic spatial assessment of multiple factors

2. Limitations and barriers: "expert" approaches vary widely, affecting the effectiveness of the objective analysis; where landscape values and visual impacts are concerned more community participation is needed; skill/knowledge, time and data constraints; difficulty to tackle non-spatial policies; fear of early disclosure of information via GIS websites

3. Need for a more integrated approach, working "backwards" from development control & IA: if we know what decision-makers need to know in order to predict and control development impacts on landscape values, then we'll know what we have to evaluate, map and prioritise

(b) One or more emerging trends

Tools such as GIS, remote sensing, landscape evaluation, etc, can contribute to assessment and planning with more than "just" a description of the baseline environment

(c) Issues relating to impact assessment effectiveness:

(i) dimensions of IA effectiveness (i.e. what are the characteristics of effective IA?)

Aspect not addressed

(ii) challenges/barriers to IA effectiveness

Challenges and barriers referred to the effective use of computer-based tools, see point a2

(iii) how these barriers might be overcome

Integrated process, see point a3.

(d) Comments on the Art and Science of Impact Assessment (i.e. the relative importance and interplay between science and values/politics/subjectivity in impact assessment)

Landscape values and visual impacts are more subjective, 'political' and in need of community participation than most other environmental components. Some 'objective' analysis through computer-based tools and techniques has proven effective as a base, but 'expert' approaches vary widely.