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# The future of spatial planning related impact assessment in Estonia

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# Republic of Estonia

Population 1 320 000 (↓)

Total area 45 227 km<sup>2</sup>

Capital city Tallinn (400 000 ↑)

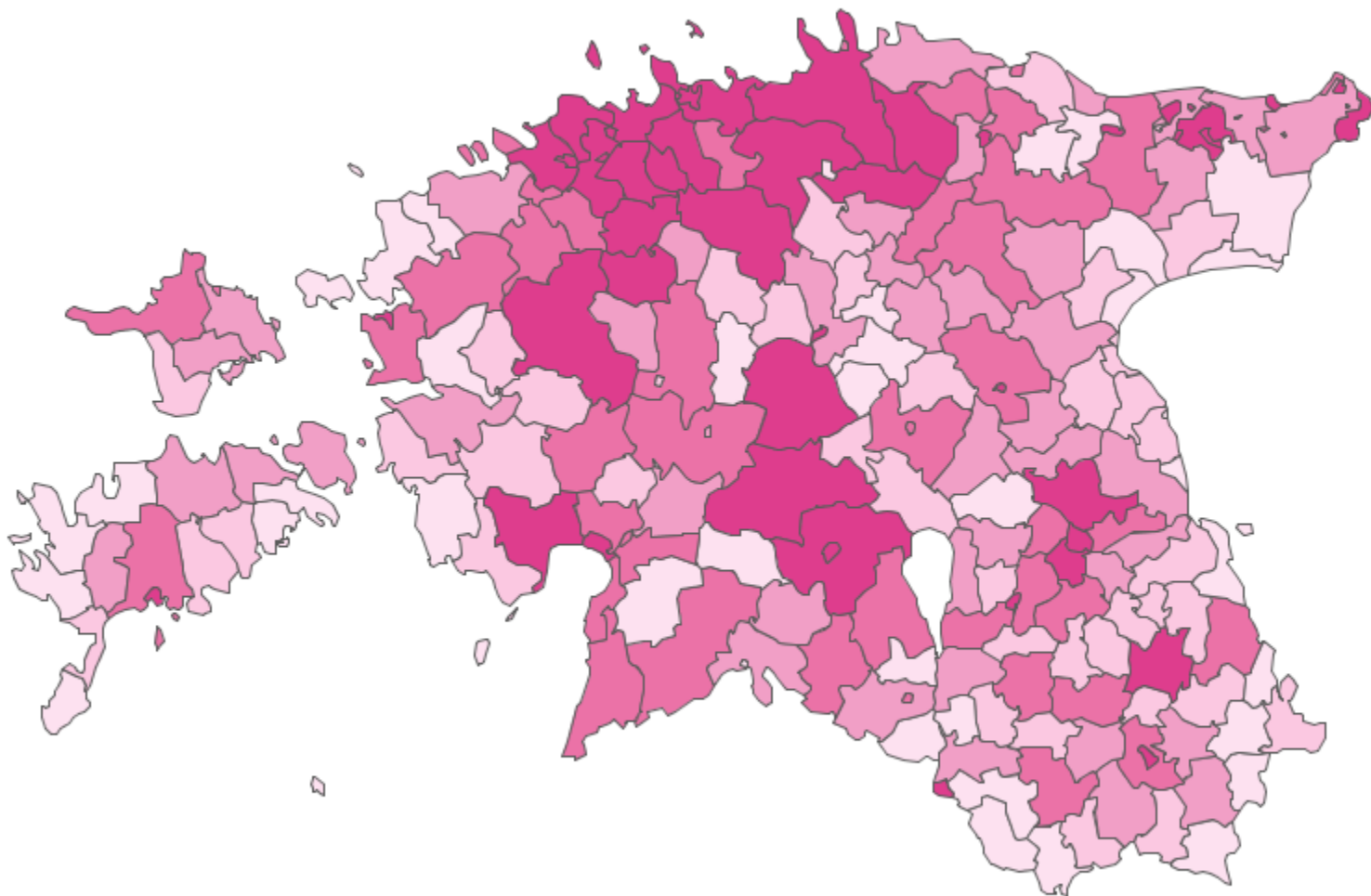
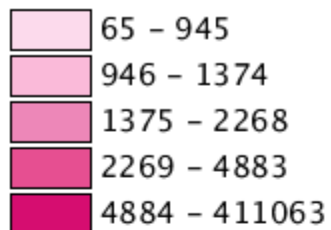
Administrative division:  
15 counties, 215 administrative  
units, including 30 cities and 185  
rural municipalities (↓)



Median population size of a local municipality in 2014: 1694

Each local municipality is responsible for spatial planning on its territory

Population by sex and age group  
Males and females, Age groups total, 2014



# Spatial planning act as of 2003

In the spirit of European spatial planning (Torremolinos) charter of 1983

What is planning (§ 1):

*Planning co-ordinates and integrates the development plans of various fields and, in a balanced manner, takes into account long-term directions and needs in the development of the **economic, social, cultural and natural environment***

A function of a general plan (§ 8):

**To assess the potential economic, social and cultural impact** of the proposed spatial development **and its potential impact on the natural environment** and, on the basis thereof, to establish conditions for sustainable and balanced spatial development

**Implemented poorly**

# (Spatial planning) SEA legislation since 2005

- EU SEA (and EIA) directive oriented
- SEA mandatory on higher planning levels, done upon screening on the detail plan level (by municipality)
- Some potential and/or documented problems:
  - insufficient quality control over reports (Peterson 2015)?
  - too narrow scope?
  - quality?
  - integration with planning processes and documents?
  - implemented where not necessary?
  - ...

# The institutionalised SEA

According Richard Scott's institutional theory (2014), an institution can be analysed via three vital "pillars" of an institution

SEA in Estonia may be seen as an existing institution

Regulative pillar	Normative pillar	Cultural cognitive pillar
SEA law	Agents (review, approval – quality control)	How are things done?
SEA directive	Process (strictly described in legislation)	What is expected of SEA?
Definition of impacts to be assessed		

# The problem with spatial planning related IA in Estonia

The perception of stakeholders that "non-natural-environment-impacts" are not considered well enough in spatial plans (NGOs, courts, and local municipalities)

How to make planning decision makers do what the planning act requires them to do: consider a wide array of impacts?

(or document the motivations)

(or make better planning decisions)



# Two ways forward

## Widen the scope of SEA to include more social and economic impacts?

- Unlikely for the SEA directive to move in this direction
- Lack of political will
- The SEA has, in 10 years, "institutionalised" in terms of scope, stakeholders, and process

## Build up SIA next to SEA?

- Most likely even less political will
- What should an "Euroean SIA" look like?
- Need to build up a whole new institution – is it worthwhile ...
- ... or is it doable within better spatial planning?

# ... or a way around

**Guidelines on how to assess (and consider) social, cultural and economic impacts in spatial planning**

**Goal:** to enhance the consideration of wider impacts in spatial planning, and help the planning decision makers make better planning decisions.

**The wider context of IA still needs clarification.**

**The end result: a box of techniques? (Hacking, Guthrie 2008)**



Photo from Tartu city web page:

[http://www.tartu.ee/data/aerofoto%20objektist%20ja%20%C3%BCmbritsevast\\_1.jpg](http://www.tartu.ee/data/aerofoto%20objektist%20ja%20%C3%BCmbritsevast_1.jpg)

*"According to the ToR , the SEA report has to deal with economic, social and cultural impacts. The long and short term, positive and negative social, economic, cultural and townscape impacts are presented."*

*"With this, obligations are given to the SEA expert that the law doesn't really require. This raises the question why should the SEA report analyse all of these, vast impacts (social, economic, cultural, townscape impacts). Shouldn't this analysis be part of the planning document?"*

*"According to the legislation, the purpose of strategic environmental assessment is to: 1) contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of strategic planning documents; 2) provide for a high level of protection of the environment; 3) promote sustainable development."*

*"Here, the purpose is expanded greatly, and I see the threat for the SEA expert to start to justify negative impacts on the natural environment with the help of social, economic, cultural etc."*

*"The in-depth analysis should focus on environmental matters."*



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# Thank You for your attention!

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