

Aligning Environmental Assessment and the Sustainable Development Goals: Practitioner perspectives



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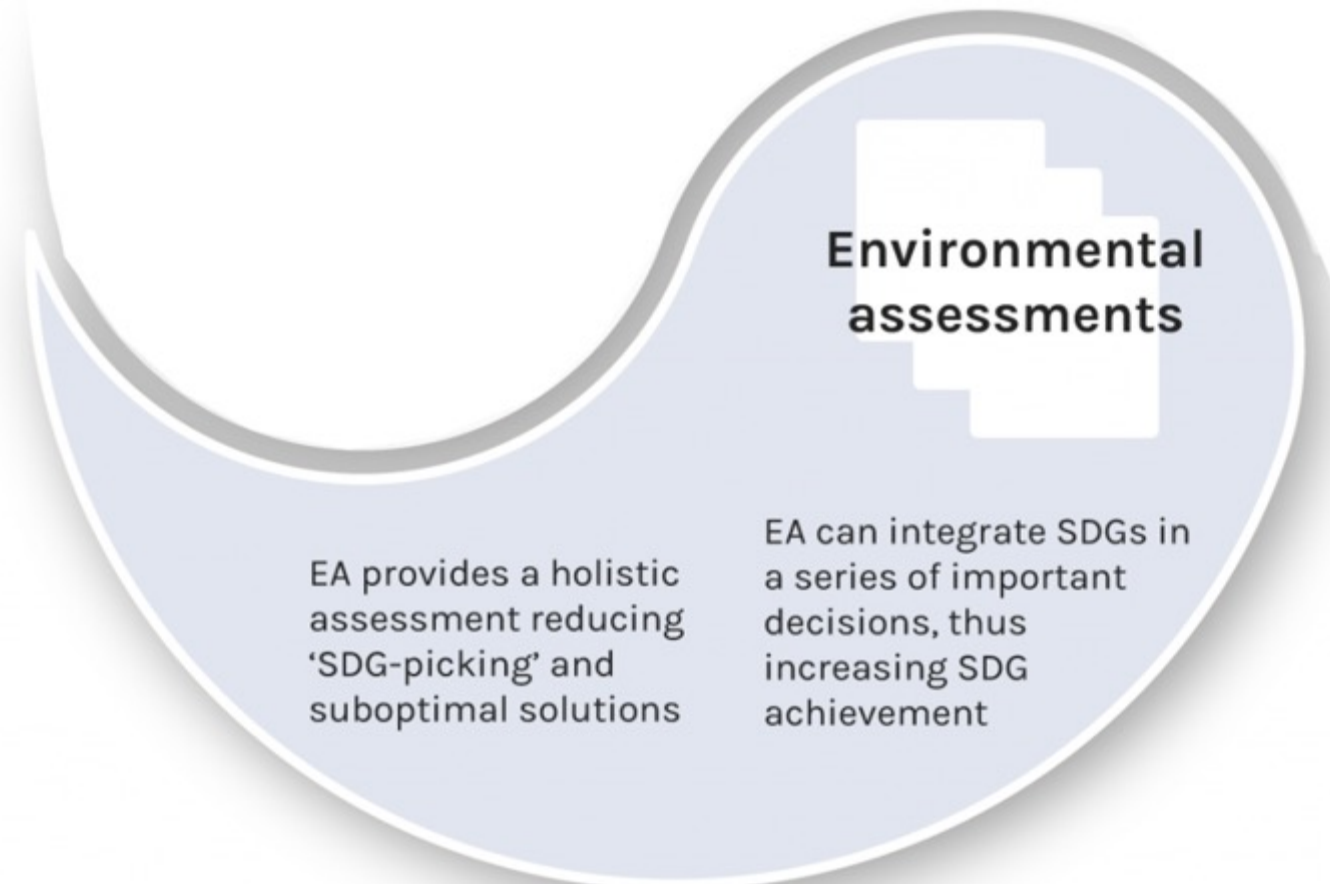
THE GLOBAL GOALS

For Sustainable Development



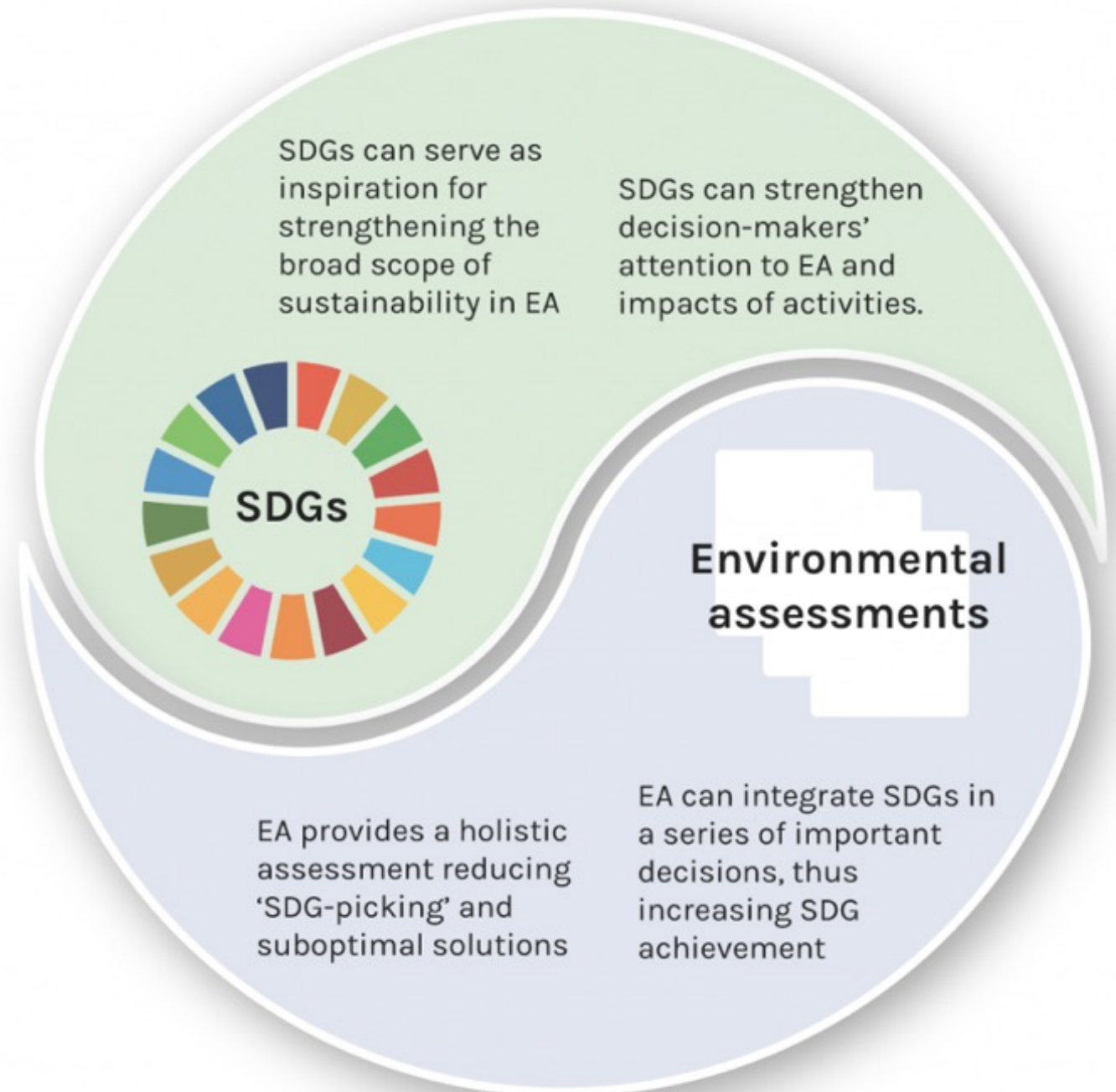
MUTUALISM OF SDGS AND EA

- ▶ Environmental assessment (EA) as a tool for...
- ▶ ...integrating SDGs in decision-making
- ▶ ...more holistic assessments on SDGs



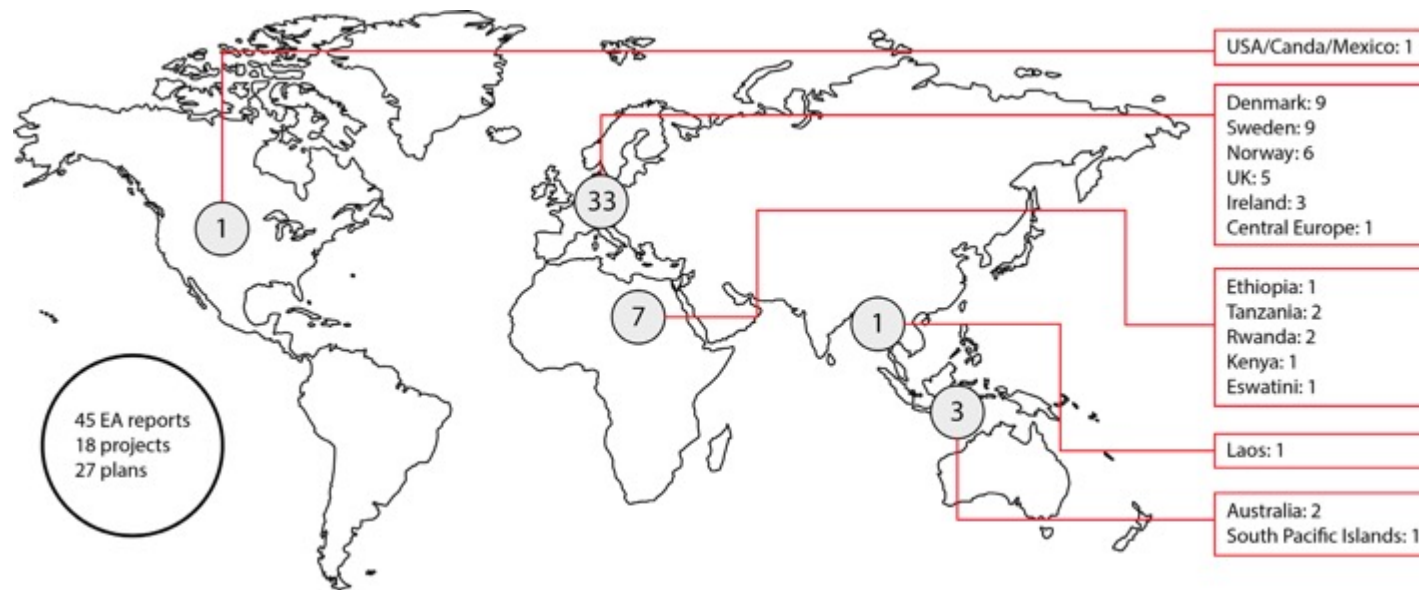
MUTUALISM OF SDGS AND EA

- ▶ SDGs as a normative framework can...
- ...inspire new approaches for EA
- ...strengthen attention from decision-makers

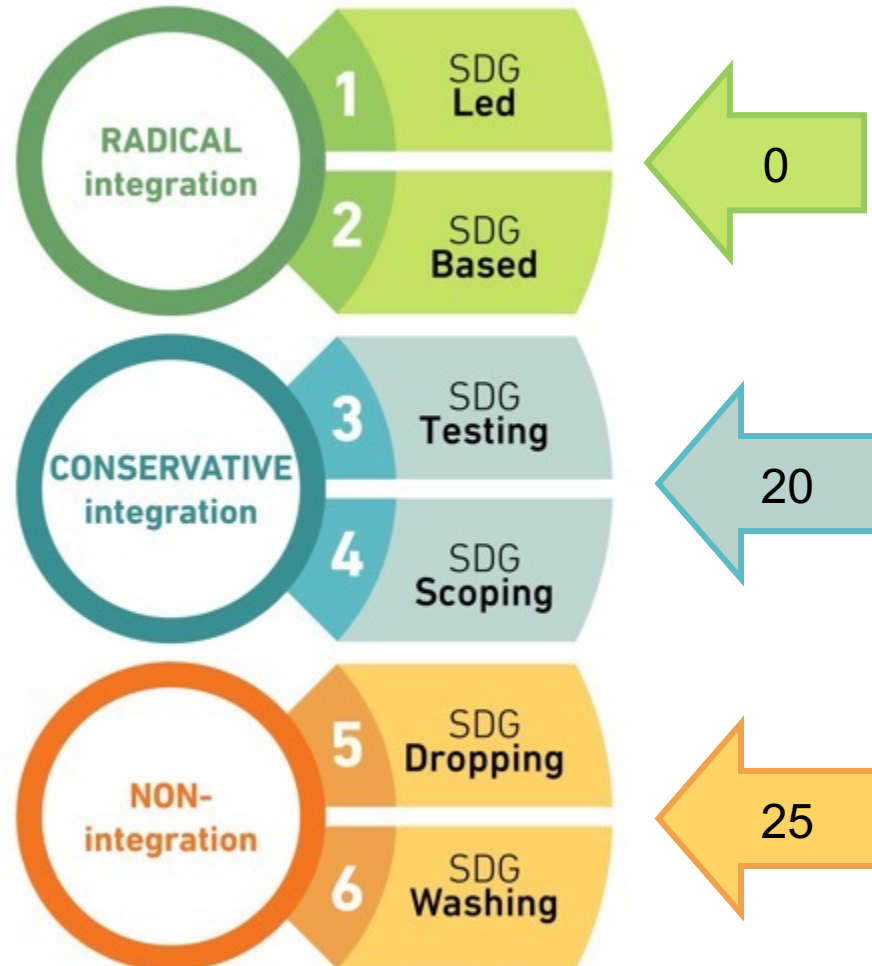


But what about practitioners expected to carry out this practice?

- Emerging interest globally



But what about practitioners expected to carry out this practice?



- Emerging interest globally
- Potential in exploring more radical approaches

But what about practitioners expected to carry out this practice?



- Emerging interest globally
- Potential in exploring more radical approaches
- But are practitioners on board?

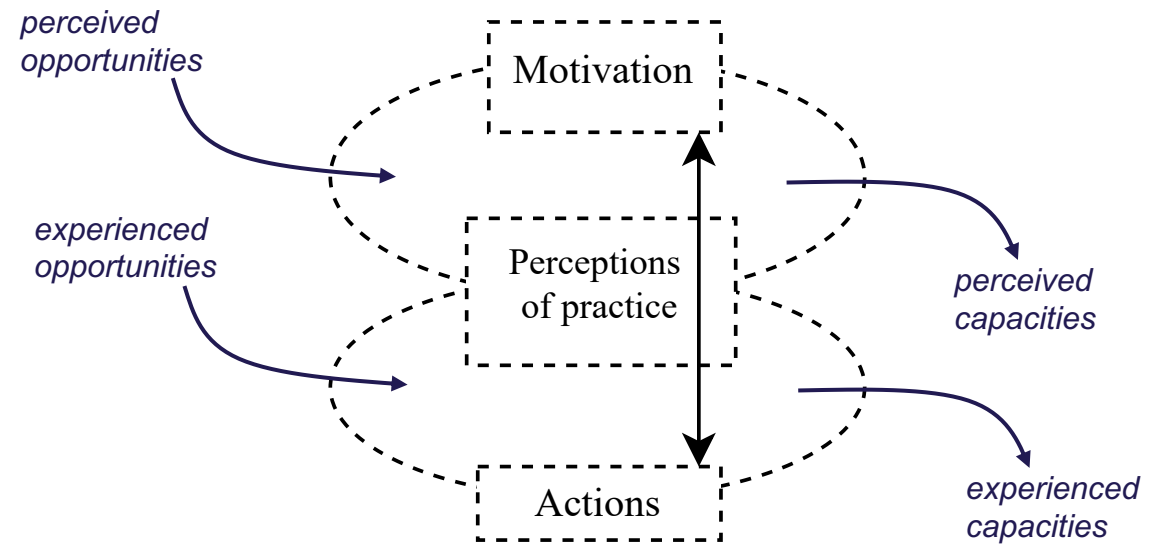
”Are significant changes to practice subject to new legislative demands, or **can we instead turn to the drive of the individuals** conducting the practice?”

Methods

- ▶ Interviews with 26 consultants
- ▶ 15 consultants from Denmark
- ▶ 11 consultants from the Republic of Ireland

Theoretical background

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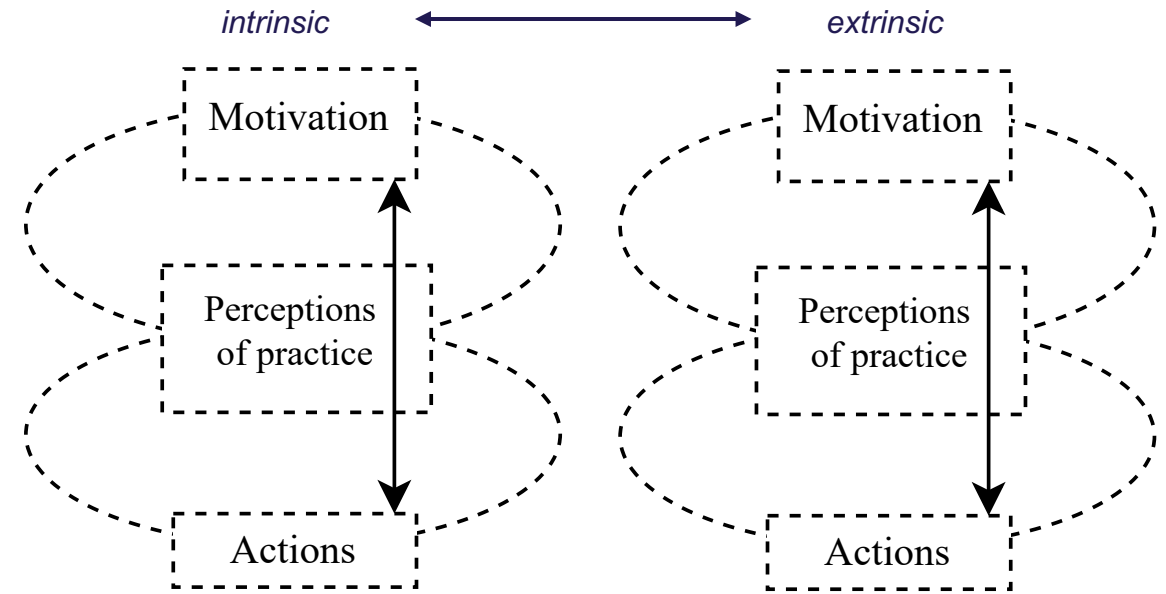


Methods

- ▶ Interviews with 26 consultants
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- ▶ 11 consultants from the Republic of Ireland

Theoretical background

11



How are consultants motivated to integrate SDGs? Challenges and potentials that influence their ability to act?

Main findings

- ▶ Related to
 - ▶ Operationalizing SDGS
 - ▶ Practitioner roles in changing a practice



Perceived societal obligation



Varying readiness



Requires full engagement

Main findings



Perceived societal obligation



Varying readiness



Requires full engagement

- ▶ "Societal responsibility" rather than procedural or legislative obligation
- ▶ Intrinsically motivated...
- ▶ ... but difficult to argue without legislative foothold

Main findings

	Denmark	The Republic of Ireland
Intrinsic motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational and individual interest 2. A curiosity for exploring synergies 3. Aligning EA with strategic objectives 4. EA as a process for design 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational and individual interest 2. A curiosity for exploring synergies 3. Aligning EA with strategic objectives 4. EA as a process for design
Perceived opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Improving EA quality and transparency 6. Communicating sustainability 7. Complying with legislation 8. Expanding EA scope 9. <i>Methodologies and know-how</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Improving EA quality and transparency 6. Communicating sustainability 7. Complying with legislation 8. Expanding EA scope 9. <i>Available resources</i>

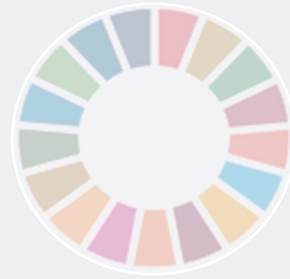
Main findings

Perceived capacities

1. Influence of other practitioners
2. Procedural incompatibilities
3. EA not as a process for design
4. Legislative incompatibilities
5. Lacking resources and know-how
6. *Varying consultant interest*
7. *Unestablished methodologies*

1. Influence of other practitioners
2. Procedural incompatibilities
3. EA not as a process for design
4. Legislative incompatibilities
5. Lacking resources and know-how
6. *Uncertain added benefits*
7. *Consultant unawareness*
8. *Organizational and cultural change*

Main findings



Perceived societal obligation



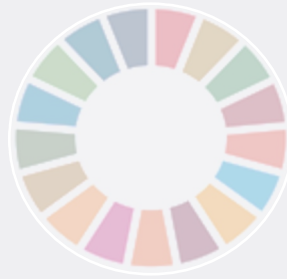
Varying readiness



Requires full engagement

- ▶ Varying levels of readiness between countries
- ▶ Greater focus on methods in Denmark than Ireland
 - ▶ *Whether* in Ireland, *How* in Denmark
- ▶ Differences in awareness of SDGs

Main findings



Perceived societal obligation



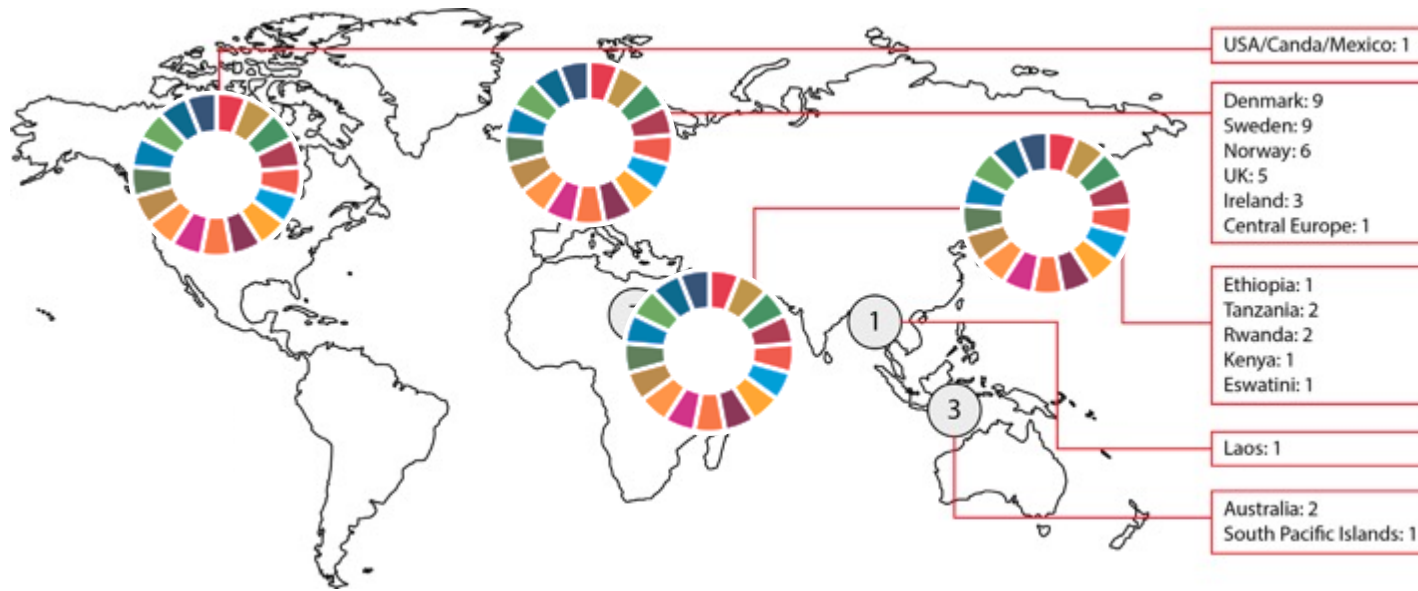
Varying readiness



Requires full engagement

- ▶ Hesitant to act on motivation
- ▶ One stakeholder group cannot change practice alone
- ▶ Need collective and shared SDG innovation

Ways forward



What are practitioner views in other countries?

How do the SDGs relate to EA in other countries?

How can practitioners support each other to prevent a motivation gap?

Open to dialogue



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Motivating a change in environmental assessment practice: Consultant perspectives on SDG integration

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ABSTRACT

The responsive nature of environmental assessment (EA) subjects it to the political conversations that drive future planning and development, one of the most relevant being the increased attention given to a sustainable transition. This political attention has catalyzed an interest amongst practitioners to urge traditional EA practice towards one with an increased regard for sustainability objectives, understood, in this case, to be guided and driven by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Using a theoretical framework of a practitioner's 'spaces for practice' and interviews with environmental consultants in Denmark and the Republic of Ireland, this paper unfolds the motivation that consultants have for integrating SDGs in their practice. This includes both outlining the overarching opportunities that enable the adoption of new practices and the perceived capacities that demotivate integration attempts. The results are then compared and correlated across both countries, showing an emerging motivation from consultants for integrating SDGs and shifting EA practice towards aligning with the strategic goals, but also identifying challenges hindering the implementation of this motivation in practice. These range from being intrinsic conditions of the individual practitioner to extrinsic conditions of the relations between practitioners and stakeholder groups. The study suggests directing attention towards theory on how practitioners construct practice to better address the divide between SDG integration in theory and in practice.

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- Lars Horn, Baghuset. Photographer. Photo on slides 1 and 2.

Let's continue the conversation!

Post questions and comments in the IAIA23 app.



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