Health Impact Assessment from a problem perspective

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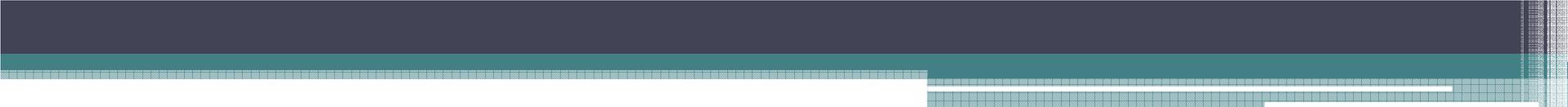
Added Value of HIA

The added value that HIAs might claim to bring are the following:

- Identify factors (harmful and favourable) that would not otherwise have been identified.
- Quantify the magnitude of harmful and beneficial impacts more precisely than could otherwise have been done.
- Clarify the nature of trade-offs in policy making by better identification and description of the elements involved.
- Allow better mitigation of harmful factors or enhancement of beneficial factors.
- Make the decision-making process more transparent and lead to more participation by stakeholders.
- Change the culture so that policy makers always take health into consideration"   (Kemm, 2000, p.432)
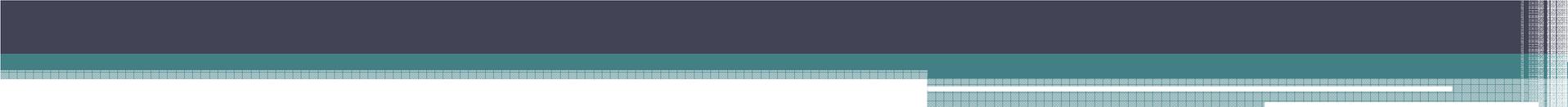
Gaps or problems underpinning these

- *Missing concepts*

  e.g. health effects of decisions are not routinely considered by decision makers and they should be.

- *Missing information*

  e.g. information on +/- impacts, unintended consequences, differential impacts of an action on health are not included in decision making and they should be.

- *Missing process(es)*

  e.g. insufficient intersectoral working, a lack of involvement of people in decision making, or no systematic mechanism for considering evidence in decision making exists in policy processes and they should do.

Linear representation

Model	Example

Problem

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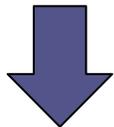
Strategy or 'solution'
to solve it

Lack of consideration of health
in policy making in
government

⬇

Policy HIA
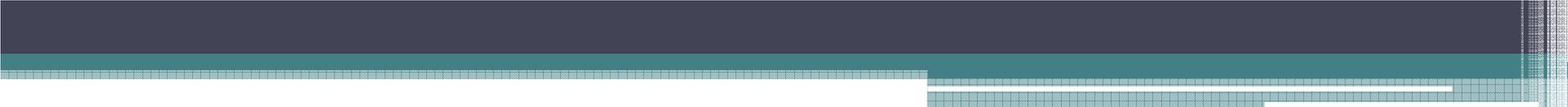
Tension 1

- We have potentially framed the problem as well as the solution needed to resolve it.

  ▫ Who is 'we'?

  ▫ How have we done this?

Four potential explanations for HIA

EIA: linear extension of EIA, SEA and HIA based Environmental Management from which EIA and its practices are derived.

EIA+: An addition to EIA but based on new influences from Public Health, triggered by Healthy Public Policy; Non-linear model based on disrupting EIA to create of new knowledge.

EHIA: Derivation of EHIA which is expanded to include a broader definition of health, new types of evidence, new ways of interpreting evidence. Linear development disrupted by new ways of understanding health.

New innovation: New approach embedded within Environmental Management and Public Health and other disciplines; combines linear models with disruption arising from the need for additional perspectives

Framing problem from discipline perspective

Problem $\Longrightarrow$	Strategy or 'solution' to solve it
Perspectives: Environmental Management/EIA/EHIA Health/PH/ HPP	*Which are derived from:* Environmental Management/EIA/EHIA Health/PH/ HPP
Factors that will influence: How is the problem framed in this discipline? What is the problem that necessitates a 'solution'? What constitutes a problem in this discipline?	*Factors that will influence:* What existing 'solutions' already exist? What rules dictate the qualities that a 'solution' has to have in this discipline? What constitutes a 'solution' in this discipline?
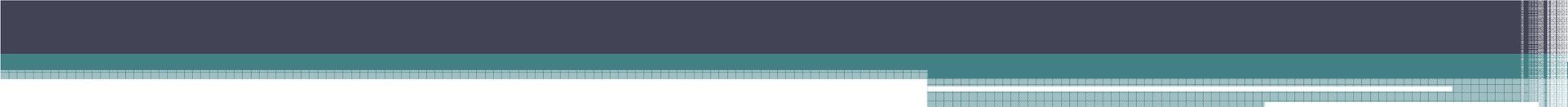
Potential challenges of discipline framing of problem/solution

- We framed HIA as a solution to problems we identified – restricted buy-in from some externals.

- We framed it based on discipline laws (multiple) so it's form and function are contested

- We potentially didn't align it with decision makers framing of problems or required solutions? What are the actual levels of buy in? How happy are they with it as a solution?
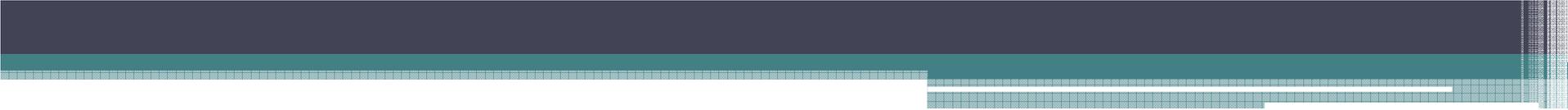
Tension 2

▫ When we framed the problem/solution we focused on the manifestation of the problem not the root cause i.e. underlying social economic, political, technological and cultural shifts which had produced or triggered the problem.

- In so doing, we potentially claimed to be able to do too much and not necessarily at the right level.

Attention to manifestation not problem

Model	Example

Model:

Problem

⬇

Manifestation of it

⬇
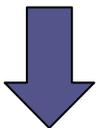
Strategy or 'solution' to solve it

Example:

Problem?

⬇

EU Health Protection Legislation

⬇

Policy HIA
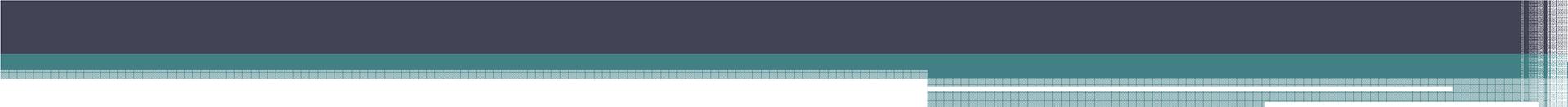
How the connection should be understood

Broader shift/change

Producing a new problem

Resulting in a manifestation or symptoms of it

Strategy of solution to solve it

From an HIA Perspective

Increased consideration of the risk exposure of government

Acknowledgement of a failure to adequately determine if human health is protected

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Development of appropriate EU Health Protection Legislation

Development of HIA to assess new policy proposals for their potential impacts on human health
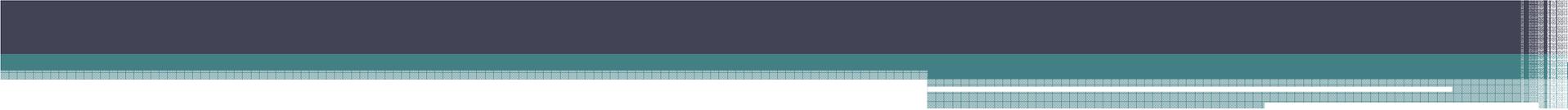
Implications

- Lack of clarity about the underlying shifts/changes:
  - which caused it to be framed as a problem,
  - the range of differing 'symptoms' in government (or other decision making settings)
  - responsibility for achieving resolution.

- Result in different interpretations of the intended goal of HIA:
  - to anticipate?
  - to predict?
  - to evaluate?

- The critical issue underlying this is that the tension relates to locus of responsibility for resolving the problem being conditional upon the way the problem is framed.

An example of the complex interplay between problem and 'solution'

Possible problem		Possible 'Solution'
Is the problem the need to put health considerations onto the policy making agenda because governments are concerned about the future spiralling costs of health care provision in the face of high rates of obesity, heart disease or diabetes?	⟷	Is policy HIA: •an *evaluative* tool for policy makers which provides evidence of the likely effectiveness of one intervention over another for achieving behaviour changes; •a scientific approach for mapping *predicted* rates of change in the population based on a series of options; •or a health promotion policy concept designed to promote community participation in order to *evaluate* the best decision for a given community to achieve maximum take up of that concept?
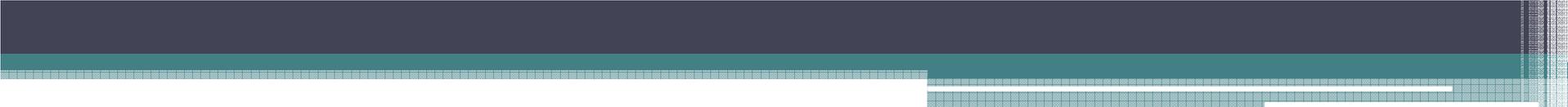
HIA does not exist outside of the problems it is designed to address
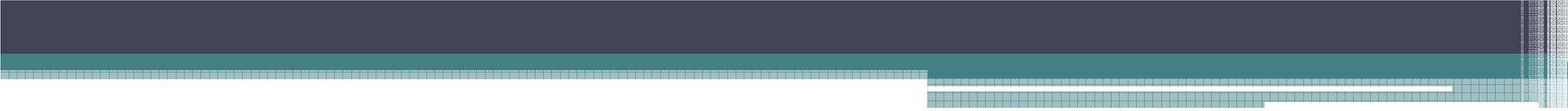
Problematisation involves

"an issue being framed as relevant and accessible to political action; it involves defining the nature of the problem, pointing to reasons for dealing with it, and identifying its causes as well as its possible solutions" (Bacchi, 1999, p.46).
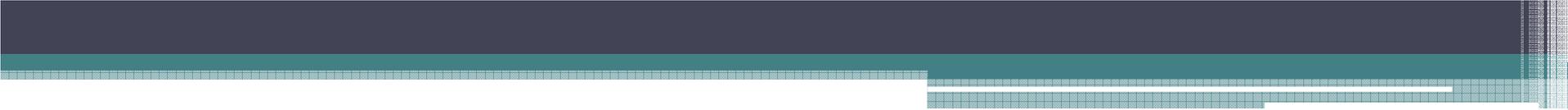
What's the problem represented to be?

- Traditional models for making sense of policy problems is through a discovery/response model – assuming that a 'discrete' 'problem exists which requires 'discrete' and simple 'solutions'.

- This approach focuses on the policy proposals as problem representations – not on 'problems'

- Policy proposals contain information on what is of concern and what needs to change for the 'problem' to be addressed.

- They can't be assessed without understanding what is implied or taken for granted them in them because these effect the way the solution needs to be framed

"NO! - I CAN'T BE BOTHERED SEEING ANY CRAZY SALESMAN - WE'VE GOT A BATTLE TO FIGHT!"