Transitions-Based Strategic Environmental Assessment

OAIA 2019

Kelechi Nwanekezie, PhD Candidate
Department of Geography and Planning
University of Saskatchewan

October 29, 2019

University of Saskatchewan

SSHRC CRSH
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

Outline

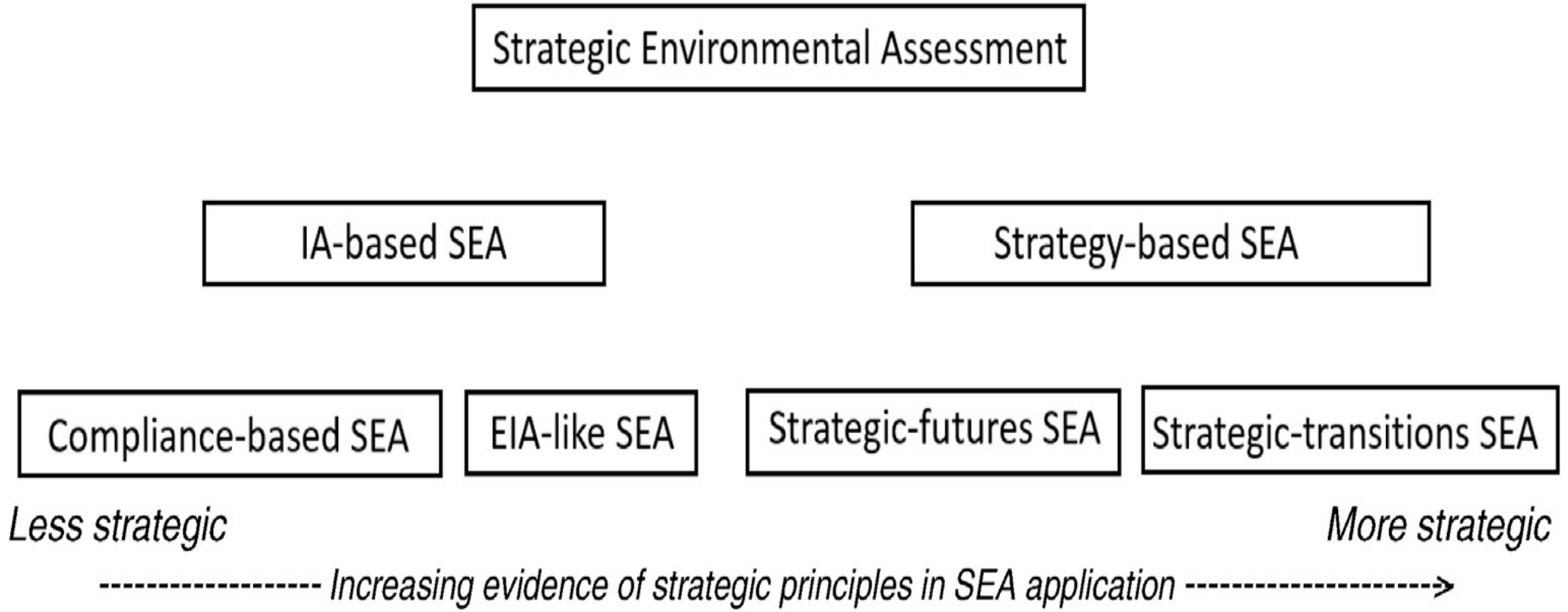
Conceptualizing SEA

The Need for Strategic Transitions SEA

Existing Strategy-Based SEA Models

The Transitions-Based Framework

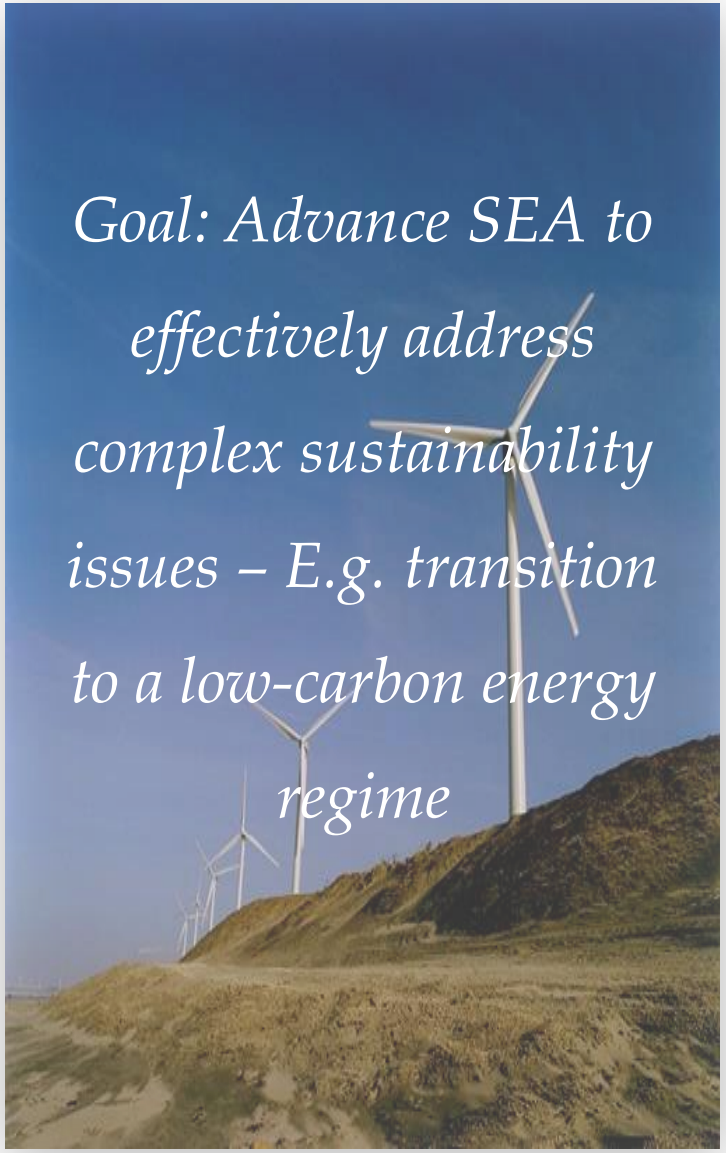
Conceptualizing Strategic Environmental Assessment



Noble and Nwanekezie, 2017

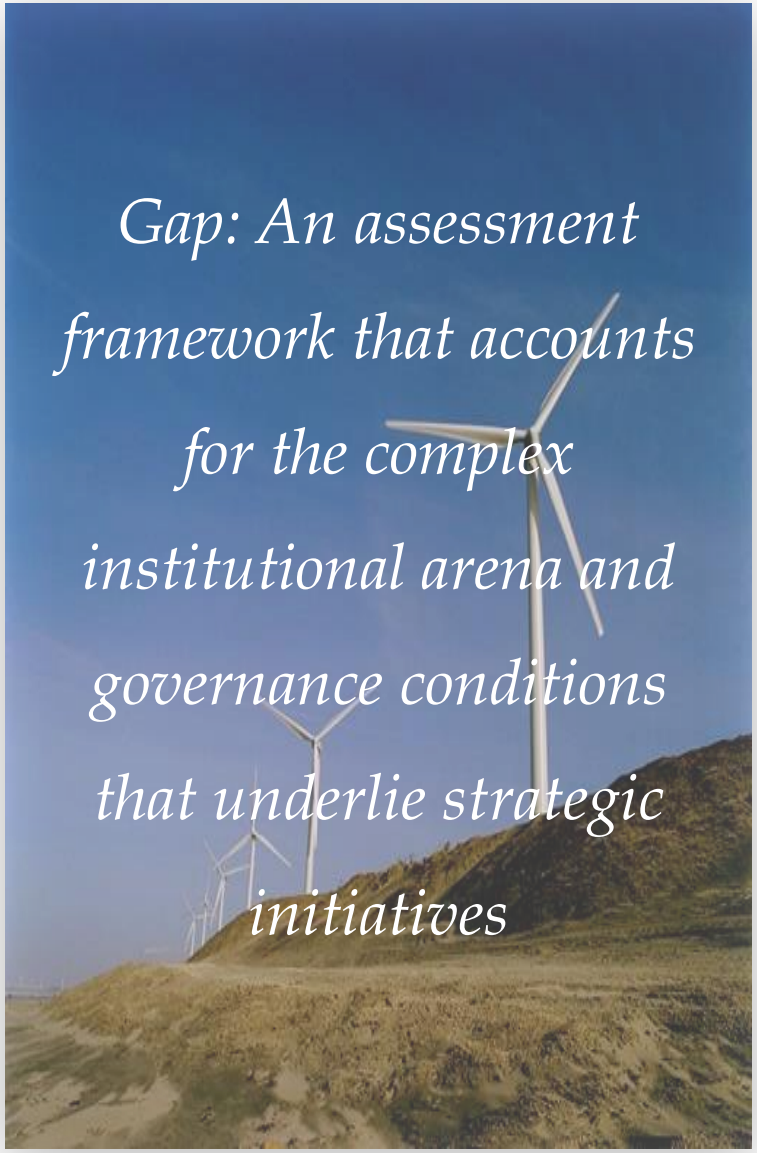
The Need for Strategic Transitions SEA

- How can SEA enable fundamental policy shifts within complex socio-technical systems and what are the obstacles to enabling such transitions?
- What capacities exists, or innovations are required, in institutional and policy environments to facilitate sustainability transitions?
- Where are the windows of opportunity to influence strategic decision-making?



The Need for Strategic Transitions SEA

- Conceptualizing SEA as a tool to enable sustainability transitions requires clearer articulation of the co-evolving, complex relationship between key elements and characteristics of transition
- The traditional IA-based SEA model needs to be complemented with more strategy-based approaches



The Need for Strategic Transitions SEA

- Key insights can be gained from the socio-technical transitions literature
- The study draws on the theoretical underpinnings of these frameworks:
    - Multi-level perspective – multi-level framing to understand change processes influencing development trajectories
    - Transition governance – deliberative governance approach and long-term perspective in managing transition pathways

Existing Strategy-Based SEA Models

Model	Strategic Elements	Theoretical Background
Strategic-Thinking SEA Model	• Critical decisions factors (CDF) • Strategic Reference Framework (SRF) • Institutional & Governance Framework • Strategic Options/Alternatives • Opportunities and Risks • Decision Windows • Stakeholder Engagement/Continuous Dialogue • Follow-up	• Complex systems thinking • Good governance

Existing Strategy-Based SEA Models

Model	Strategic Elements	Theoretical Background
Institution-Centered SEA Model	• Policy Formation/Implementation • Windows of Opportunity • Environmental Priority Setting • Institutional Assessment • Stakeholder Representation • Social Accountability	• Policy analysis • Political theory • Organizational learning/ Capacity building

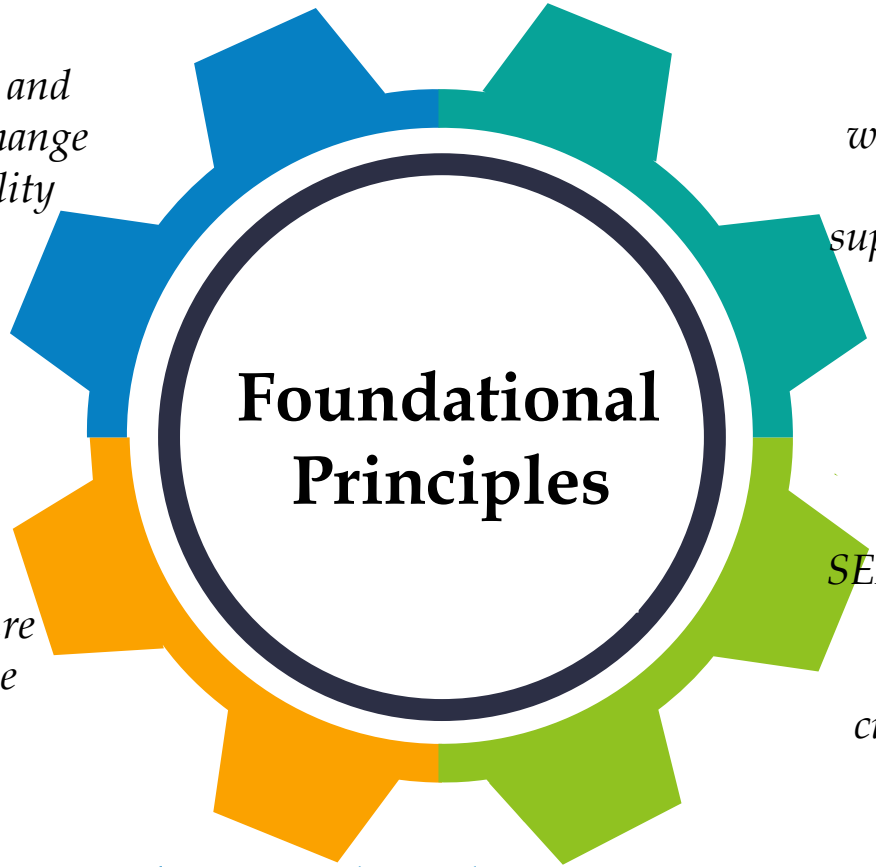
Transitions-Based SEA Framework

Guiding vision:

Crucial to understanding the decision-context and establishing enabling conditions for strategic change is identifying a coherent vision for sustainability transformations

Institution-centered:

SEA should assess the gaps, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and constraints within existing institutional arrangements needed to support proposed transitions from one development trajectory to another



Dynamic processes and complex interactions:

SEA must fully acknowledge the dynamic nature of sustainability decision-making as well as the complex interlinkages of multiple actors and domains across multiple scales

Politically-oriented:

SEA must assess the capacity of the existing political environment to support sustainability transformations including the political circumstances under which sustainability policies are likely to be adopted

Relationship between actors:

SEA can serve, not only to engage the perspective of relevant actors in a fair and open process, but also to explore their dynamic interaction, needs, and capacities

Transitions-Based SEA Framework

- Building blocks of the Transitions-based SEA framework
    - Key elements
    - Types of questions to explore
- To provide context, the framework is situated within the energy resource sector - specifically renewable energy transition in Saskatchewan, Canada
- The province has set a goal to increase renewable electricity generation capacity from 25% of the current mix up to 50% by 2030

Transitions-Based SEA Framework

Guiding vision and drivers of transitions	
•-*What are the drivers and selective pressures for change?*	•-*Is the guiding vision coherent and does it adopt a long term perspective to guide desired transition pathways?*

Transitions-Based SEA Framework

Institutional and Governance Context:

-Is there adequate capacity within existing institutions and governance arrangements to support desired transitions and what new capacity or institutional mechanisms are needed to ensure successful sustainability transition?

-What are the current institutional barriers to achieving the desired strategic change?

•-*Institutions*	•-*Policy and Regulatory Context*	-*Political Context*	-*Actor/stakeholder relations*

Transitions-Based SEA Framework

Opportunities and Risks of Sustainability Pathways	
•-*What are the implications of adopting certain energy development trajectories?*	•-*What are the immediate and longer-term risks and benefits of proposed energy transitions?*

Transitions-Based SEA Framework

Progress Indicators for On-going Transition Management

- *What are the progress indicators useful to track the transition and help ensure transition goals, and impact management strategies are being achieved?*

Transitions-Based SEA Framework

Exogenous Landscape Influences

- *What are the impacts of the broader landscape changes on the proposed energy transition?*

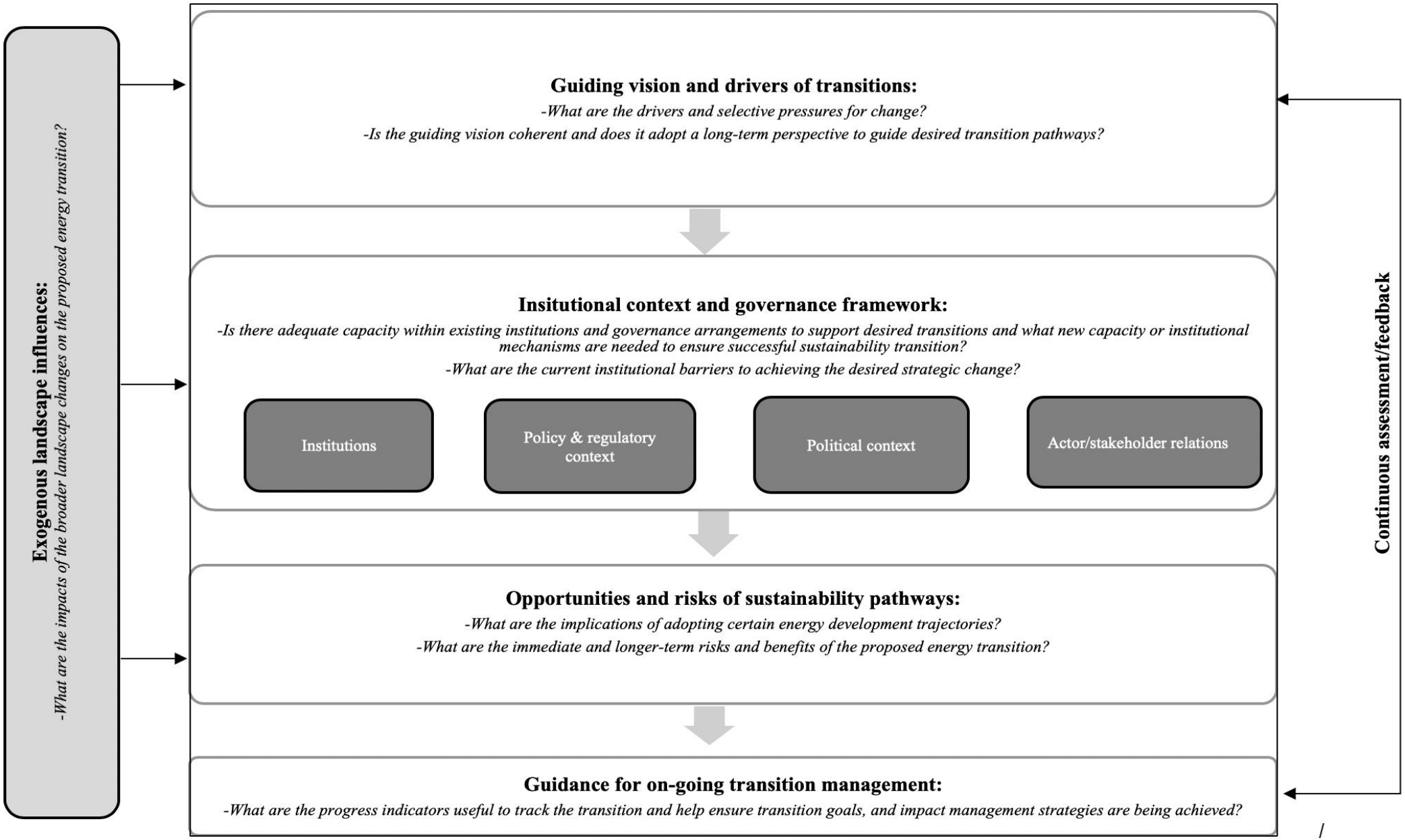


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Transitions-Based SEA

Conclusion

- Advancing strategy-based SEA approaches has become increasingly important in response to more calls to enhance SEA's effectiveness as a strategic decision-making tool
- Current EA practices need more robust frameworks that can effectively address the recurring institutional and governance problems that currently impede successful sustainability transitions
- For future research, there is a need for an empirical application of the strategic-transitions model to an energy case study to test the value and merits of applying the framework in practice

References

- Cherp, A., Watt, A., & Vinichenko, V. (2007). SEA and strategy formation theories: From three Ps to five Ps. Environmental Impact Assessment Review, 27(7), 624–644. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2007.05.008
- Loorbach, D. A. (2010). Transition Management for Sustainable Development: A Prescriptive, Complexity-Based Governance Framework. Governance, An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions., 23(1), 161–183. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0491.2009.01471.x
- Noble, B. F., & Nwanekezie, K. (2017). Conceptualizing strategic environmental assessment: Principles, approaches and research directions. Environmental Impact Assessment Review. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2016.03.005
- Partidário, M.R (2007). Strategic Environmental Assessment Good Practice Guidance – methodological guidance. Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente. Lisboa (http://www.iambiente.pt/portal/page?_pageid=73,426033&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&not_c_qry=boui=15473913)
- Partidário, M. R. (2012). Strategic Environmental Assessment Better Practice Guide: Methodological Guidance for Strategic Thinking in SEA. Portuguese Environment Agency and Redas Energeticas Nacionais, Lisbon
- Slunge, D., Nooteboom, S., Ekbom, A., Dijkstra, G., & Verheem, R. (2009). Conceptual Analysis and Evaluation Framework for Institution-Centered Strategic Environmental Assessment. *Strategic Environmental Assessment in Policy and Sector Reform: Conceptual Model and Operational Guidance*, (January), 127–198.
- World Bank. (2011). Strategic Environmental Assessment in Policy and Sector Reform: Conceptual Model and Operational Guidance.

Thank You