

Monitoring and post-evaluation of the cultural heritage component of Environmental Assessments.

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This paper considers the current position relating to monitoring and post-evaluation procedures in the EIA and SEA processes. The term “monitoring” refers to the measuring and recording over time and space of information related to a considered project or plan (effects on the urban and social environment). “Post-evaluation” or “audit” means the comparison of the monitored information with some reference information (predicted effects, baseline conditions, standard/thresholds, original objectives, etc). Monitoring information has three common uses: (i) control and sanction, (ii) dynamic and adaptive environmental management and, (iii) building of knowledge, and the post-evaluation or audit of the information in any of these contexts lends credibility to the resulting actions.

The prime objectives commonly cited, to extol the benefits of post-decision monitoring and evaluation programmes, are:

- to check the accuracy of predictions with a view to improving prediction techniques
- to monitor compliance with agreed conditions and regulations
- to ensure mitigation measures are implemented and to provide learning opportunities for improving mitigation measures on future projects

- to provide feedback to decision makers about the effectiveness of their actions
- to identify unforeseen impacts before irreversible damage occurs and allow to undertake remedial action

In the particular field of urban cultural heritage, review of existing literature and of current practice, reveals that the first two objectives are especially crucial. The non-implementation of conditions attached to consent decisions (and lack of sanction) is a common problem, as well as the rapid obsolescence, lack of dynamism, and consequent problems of status and legitimacy of urban regulation plans and policies. In such a context, monitoring and post-evaluation programmes that could allow an evolution of the plans throughout time to facilitate a better fit with the monitored needs and requirements of the urban and social environments, would be of great help. For example, unexpected dereliction trends in urban historical areas could be rapidly identified and managed before irreversible damage occurs.

European Union Directives

Under the EIA directive¹, post project monitoring and evaluation is not mandatory.

The situation for SEA is better as the SEA Directive² contains specific provision for post implementation monitoring:

*“Article 10, Monitoring
Member States shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes in order, inter alia, to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects, and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.”*

By stating that monitoring must have an objective “to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action”, the SEA Directive tends to promote a more dynamic management of the urban environment.

However, the SEA Directive only entered into force on July 21st 2001 and Member States have three years to implement its requirements. Currently only a few Member States have specific SEA legislation in place and information relating to this area, and more specifically to the consideration of cultural heritage at this stage, was not available at the time of writing.

In parallel to these two directives, a process of openness in relation to public access to environmental information, initiated by the Directive on the freedom of access to information

¹ Council Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997 (Council of the European Communities 1985; Council of the European Union 1997).

² Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment of 27 June 2001.

on the environment (90/313/EEC³), is under development. The more recent Aarhus convention⁴, actually promotes post-monitoring and evaluation procedures, aiming at guaranteeing the right of access to information in environmental matters. Its article 5 states that “each party shall ensure that public authorities possess and update environmental information which is relevant to their” functions, where the “environmental information”, defined in article 2, includes “conditions of human life, cultural sites and built structures, inasmuch as they are or may be affected by the state of the elements of the environment or, through these elements, by the factors, activities or measures”. A directive is currently under preparation to replace Directive 90/313/EEC and to implement the Aarhus convention’s objectives. It may therefore be expected that the EU legal requirements for post-monitoring will be strengthened in the near future.

Member States legislation and practice

As post project monitoring and evaluation are not mandatory stages in the EIA process the provisions for it are uncommon throughout the Member States.

Questionnaires were sent, as part of the SUIT project, to ascertain the state of current legislation and practice within Member States in relation to EIA/SEA and the consideration of cultural heritage.

³ Council Directive 90/313/EEC on the freedom of access to information on the environment of 7 June 1990.

⁴ UN-ECE convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, done at Aarhus, Denmark, on 25 June 1998.

Even where provisions for monitoring formally exist, such as, in Portugal, cultural heritage issues are unlikely to be assessed at this stage. Both Spain and Greece also have specific legislation for monitoring, however no information has yet been obtained for this project to assess how effective these procedures are in relation to cultural heritage issues.

In theory cultural heritage issues are considered at this stage in the UK, The Netherlands and Finland but insufficient information was gained to ascertain whether this is carried through to the practical situation, one respondent suggested that this was not the case in the UK. None of the respondents to the questionnaire from Ireland considered that cultural heritage issues were considered when post-evaluation occurred. The general consensus from the questionnaire responses suggested that even in countries where cultural heritage issues are considered at the majority of the other stages of the process, such as in Denmark and Ireland, they are not considered in post-decision monitoring and evaluation when it occurs.

Despite the generally acknowledged benefits of post-evaluation and the view that it should form an integral part of the EIA process, in practice procedures are rarely conducted. The absence of any requirement, within the EIA Directive, for post-decision monitoring and evaluation has resulted in a failure to maximise the potential for learning from experience within the EIA process in Europe. Even in the few countries where post-evaluation is mandatory there seems to be little incentive for undertaking it or often it only takes place for impacts that fall under the remit of specific legislation.

Research has also shown that in the cases where post-evaluation does occur, its effectiveness is often questionable. Numerous studies have shown

that there is a low level of auditable predictions. More reassuringly, there is generally a high level of accuracy for those impact predictions that can be audited.

As with the perceived benefits of post-evaluation, there appears to be general consensus regarding the necessary components of a successful procedure. Post-evaluation procedures need to be developed throughout, and be integral to, the EIA process in order that by the time development consent is granted, the programme for post-development monitoring and evaluation has been defined. Factors, such as, the purpose of the monitoring programme, who it is being done for, why it is being done, for example, to check compliance with legislation or development consent conditions, need to be considered at the beginning of the process. In addition to the objectives of the monitoring programme, the impacts to be studied, the monitoring sites, the data to be collected (when and what) and how this data will be analysed all need to be clearly defined prior to the inception of the monitoring programme. Studies to assess feasibility in relation to costs, data collection, storage and the suitability of the proposed programme to meet the objectives, along with the collection of pre-development baseline data, are all required prior to the main monitoring programme.

Post-evaluation procedures specific to cultural heritage.

The apparent lack of post-evaluation procedures specific to the field of cultural heritage, and indeed, the paucity of post-evaluation of projects in general may be perceived as an opportunity for the SUIT project.

The procedures developed will not be constrained by current practice and preconceived ideas

relating to what cultural heritage encompasses. Consequently, the tool developed will be able to address cultural heritage in its broadest form rather than being confined to narrow aspects, such as, listed buildings and designated sites. There is a need for the involvement of further actors including the public in the cultural heritage definition and identification, as well as in the choice of an appropriate management approach, since these processes are recognised as being highly subjective and so subject to controversy. However, the public's point of view must be considered alongside those of practitioners, technicians, experts and decision-makers, in order to reach consensus within the development process and to ensure that the resultant tool will be of practical use in the working environment. In this context, the development of social (or participative) post-evaluation procedures would be of great help.

Even though initial uptake of the procedures developed for this project could be limited because of the current general lack of post-evaluation of projects, due to its non-mandatory status within the EIA Directive and the EIA legislation of most Member States, it can be expected, seeing the recent developments of EU

legislation (inter alia, the SEA Directive), that such procedures will become mandatory in the coming years. The tools developed in the course of the SUIT project, therefore, have the potential to influence the consideration of cultural heritage in the post-evaluation stage of both EIA and SEA practice. This is of particular importance in the case of SEA procedures where, as Directive 2001/42/EC is transposed into Member States legislation, post-evaluation procedures will become a necessary stage of the SEA process.

Finally, it is necessary to develop monitoring and evaluation tools compatible with those developed for predicting impacts. Research on post-evaluation makes it clear that most impacts cannot be audited at a later date because the predictions were not presented in an auditable form. This has to be addressed at the scoping stage, and post-evaluation procedures must be used to influence the prediction techniques developed to ensure that, where best practice prevails in spite of lack of legal requirement, post-evaluation will be possible.

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