Can impact assessments protect and promote urban health and inform urban policies?

URHIS conference, Amsterdam, 12-14 Sept 2012

Session: Health in All Urban Policies

rainer.fehr@lzg.gc.nrw.de / rainer.fehr@uni-bielefeld.de
Context

- Ongoing work at Centre for Health North Rhine-Westphalia (LZG.NRW), in cooperation with U Bielefeld, on HIA and on Urban health
- New HIA section of European Public Health Association (EUPHA)

Presentation structure

- HIA sketch
- Case study
- Key developments
- Conclusions
1. HIA sketch

*Impact Assessment*, according to the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA):

the process of identifying the future consequences of a current or proposed action

By analogy: *Health Impact Assessment* (HIA):

the process of identifying the future *health* consequences of a current or proposed action

HIA *idea*: intuitively appealing to professionals, decision-makers, public

HIA *practice*: modes and implementation vary strongly between countries
1. HIA sketch

HIA:
- Procedure, incl. screening, scoping, appraisal, reporting
- Methods: qualitative, quantitative (incl. modeling)
- Principles: reliance on evidence; considering impacted subgroups; interdisciplinarity; overall transparency; participation

Rapid vs. Full-blown HIA
HIA examples

Selected examples from Germany:

- European Employment Strategy (work flexibility)
- State-level housing policy (barrier-free living)
- Spatial planning: Regional land use plan
- Waste site extension
- Highway planning
- Drinking water privatization
2. Case study: Regional Land Use Plan

CSD 2008: Spatial planning offers unique gateways to health protection and promotion

Case study: “Ruhr” metropolitan area in Germany – Rapid HIA of novel spatial planning, cf. chapter in forthcoming book O'Mullane (ed.)

“Ruhr area” (Ruhrgebiet) – the “German megacity”

- 5 mill pop
- formerly heavy industry
- now undergoing profound conversion
Joint Regional Land Use Plan

6 Ruhr area cities:
- Bochum, Essen, Gelsenkirchen, Herne, Muelheim/Ruhr, Oberhausen
- 1.8 mill pop
- decided for a Joint Regional Land Use Plan (*Regionaler Flächennutzungsplan*, RFNP)

Draft spatial plan:
- 45 different items, including maps and texts
- the plan was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), necessitating an Environmental report
Components of draft Joint Regional Land Use Plan (RFNP) 2008

- Proposed resolution (*Beschlussvorlage*)
- Map (*Plankarte*)
- Rationale (*Begründung*) with 10 additional maps (*Erläuterungskarten*)
- Environmental report (*Umweltbericht*), required by SEA – with 12 thematic maps (*Themenkarten*)
- 7 summaries of characteristics (*Steckbriefe*)
- Several further summaries, listings, overviews and synopses
Rapid HIA

Former LIGA.NRW (now LZG.NRW) was asked to act as an “Institution responsible for public concerns” (Träger öffentlicher Belange) and to support the coverage of health aspects

-> **Rapid HIA**, focussing on:

- Evaluation of health-related topics already covered in the plan
- Pinpointing additional topics, indicating both health risks and opportunities
- Suggesting ways to gain a fuller coverage of health

Methods applied: document analysis, process participation, expert judgement
Rapid HIA report / Contents

Health situation in the planning region
Impacts of the planning project on health determinants
Topics with special significance for health, which should be elaborated on in the emerging Joint Regional Land Use Plan:

- Physical (im)mobility
- Social inclusion: diversity, gender issues, high-risk groups, and handicapped persons
- Housing and health
- the economy and health

Existing health statistics and local health reports should be integrated into the planning procedure, e.g. for identifying areas of particular concern
Stakeholder involvement

2 waves of public and stakeholder involvement (Öffentlichkeits- und Trägerbeteiligung)

1st wave included:
- 19 public meetings
- c. 6,000 suggestions for change
- 256 agencies & institutions involved
- 115 statements, c. 590 suggestions

Planning officials regarded our Rapid HIA as 1 of the 115 statements received. The report was seen as representing 14 different specific suggestions
Reactions; preliminary conclusions

Our suggestions (concerning text changes) were explicitly responded to:
- 6 of the 14 suggestions were turned down
- 1 "taken notice of"
- 4 accepted partially
- 3 accepted fully

Preliminary conclusions:
- Yes, possible to utilize HIA to inform (urban, regional) policy-making and planning procedures - even in a country with no highly developed HIA culture
- However, the benefit / cost ratio can be small
3. Current HIA key developments, from NRW perspective

Beyond further HIA implementation and evaluation:

- In the intersectoral debate in Germany, numerous sectors support their case with specific departmental plans (*Fachpläne*), e.g. on housing, or sports. Health sector needs to develop *Departmental health plans* (*Fachpläne Gesundheit*)

- *Health impact quantification* (not covered here; cf. workshops Düsseldorf 2010, Granada 2011)

- *Interrelation of HIA with other Impact Assessments*, incl. EIA and SEA, cf. below
Interrelation of HIA with other Impact Assessments

**Range of Impact Assessments**: Environmental, Social, Socio-Economic, Sustainability, Integrated - some of these supported by specific “cultures“, e.g. legal basis, political support, legacy of experience, material infrastructure.

It seems essential to constantly “think“ integration, i.e. to be aware of the (societal, administrative, scientific etc.) contexts, including the range of other assessments with their respective cultures.

In contrast, to “do“ integrated assessments is not always feasible. In this case, there should at least be “coordination“ of (impact) assessments, in order to avoid duplication of work, inconsistencies, “participation fatigue“.

Initiative to promote this topic: WHO, EUPHA, IAIA
HIA as a topic for **WHO**

WHO: long-standing interest in HIA

Current activity examples:

**WHO ECEH Bonn:**
- **HIA training** in Riga 2012
- **Health in SEA** workshop and publication

**WHO Geneva:** “Health in Rio+20” incl. role of HIA

Publication series: Health in the green economy

Key topics of health and sustainable cities: slum housing; urban air quality; healthy, efficient transport; urban violence
HIA as a topic for EUPHA

- HIA workshops
- “EUPHActs”: HIA
- EUPHA and Polish EC presidency: HIA workshop
- EUPHA HIA section, initiated in 2011
- Malta 2012 conference, workshops on
  - HIA implementation
  - “family” of health-related Impact Assessments
Joint WHO, EUPHA, IAIA Initiative

Promoting “health” in Impact Assessments, either as HIA or “embedded” in other assessments:

- analysis of current situation
- steps forward

Discussion process, incl.

- EUPHA/ASPHER Malta Nov. 2012
- IAIA Calgary May 2013
- HIA Geneva Sept. 2013

Publication being prepared
4. Conclusions

Multiple authoritative institutions incl. WHO, CSD, EC, EUPHA agree: HIA offers significant opportunities to promote and protect human health, by informing policy-making

This applies also to (urban, regional) policy-making / planning

HIA, being at the heart of “Health in all policies”, should constitute a key element of urban and regional health policy; deserves a permanent place in the Public Health toolbox

But: cost (effort) of doing HIA can be considerable; benefit can be smaller than expected; benefit / cost ratio needs to be improved
Conclusions (2)

In planning and decision-making procedures:

- For those *testifying for health*: challenge to adequately understand the rules and ramifications of the planning process
- For those *managing the planning or decision-making process*: challenge to evaluate and integrate the multitude of suggestions received

- Need mutual interdisciplinary exposure from early on; joint learning / project work / excursions
Conclusions (3)

Improving the chances for successful, efficient coverage of health in planning and decision-making:

- At least in Germany, HIA needs to be seen as a *flexible* tool, which has to be adjusted to suit different situations
- Health sector needs to develop *departmental health plans* (*Fachpläne Gesundheit*)
- Routinization of HIA, and Health in other impact assessments, is desirable; the interrelationship of different *types of Impact Assessment* needs to be taken advantage of

Extended vision of Health 2020: „*Health is given adequate weight in all impact assessments, which then universally inform urban and regional policies to protect and promote human health*“
More info

HIA gateway: [www.apho.org.uk/hia](http://www.apho.org.uk/hia)

WHO Geneva: [www.who.int/hia](http://www.who.int/hia), [www.who.int/hia/green_economy](http://www.who.int/hia/green_economy)


EUPHA: [www.eupha.org](http://www.eupha.org)

IAIA: [www.iaia.org](http://www.iaia.org)

LZG: [www.lzg.gc.nrw.de](http://www.lzg.gc.nrw.de)

Forthcoming books: Monica O’Mullane (ed.), John Kemm (ed.), both: Oxford University Press

Want to stay involved in HIA discussion? EUPHA's HIA section is open for all: [www.eupha.org/site/sections.php](http://www.eupha.org/site/sections.php)