

# Health impact assessment

A public health practice for  
developing healthy public  
policies



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sur les politiques publiques et la santé  
National Collaborating Centre  
for Healthy Public Policy

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Québec 

# Overview

- Theory....
  - Definition and conceptual basis of HIA
  - HIA and public policies
- ...and Practice
  - The HIA process
  - The state of the practice across the world and in Canada
- Main issues and challenges in the practice



# A Common definition

Gothenburg consensus paper  
December, 1999

## Health Impact Assessment

Main concepts  
and suggested approach

WHO Regional Office  
for Europe

European  
Centre for Health Policy  
Brussels, 1999

ECHP

### Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

*“...a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, program or project may be judged as to its **potential effects on the health of a population**, and the **distribution of those effects within the population**”*

ECHP, WHO, 1999



# Theory

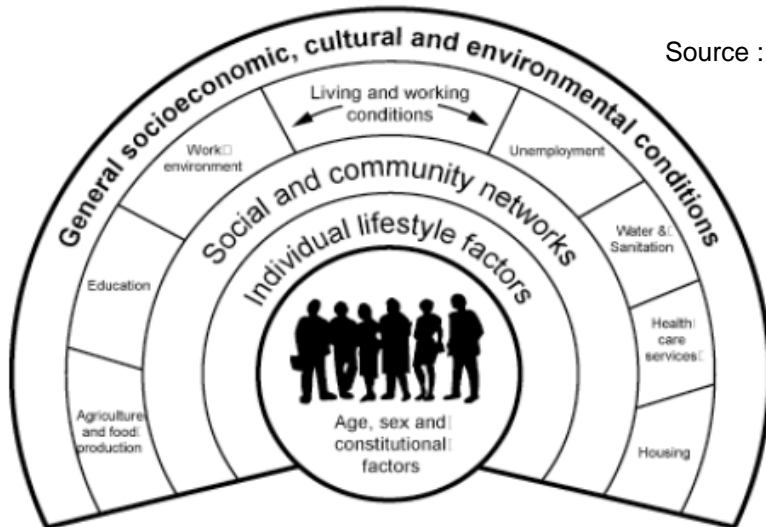
## Two roots

- Environmental impact assessment
  - Methodological rigour (science)
  - Expert-driven
- Health promotion
  - Social determinants of health and equity (distributive effects)
  - Citizenship (empowerment)
  - Healthy public policies (Ottawa Charter)



# Theory

## Main principles and goals



Source : Dahlgren & Whitehead (1991)

### Objectives

- Predict the potential effects on the health of the population
- Influence decision-making process
- Raise awareness of decision-makers from outside the health sector

### Main Principles

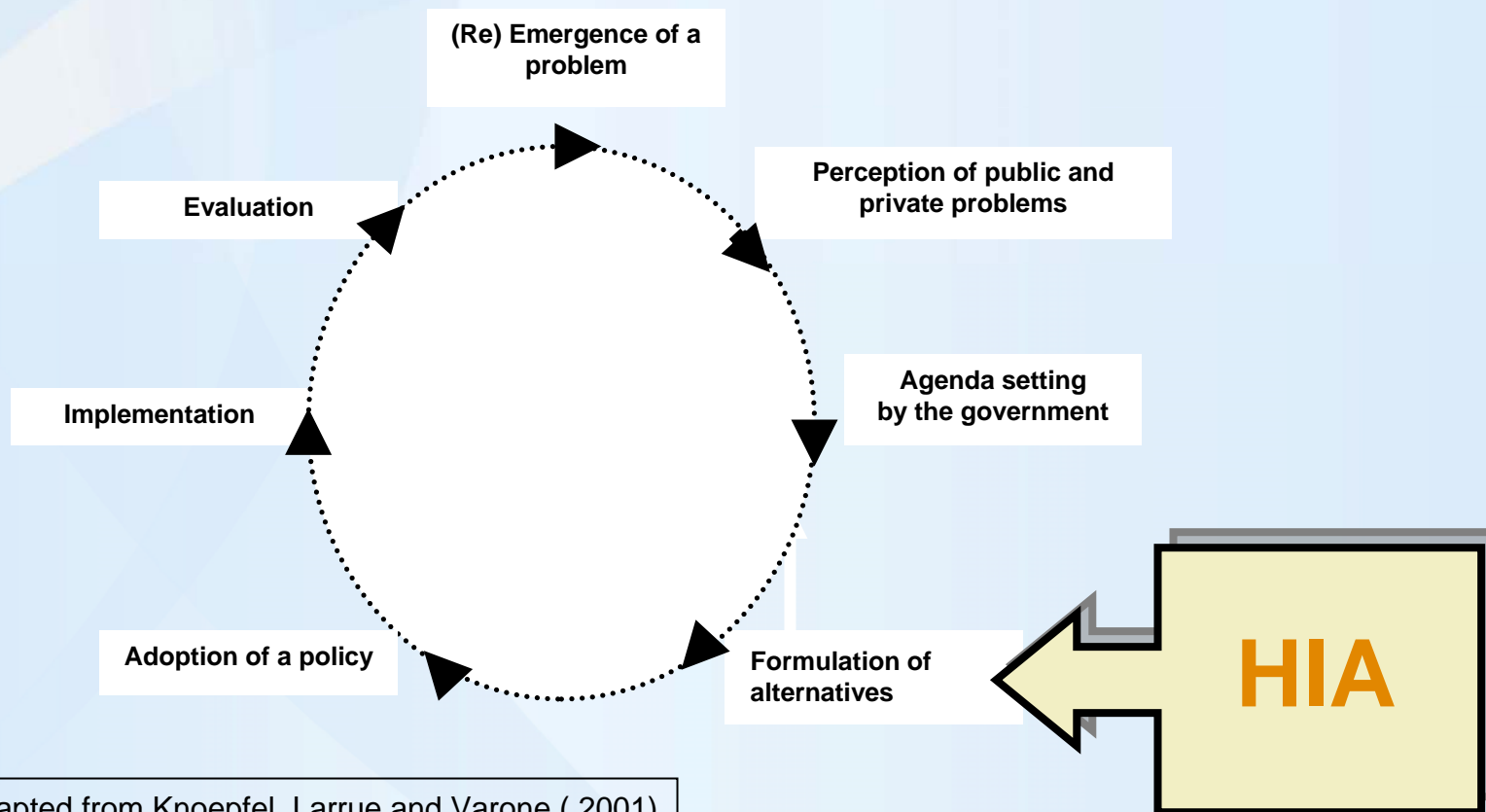
- Population health approach
- Rigor and neutrality of the analysis
- Involvement of stakeholders and intersectorial parties
- Reduction of social inequities in health
- Supporting the decision-making process
- Collective responsibility towards the population



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# Theory

## HIA and developing a policy



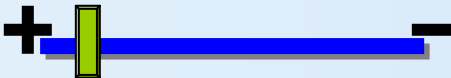
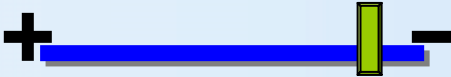

Adapted from Knoepfel, Larrue and Varone ( 2001)



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# Theory

## Different objectives and focuses

Objective	Focus	Link to Evidence
Production of a public health advisory	Scientific approach	
Democracy/empowerment	Citizenship/participation	
Rising awareness of decision-makers outside the health sector	Intersectoral dynamics	



# Theory

## Conceptualization of HIA applied to policies

- *“To improve public health by adding health awareness to policy making at every level and making concern for improved public health a norm in all policy making”*

(UK Cabinet Office, 1999)

- Strategic Health Assessment (Mahoney, 2001)
- Policy analysis focused on health (Kemmer, 2001)
- Interactive coordination strategy (Bekker, 2007)



## Theory

# HIA and knowledge transfer

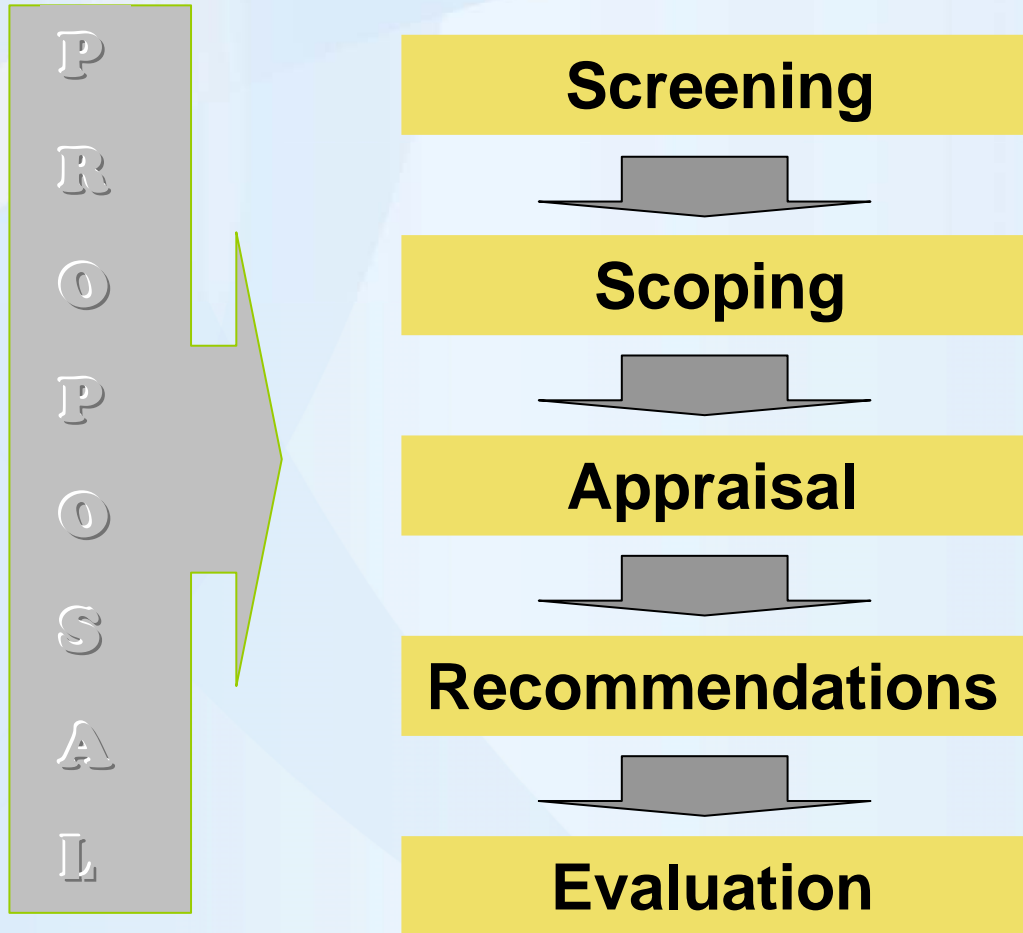
Conditions for success in using knowledge provided by HIA framework :

- Continued interaction between experts and decision-makers (Lavis et al., 2005)
- Information provided at a good timing and in an adapted language (Innvaer et al., 2002)
- Applicable information which is relevant to the context (Landry et al., 2007)
- Information emerging from the co-construction of knowledge (Brousselle et al., 2009)



# Practice

## A five-steps standard process



# Practice

# A growing practice across the world



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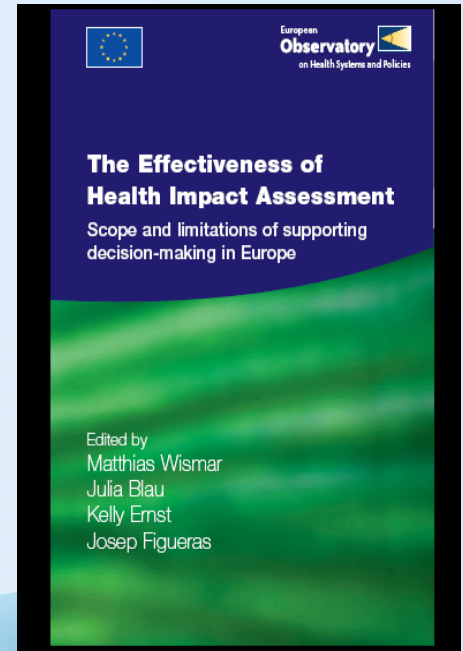
## Practice

# A practice that has been evaluated

- Allows to structure actions
- Flexible (various approaches)
- Fosters the participation of stakeholders
- Influences the policy process and raises policy-makers' and stakeholders' awareness about the wider determinants of health
- Methodological difficulties in terms of predicting the effects
- Interactive approach seems to give better results



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## *Practice*

# Rising interest in Canada

- Provincial level :  
A mechanism to integrate health in all policies (HiAP)  
E.g. : Alberta, British Columbia, Québec
- Regional/local Level :  
To support the legal mandate of public health  
E.g.: Calgary, Toronto  
To support citizen's involvement/participation  
E.g.: Nova Scotia (*PATH*)  
To support intersectoral dynamics  
E.g.: Montréal (Québec)



# Main issues and challenges

- Methodological
  - Predictive capacities
  - Management of uncertainties
- Political and policy context
  - Political will, ideological and cultural context
  - Capacity to fit into the policy process
- Organizational
  - Legitimacy
  - Capacity-building/developing of skills
  - Resources



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# Workshop

- Brief presentation of the five steps
- By using a fictitious case study:
  - 1) With the help of a grid, carry out a screening activity
  - 2) Discuss the different elements of the scoping stage
- Discussion on the issues surrounding the practice in your own contexts

