

Expanding dimensions of tiering: Towards coherent and holistic IA



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EU funded project – BioValue

- Transformative change for biodiversity in spatial planning



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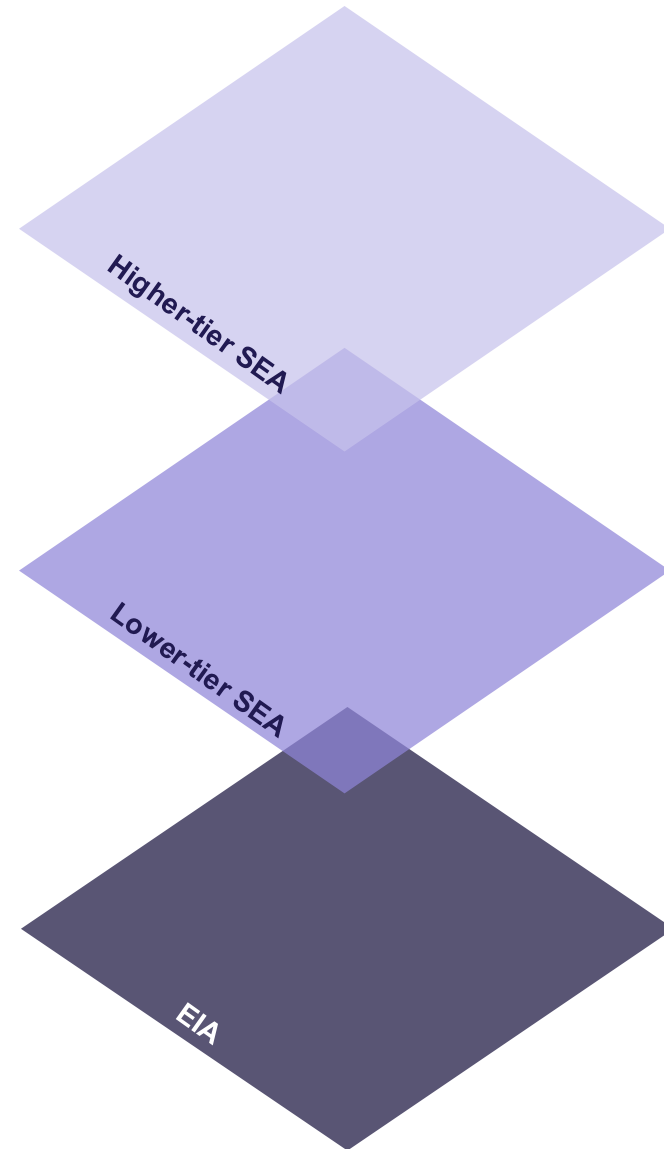
BioValue



Tiering

WHAT

Tiering is "the deliberate, organized **transfer of information and issues** from one level of planning to another, which is being supported by EAs..."
(Arts et al. 2012, p.417)



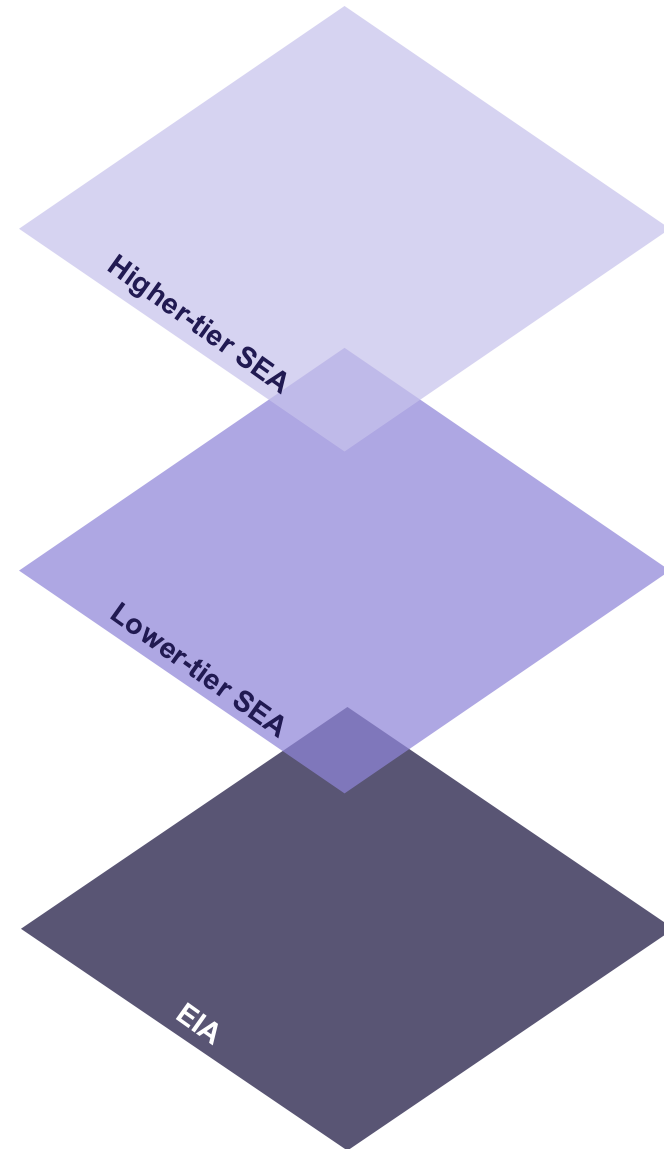
Tiering

WHAT

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(Arts et al. 2012, p.417)

WHY

Ensures **consistency** between decisions and "...allows the **right issues** to be considered at the **right time**"
(Therivel & González 2021, p. 1)

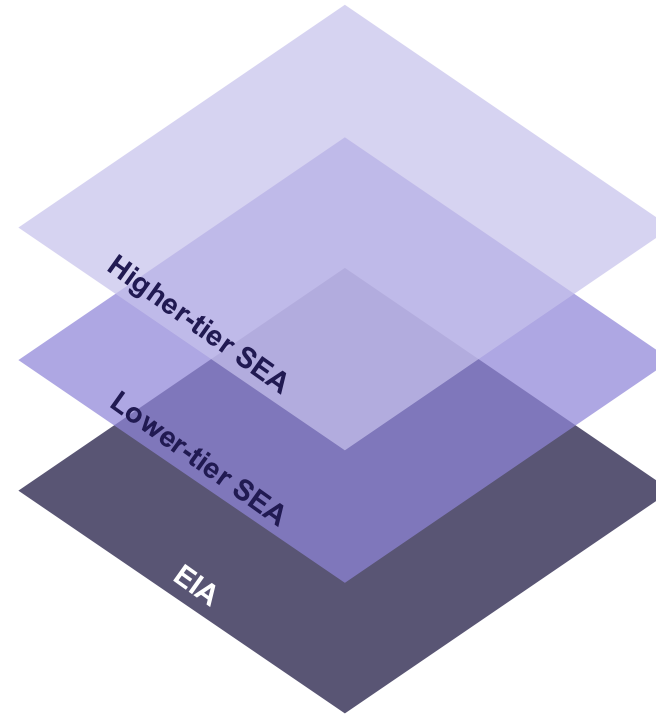


CASE STUDY



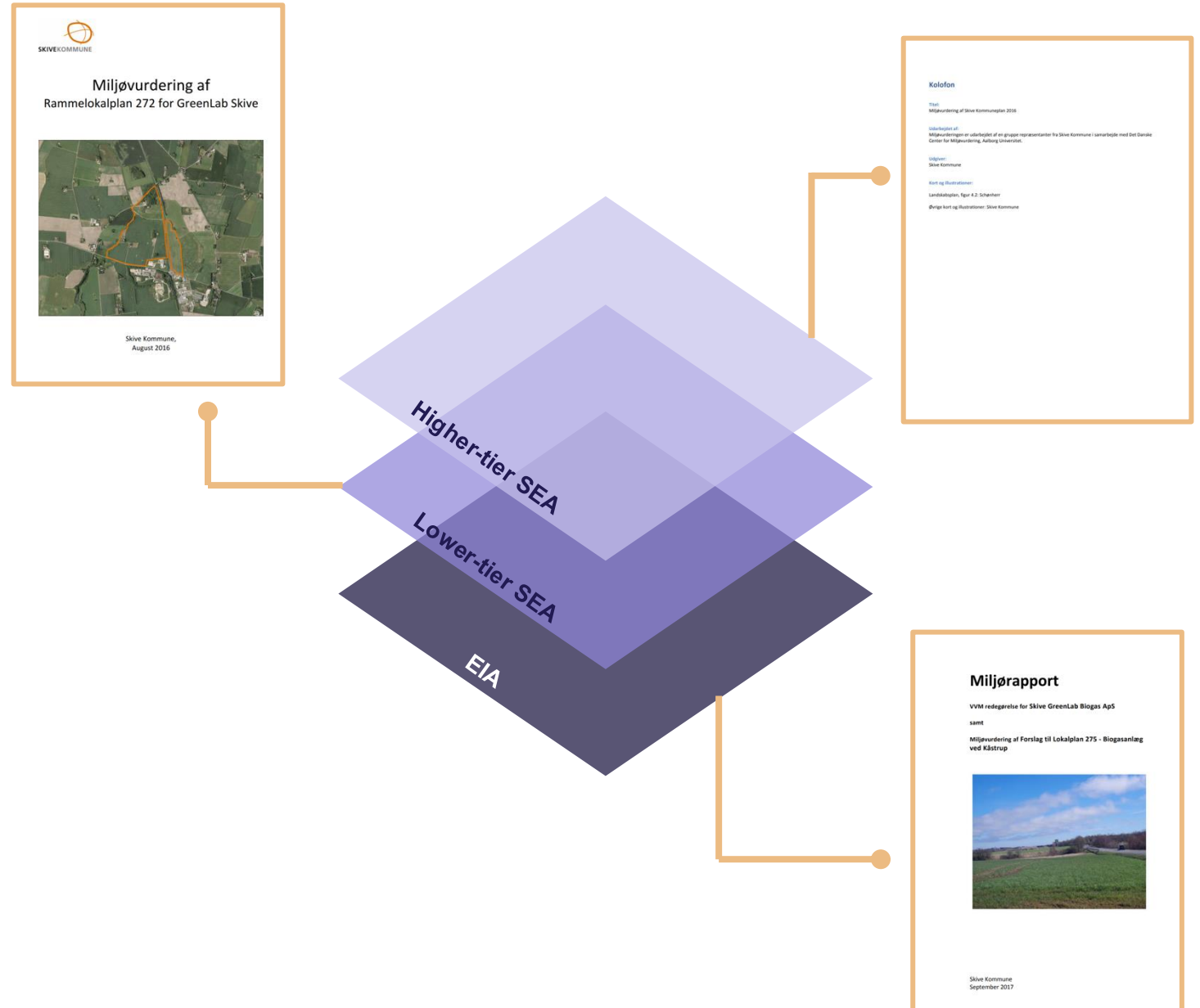
BioValue

- ▶ How and to what extent **biodiversity content is tiered** within planning hierarchy
- ▶ A Danish context



CASE STUDY

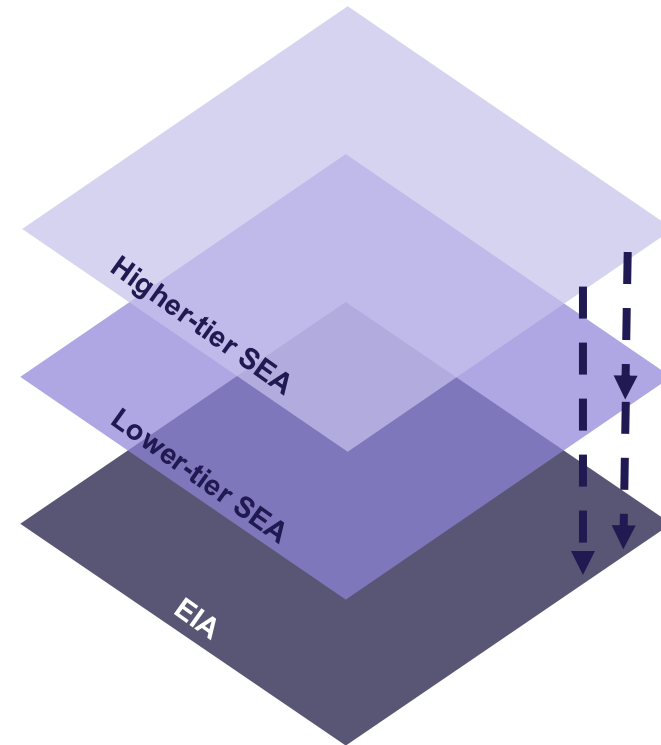
- ▶ How and to what extent **biodiversity content is tiered** within planning hierarchy
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Directions

VERTICAL

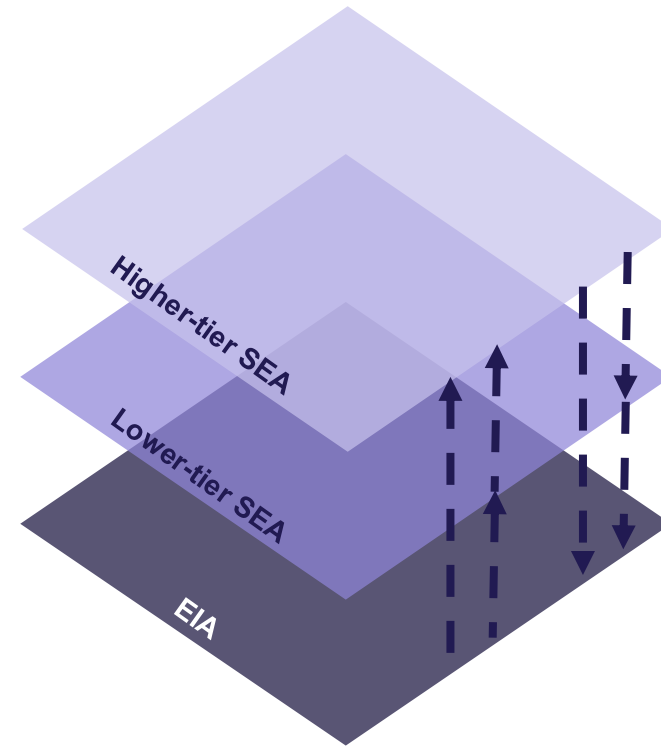
- ➊ Down-tiering, top-down tiering, trickling down



Directions

VERTICAL

- ➊ Down-tiering, top-down tiering, trickling down
- ➋ Up-tiering, bottom-up tiering, evaporating up

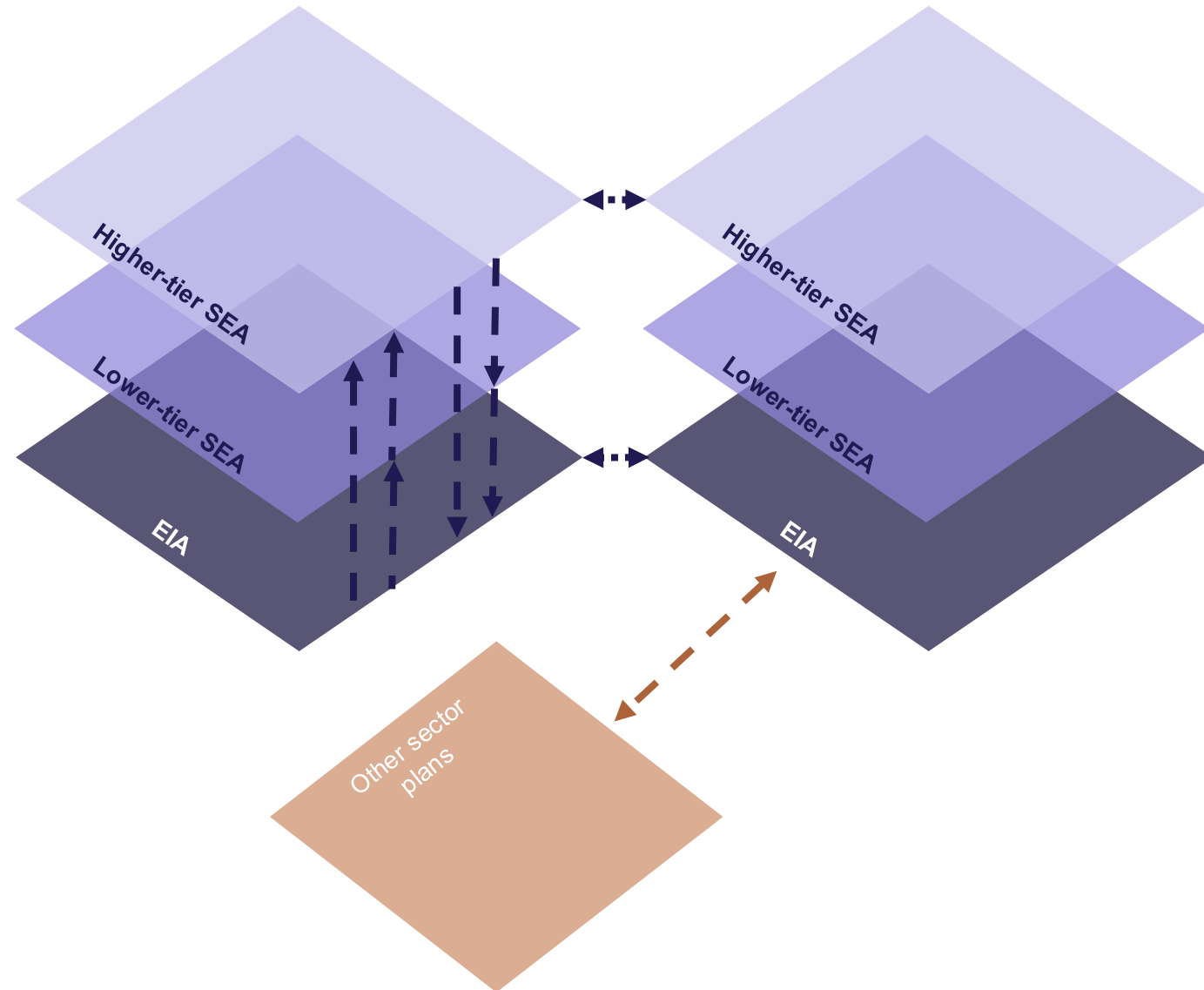


Directions

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HORIZONTAL



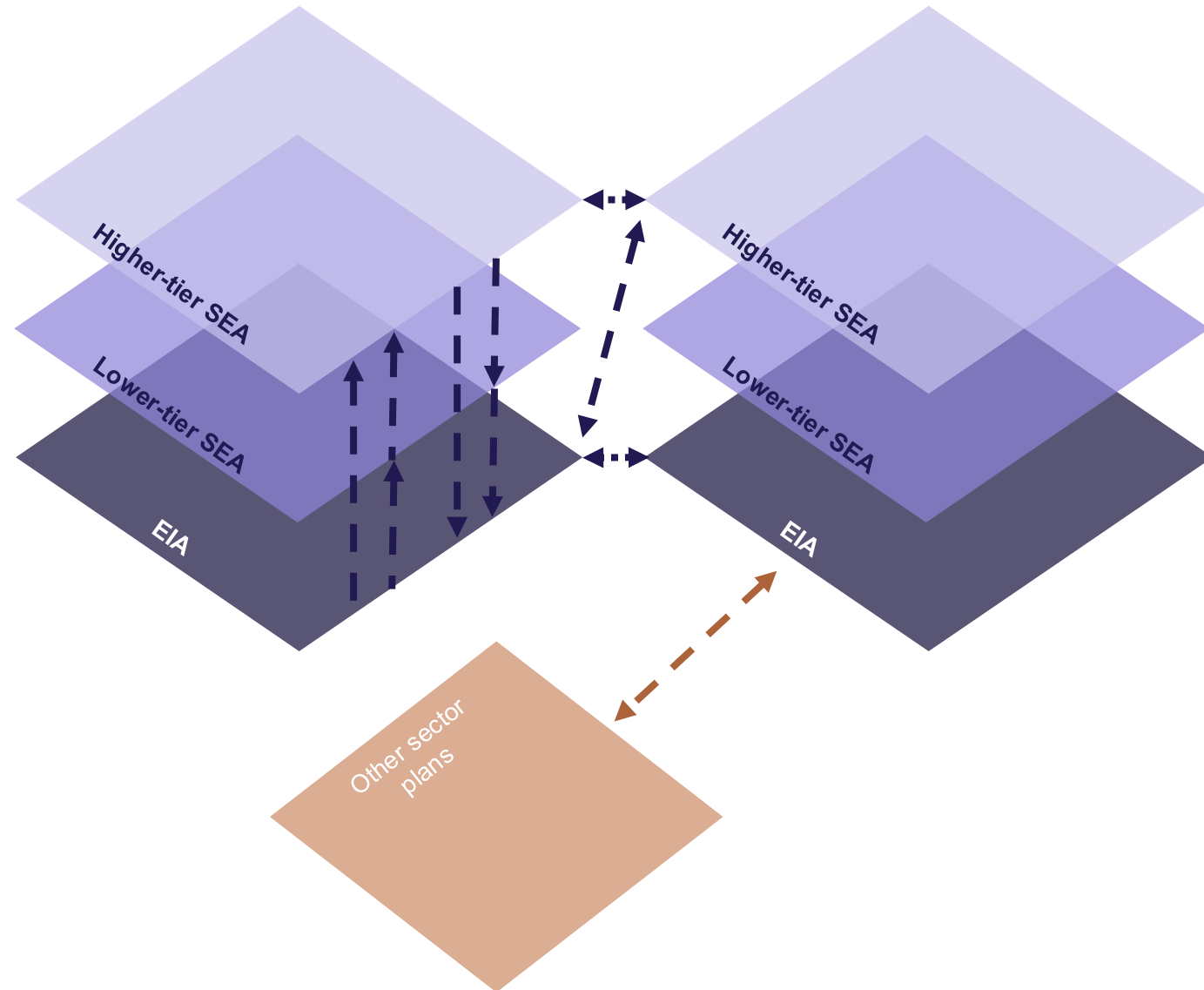
Directions

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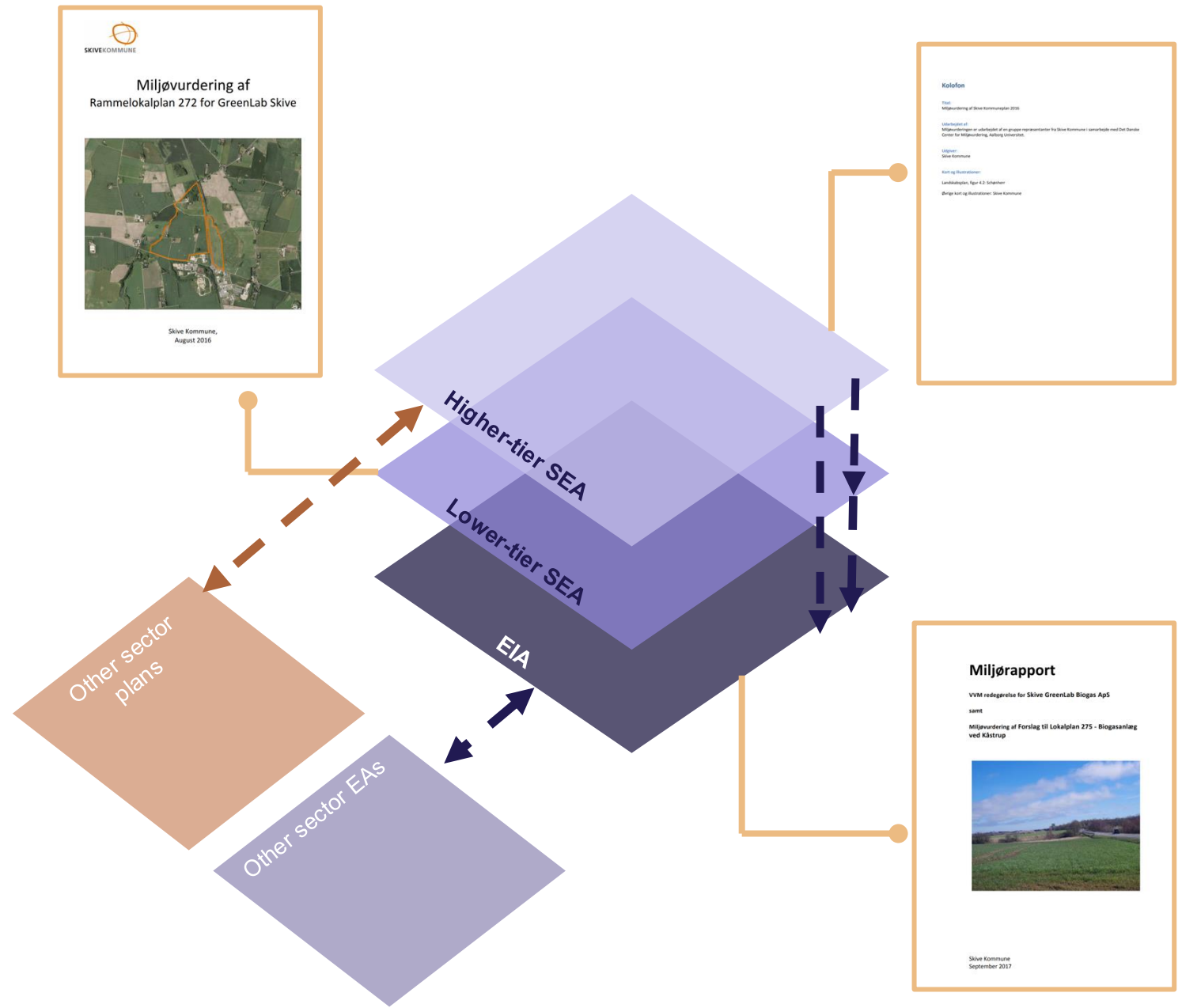
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HORIZONTAL

DIAGONAL

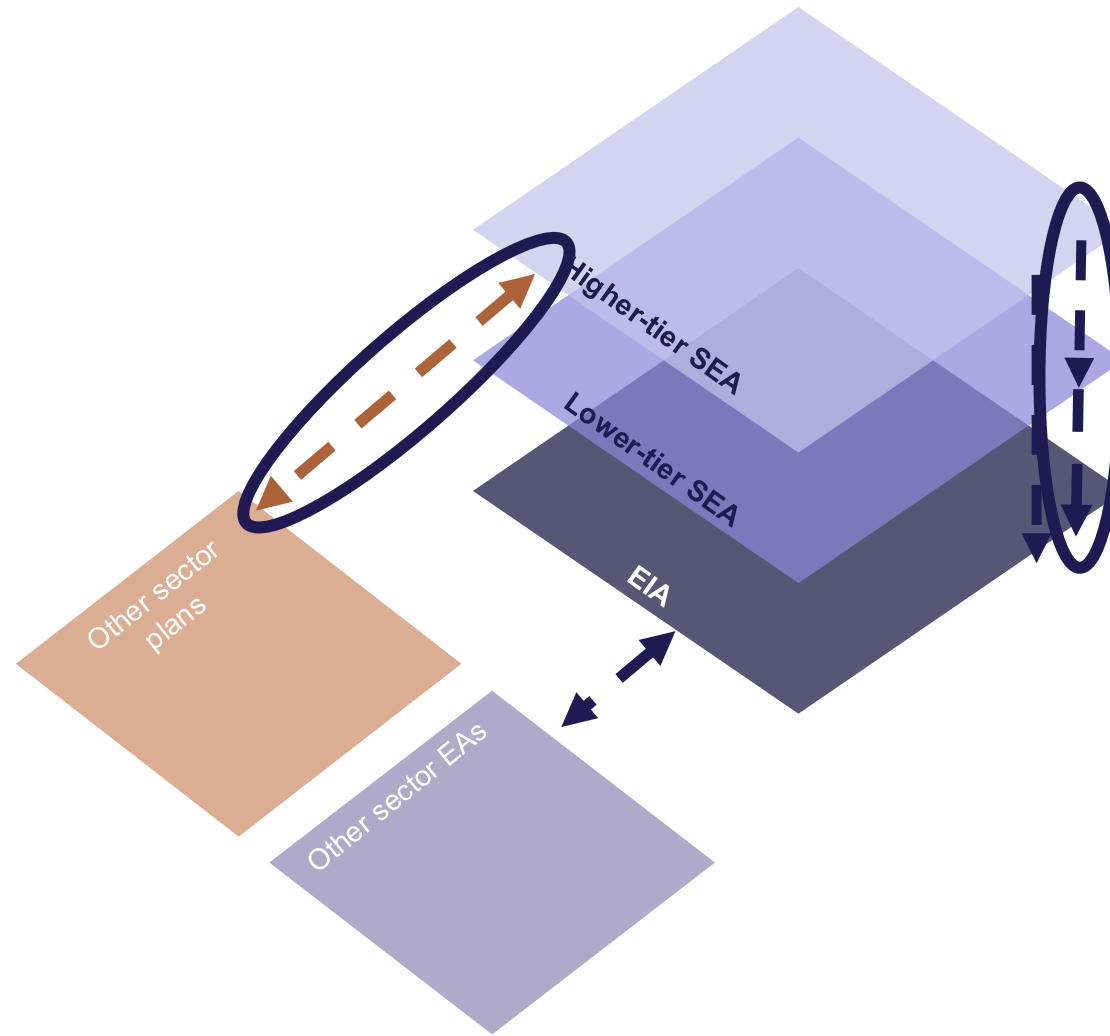


Case study



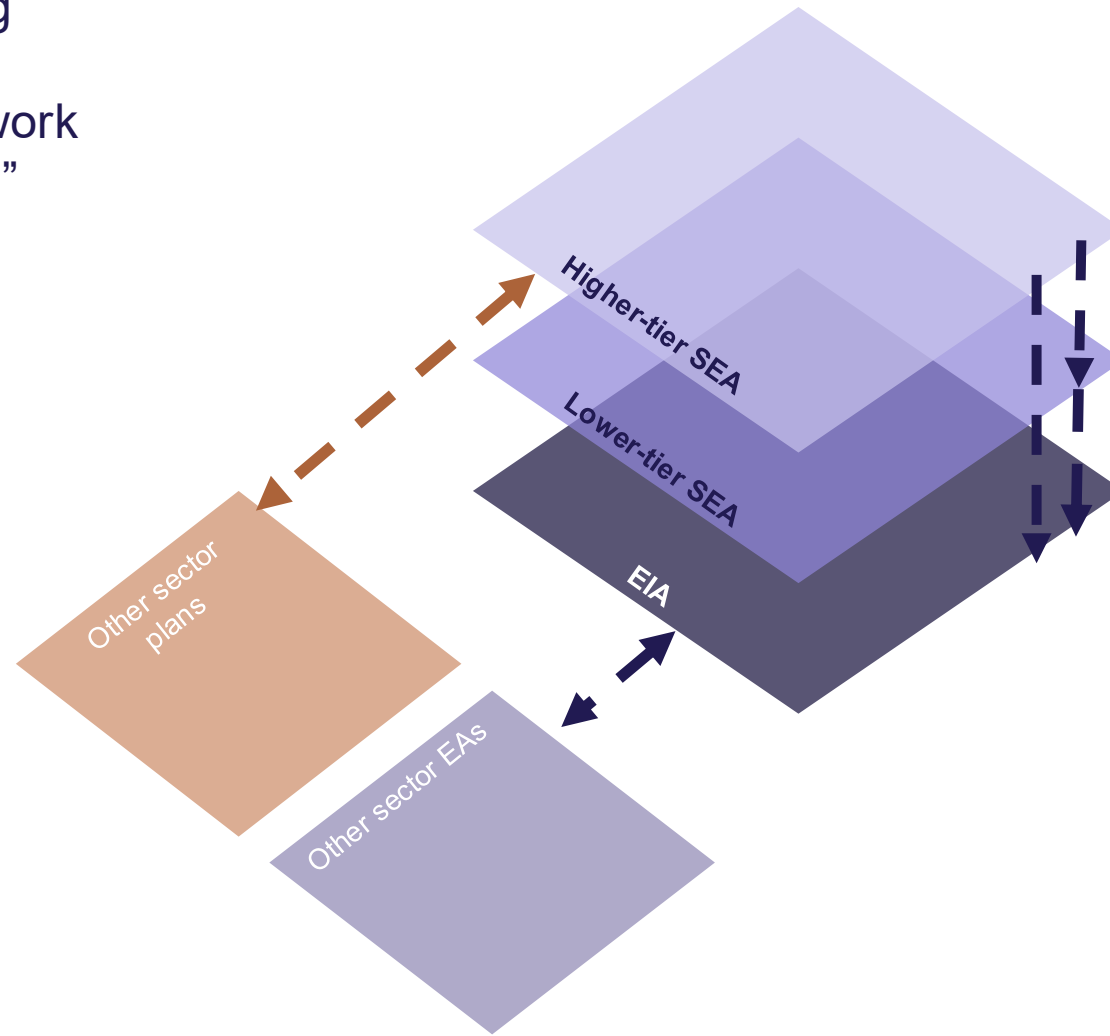
Case study

- Alternative proposed in higher-tier SEA, drawn from an external Thematic plan
- Alternative is passed from higher-tier SEA to lower-tier SEA to EIA



Case study

- Assessment of impacts on bat nesting areas is to be "...performed in the forthcoming SEA of the Local Framework Plan and through later EIA-processes"

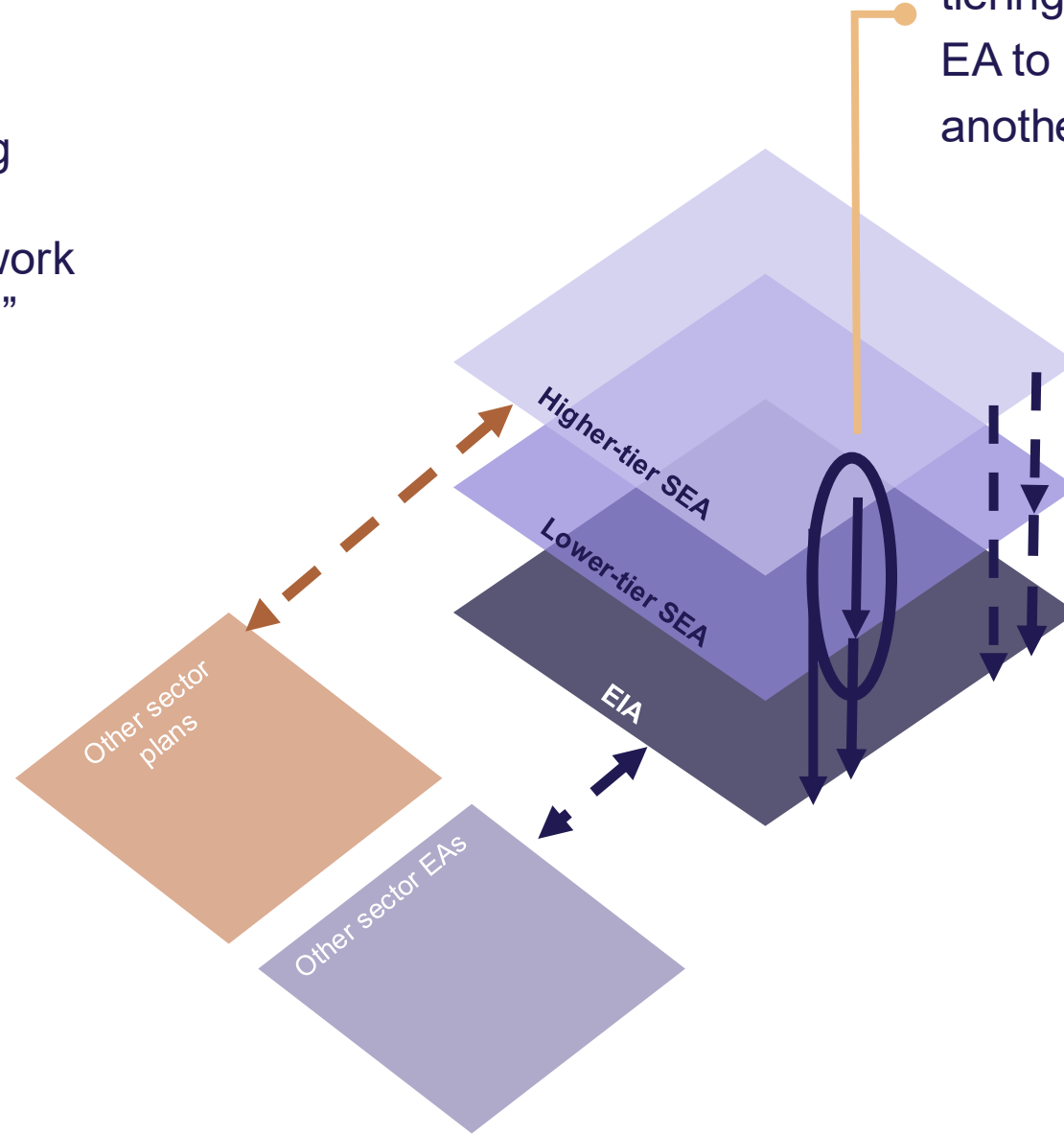


Case study

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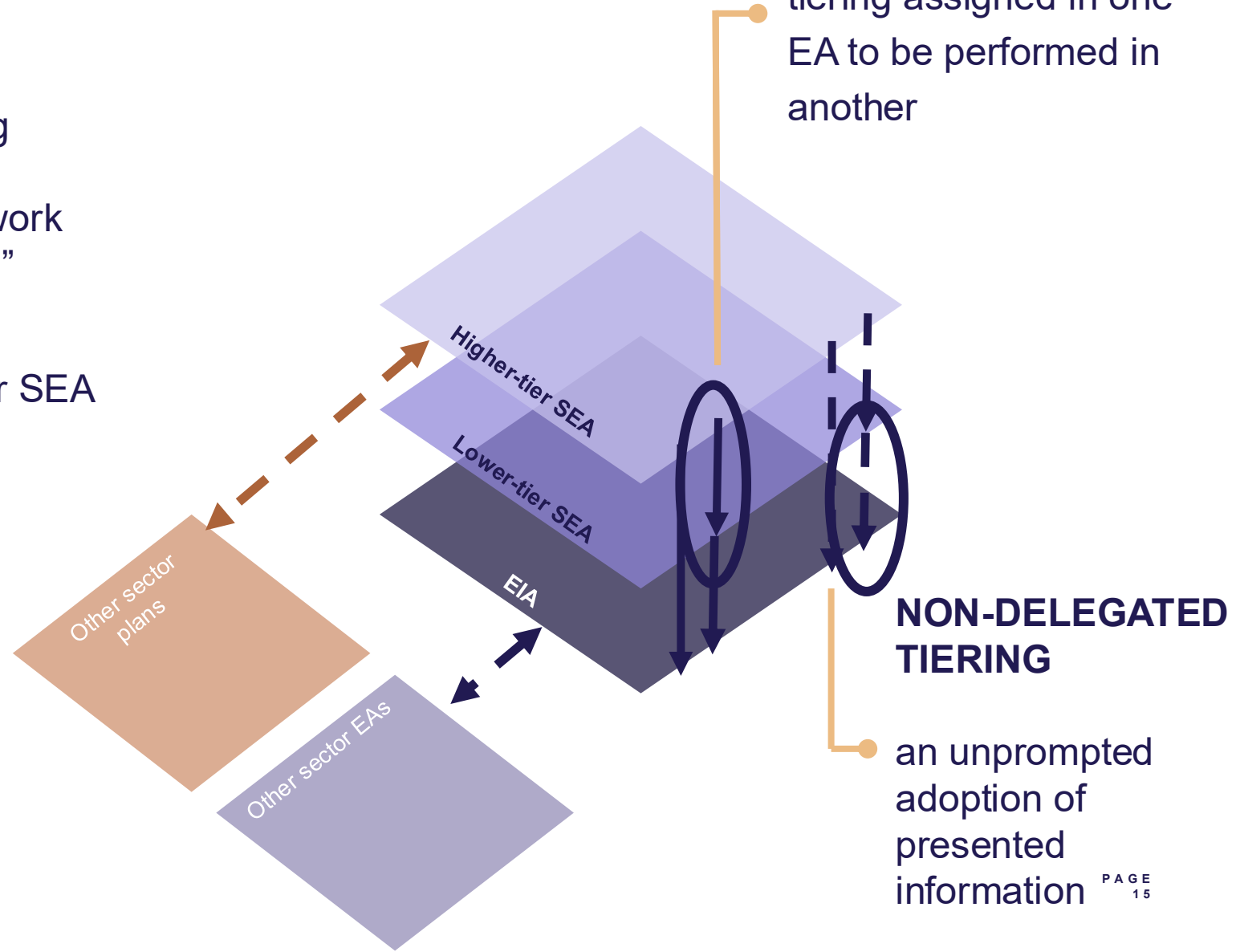
DELEGATED TIERING

a prompted action for tiering assigned in one EA to be performed in another



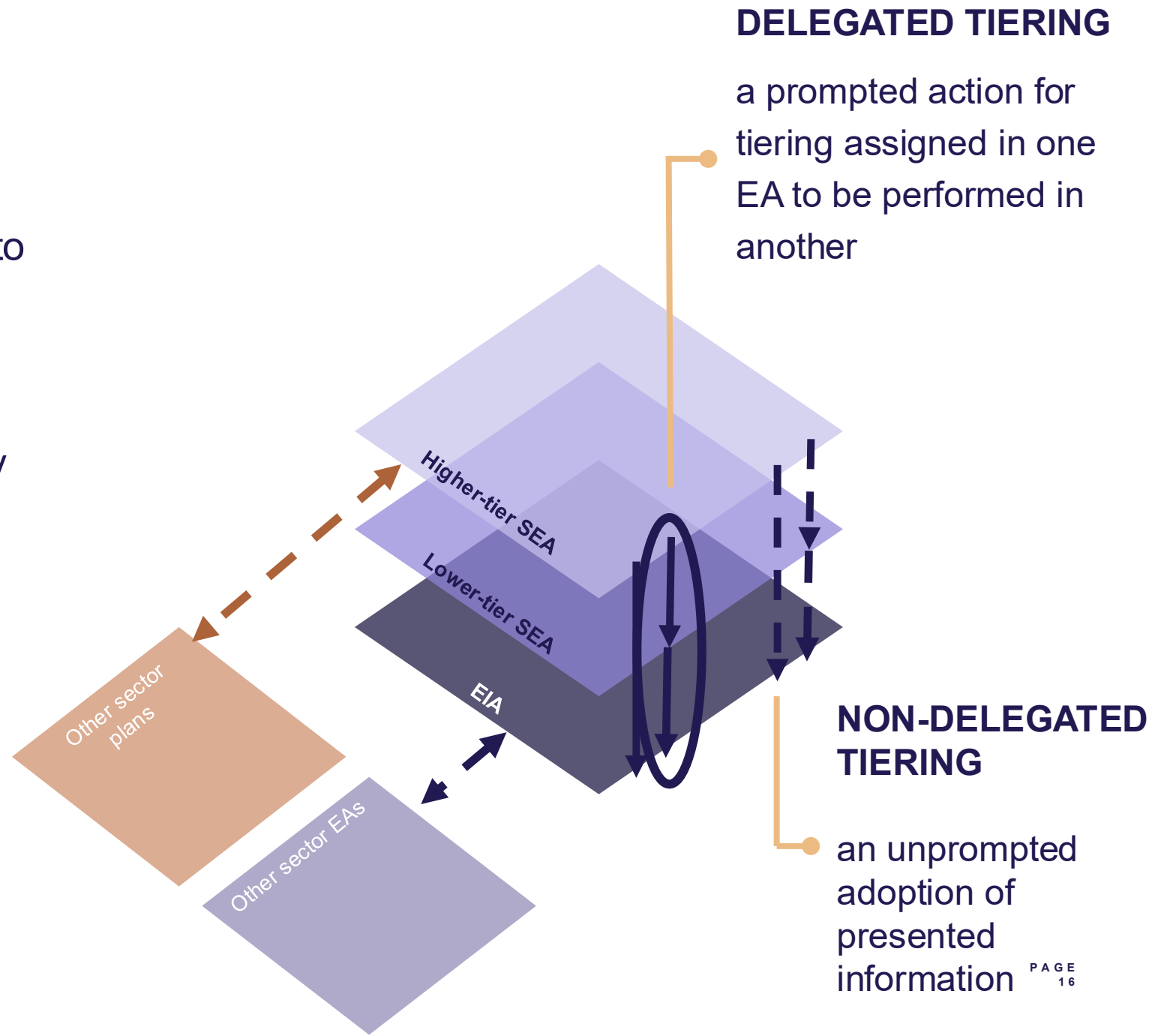
Case study

- Assessment of impacts on bat nesting areas is to be "...performed in the forthcoming SEA of the Local Framework Plan and through later EIA-processes"
- Assessment is performed in lower-tier SEA (determined insignificant)
- Assessment from lower-tier SEA is reproduced in the EIA with explicit reference to lower-tier SEA



Case study

- Enhancement of water quality is to be ensured in the forthcoming lower-tier SEA
- Enhancement of the water quality is to be ensured in later EIA processes
- No enhancement measures proposed in EIA



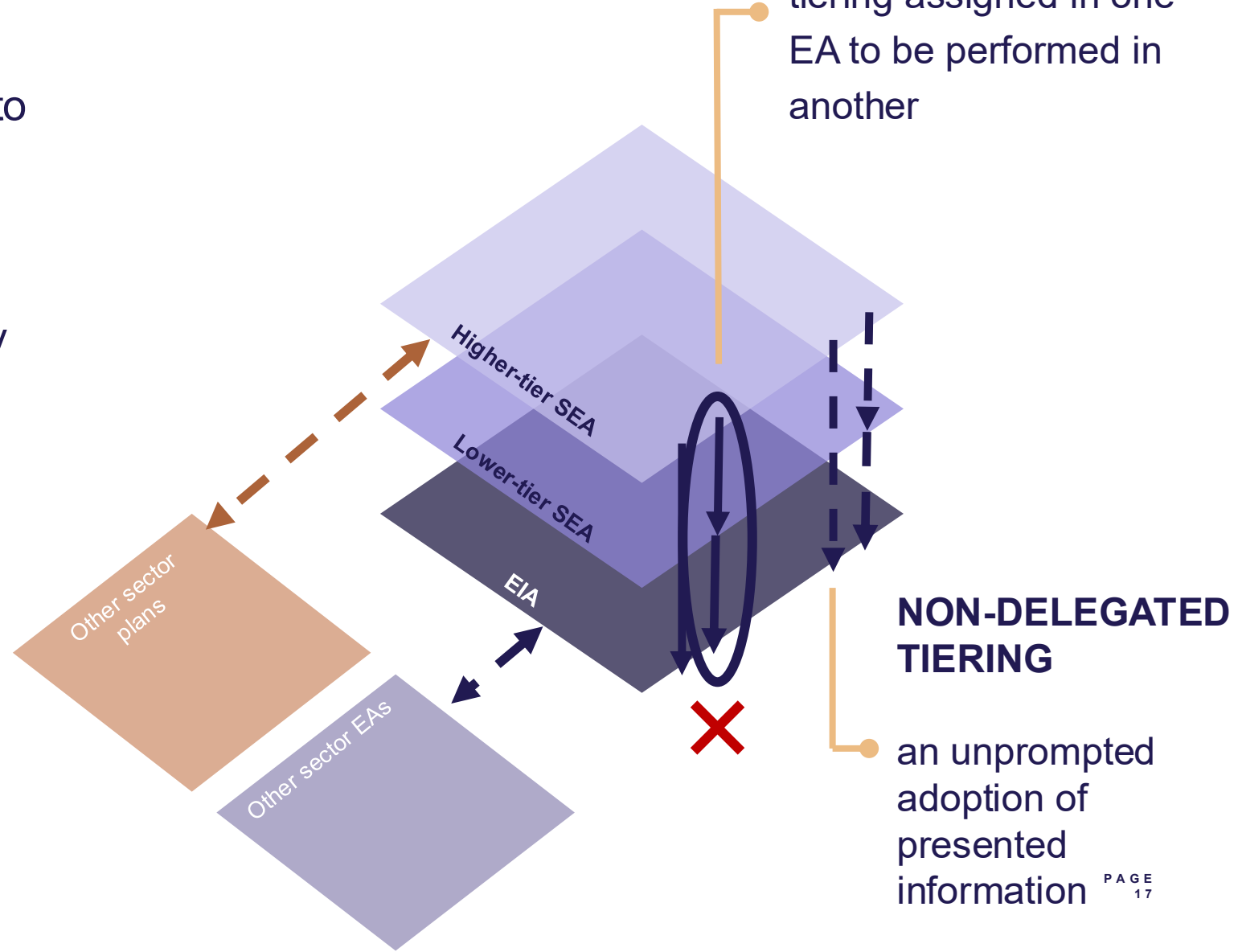
Case study

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- Enhancement of the water quality is to be ensured in later EIA processes
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Tiering is **DISRUPTED**

DELEGATED TIERING

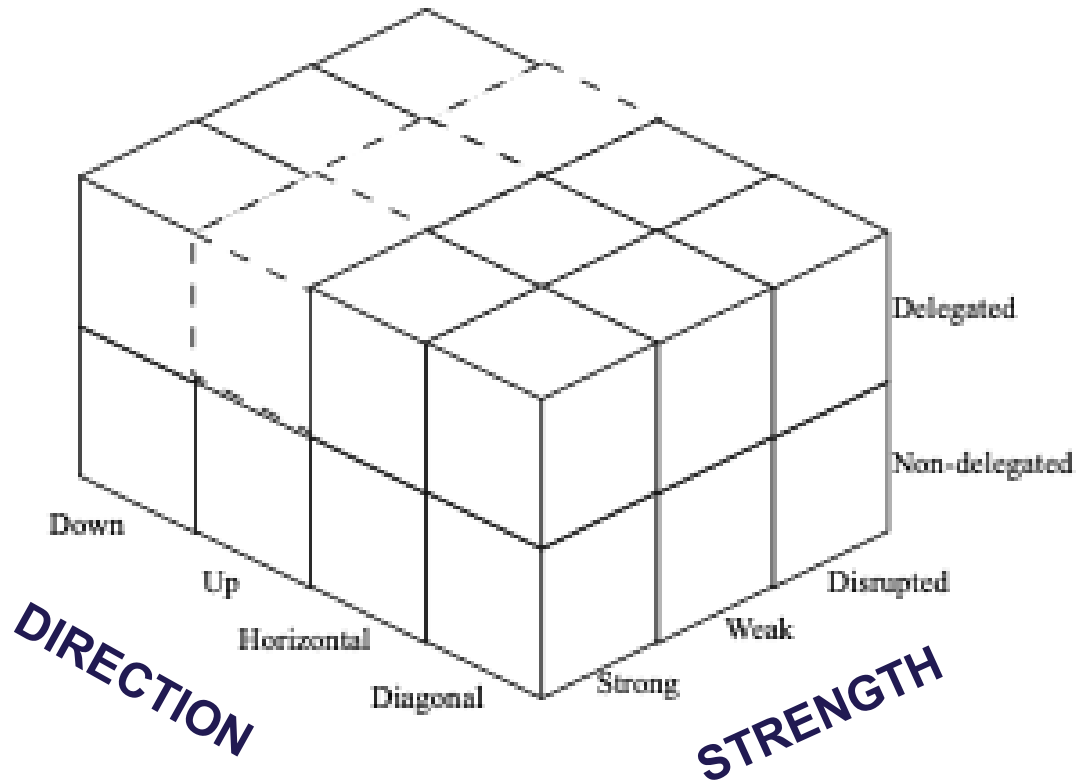
a prompted action for tiering assigned in one EA to be performed in another



NON-DELEGATED TIERING

an unprompted adoption of presented information


Three dimensional tiering typology



DELEGATION


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Unpacking dimensions of a tiering typology: Delegation, direction and strength

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ABSTRACT

Within environmental assessment (EA), tiering between higher-tier strategic environmental assessment at the plan and program level and lower-tier environmental impact assessment at the project level creates effective communication, ensuring that insights are not isolated to the planning level in which they were derived, but can inform and guide other levels. Tiering can travel in many directions – ensuring that strategic goals make it into implemented projects and that information gained in project levels inform future strategic planning. This research extends the tiering concept along three dimensions, ‘delegation’, ‘direction’ and ‘strength’. It does so to further existing conceptual understandings and gain a nuanced understanding of the role that especially strategic levels have in ensuring meaningful tiering. To illustrate the new conceptual tiering typologies, the research draws upon a case study of three Danish EA reports on spatial planning to understand how tiering is delegated between planning levels. The illustrative case study concludes that a procedurally effective referral of information between planning tiers calls for tiering practice that is explicit and is both delegated and successfully implemented in the appropriate planning levels. Consequently, this paper not only furthers theoretical perspectives; it also demonstrates how the proposed typology can be applied and opens for further reflection on the potentials and limitations of the typology as well as avenues for future research.

Ravn Boess et al. (2026) [Unpacking dimensions of a tiering typology: Delegation, direction and strength](#)

WHY THE TYPOLOGY?

1

Furthers the conceptualization and theorization of tiering in impact assessment

2

Provides an analytical aid and new vocabulary for interpreting, comparing, and characterizing different forms of tiering

3

Delegation supports the allocative role of SEA for more purposeful application and encourages "strong" delegated tiering

REFLECTIONS

Typology

1

The typology does not explain practice, it merely describes it – and says nothing about quality or accuracy of tiering

2

It does not account for geographical nor political contexts with differing jurisdictions

3

There is a potential tension between delegation and discretion

Research process

4

Research is never straightforward – you set out to do one thing and end up somewhere else





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Let's continue the conversation!

Message me your questions or comments in the IAIA26 app.

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