

30 Year
Anniversary

of the London Group
on Environmental Accounting



System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

30th Anniversary of the London Group Meeting

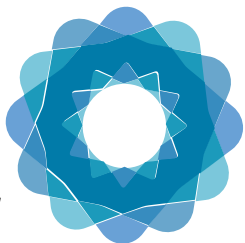
A history, achievements, and reflections

Michael Vardon



Photo Attribution: "Approaching London" by [Trey Ratcliff](#) - Licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

30th September to 3rd October 2024 | Washington D.C



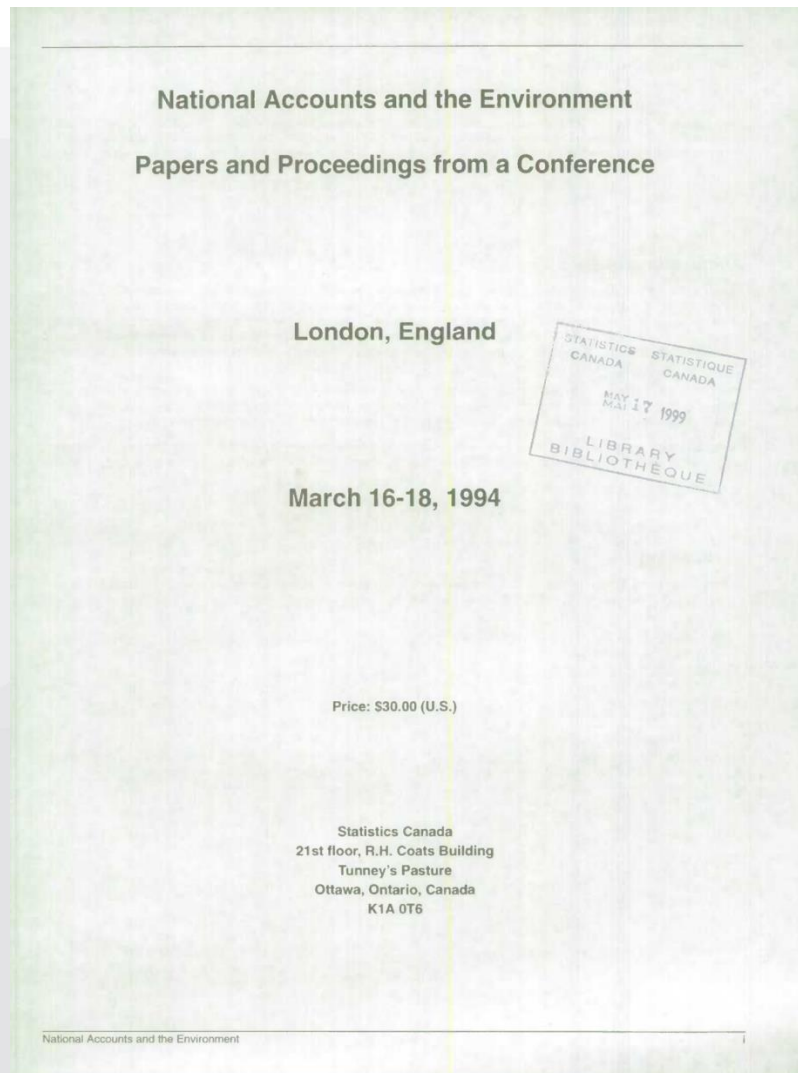
The first meeting

🌸 London, England (UK)

🌸 16-18 March 1994

🌸 30 Statisticians from
national statistical
offices and
international
organisation

🌸 Record published by
Statistics Canada



1. Knut Alfssen, *Statistics Norway*
2. Peter Bartelmus, *United Nations Statistical Office*
3. Hans Berglund, *Statistics Sweden*
4. Peter Bosch, *Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics*
5. Alan Brown, *U.K. Department of the Environment*
6. Gerard Gie, *Eurostat*
7. Gerard Gravel, *Statistics Canada*
8. Kirk Hamilton, *World Bank*
9. Anne Harrison, *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*
10. Peter Hill, *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*
11. Steven Keuning, *Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics*
12. Leo Koltola, *Statistics Finland*
13. Steven Landefeld, *United States Bureau of Economic Analysis*
14. Robin Lynch, *U. K. Central Statistical Office*
15. Ma. Eugenia Gómez Luna, *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, Mexico*
16. Paul McCarthy, *Australian Bureau of Statistics*
17. Alberto de Michelis, *Statistical Office of the European Community*
18. Brian Newson, *Eurostat*
19. Ole Gravgård Pedersen, *Danmarks Statistik*
20. Walter Radermacher, *German Federal Statistical Office*
21. Fulai Sheng, *World Wildlife Fund International*
22. Philip Smith, *Statistics Canada*
23. Carsten Stahmer, *German Federal Statistical Office*
24. Christer Stenbeck, *Statistics Sweden*
25. Anton Steurer, *Austrian Central Statistical Office*
26. Kimio Uno, *Keio University, Japan*
27. Jan van Tongeren, *United Nations Statistical Office*
28. Dombey Wallage, *U.K. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
29. Jean-Louis Weber, *Institut Français de l'Environnement*
30. David Wroe, *U.K. Central Statistical Office*

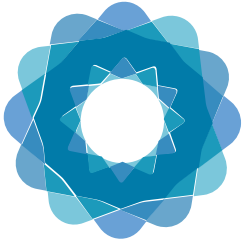
https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2018/statcan/CS13-593-1994-eng.pdf



City Groups in the international statistical system

- Voluntary groups of experts to discuss and address specific thematic challenges in the development and implementation of statistical methodologies
- Operate under the Statistical Commission
- Mostly experts from national statistical offices
- Eight active city groups
 - Wiesbaden Group 1986, Voorburg Group 1987, London Group 1993, Ottawa 1994, Washington Group 2001, Olso 2005, Praia 2015, Titchfield Group 2018,
- Nine completed city groups

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/citygroups/>

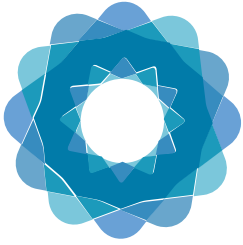


London Group Mandate

“Broadly speaking, the topics covered by the Group to date include:

- a. Physical flow accounts (air emissions, materials use, water use and energy use);
- b. Asset accounts for natural resources such as fossil fuels, forest, fish and land;
- c. Environmental activity accounts (environmental sector jobs and trade, environmentally related taxes and subsidies, emissions trade);
- d. Ecosystem accounts;
- e. Applications and extensions of environmental accounts (e.g. environmental pressure from consumption through input-output analysis, social data in the accounts);
- f. Training and implementation material.”

<https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/london-group-mandate-and-governance-structure.pdf>



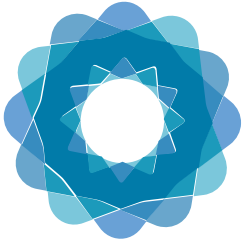
London Group objectives

“The current objectives of the London Group are to: a.

- a. support the further methodological development of the SEEA-CF
- b. support the promotion and implementation of SEEA-CF
- c. contribute to the development of SEEA: Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA-EEA)
- d. provide a forum for the sharing of national and international expertise and experience”

Perhaps an update?

<https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/london-group-mandate-and-governance-structure.pdf>

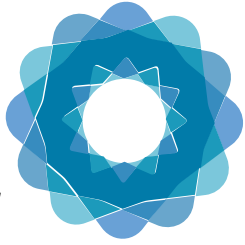


London Group governance

The London Group will be managed by a Chair, a Bureau and a Secretariat.

- ✿ The Chair, in cooperation with the Bureau, will develop the programme of work and related time schedule for the London Group, organize and develop the agenda for the meetings, facilitate the discussion during and in-between meetings, and ensure that the programme of work is implemented according to schedule.
- ✿ The Bureau will assist the chair and be a decision making body with the tasks of helping coordinate the work plan for the Group, assisting with agenda setting for the annual meeting, arranging for hand-over of the Chair responsibilities, and other administrative decisions related to the management of the Group.
- ✿ The Secretariat will assist the Chair and the Bureau in their tasks, including input on developing the agenda and organizing London Group meetings; maintaining a website for the London Group; and maintaining internal and external communication on behalf of the Group (e.g. posting meeting materials and organising official correspondence).

<https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/london-group-mandate-and-governance-structure.pdf>



Histories

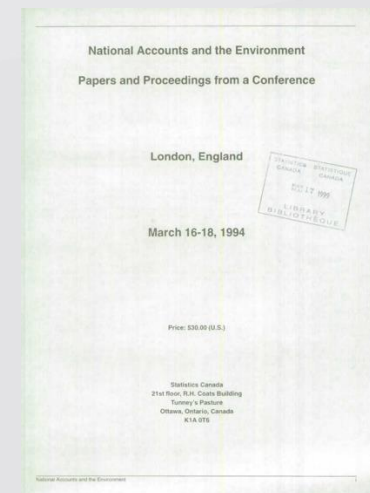
- 🌸 London Group Website
 - 🌸 2-page history
- 🌸 Bram Edens et al. 2022
 - 🌸 SEEA Development
- 🌸 Clément Surun, PhD Thesis
 - 🌸 Monetary valuation
- 🌸 An unauthorised history of the London Group on Environmental Accounting
 - 🌸 Selected reflections





History of meetings

1. March 1994, London, England
2. March 1995, Washington, D.C., USA
3. May 1996, Stockholm, Sweden
4. June 1997, Ottawa, Canada
5. May 1998, Fontevraud, France
6. November 1999, Canberra, Australia
7. May 2001 Voorburg, the Netherlands
8. November 2003, Rome, Italy
9. September 2004, Copenhagen, Denmark
10. June 2006, New York City, USA
11. March 2007, Pretoria, South Africa
12. December 2007, Rome, Italy
13. October 2008, Brussels, Belgium
14. April 2009, Canberra, Australia
15. November 2009, Wiesbaden, Germany
16. October 2010, Santiago, Chile
17. September 2011, Stockholm, Sweden
18. October 2012, Ottawa, Canada
19. November 2013, London, England
20. October 2014, New Delhi, India
21. November 2015, The Hague, The Netherlands
22. September 2016, Oslo, Norway
23. October 2017, San Jose, Costa Rica
24. October 2018, Dublin, Ireland
25. October 2019, Melbourne, Australia
26. November 2020, online
27. October 2021, online
28. September 2022, Siegburg, Germany
29. September 2023, Pretoria, South Africa
30. October 2024, Washington, D.C., USA
31. Scheduled 2025, Tallinn, Estonia



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Achievements

🌸 SEEA precursors

🌸 1993

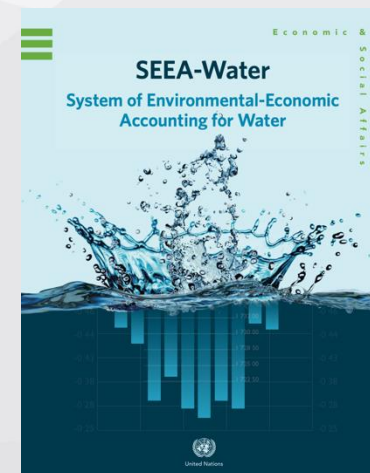
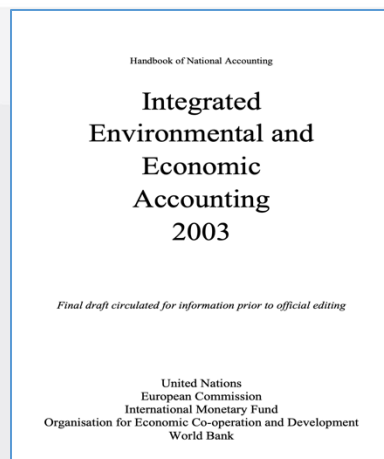
🌸 2003

🌸 2007 SEEA Water

🌸 2012 SEEA Central Framework

🌸 2012 SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting

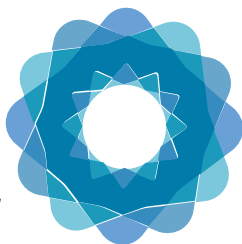
🌸 2021 SEEA Ecosystem Accounting



“Without the London Group there never would have been a SEEA.”
Sjoerd Schenau

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Webpage

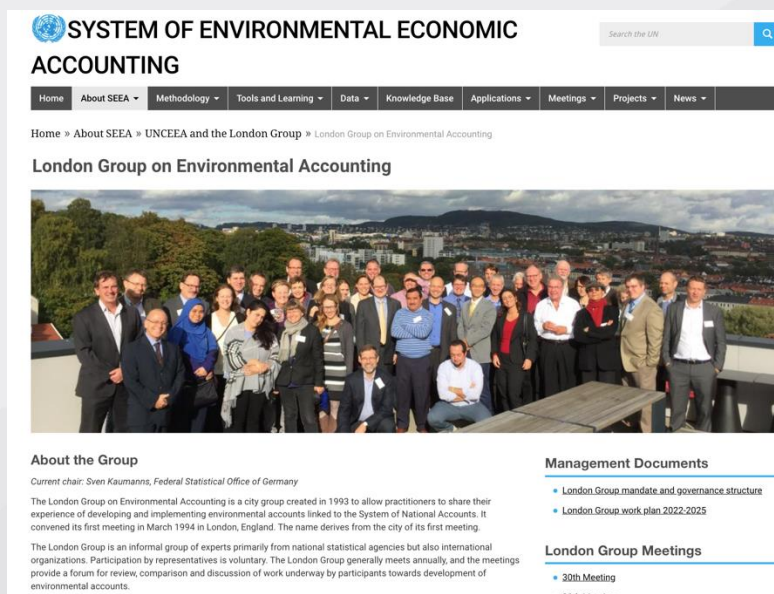
Lots of contributions

Updated to 1999
thanks to Marko and
Ilaria

Archive 6th to 16th
(1999 to 2017)

We have a record

But much is
hidden!



London Group Meetings

- [30th Meeting](#)
- [29th Meeting](#)
- [28th meeting](#)
- [27th meeting](#)
- [26th Meeting](#)
- [25th Meeting](#)
- [24th Meeting](#)
- [23rd Meeting](#)
- [22nd Meeting](#)
- [21st Meeting](#)
- [20th Meeting](#)
- [19th Meeting](#)
- [18th Meeting](#)
- [17th Meeting](#)
- [15th Meeting](#)
- [14th Meeting](#)
- [13th Meeting](#)
- [12th Meeting](#)
- [11th Meeting](#)
- [10th Meeting](#)
- [9th Meeting](#)
- [8th Meeting](#)
- [7th Meeting](#)
- [6th Meeting](#)

Not on web page
(some material
available)

16th 2010 Santiago

5th 1998 Fontevraud

4th 1997 Ottawa

3rd 1996 Stockholm

2nd 1995 Washington

1st 1994 London



2-page history

History of the London Group

The London Group on Resource Accounting was established in 1993 as a city group (by the UN Statistical Commission) with the objectives of:

- a) to play a leadership role in defining international best practices in the theory and practice of environmental accounting within the framework of the System of National Accounts;
- b) to provide a forum for the sharing of national and international expertise in this field; and
- c) to encourage the adoption of best practices in the field by promoting the results of the Group's efforts via proceedings volumes, concepts and methods manuals, operational manuals and other means.

1994-2005

In 1993 the United Nations published the *Handbook of National Accounting: Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting* (SEEA). The discussion of concepts and methods had not come to a final conclusion and the handbook was issued as an "interim" version. After the publication of the SEEA - 1993, several developing and developed countries started experimenting with the compilation of the SEEA.

Between 1994 and 1997 the Group has been an informal group of statisticians from national statistical offices and international organization. With the agreement by the Statistical Commission in 1998 to undertake a review of the SEEA 1993, Statistics Canada took on the role of Secretariat of the London Group. Further, the management of the Group was under the responsibility of the Coordinating Committee composed of the most recent and future host of the London Group meetings, Statistics Canada as secretariat of the Group, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the World Bank, the publishing agencies of the *Handbook of National Accounting: Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting 2003* (SEEA-2003). The International Monetary Fund was added as a publishing agency at a later stage and did not become a member of the Coordinating Committee. The main responsibility of the Coordinating Committee was the steering the SEEA revision.

After the publication of the SEEA-2003, the Coordinating Committee was responsible for organising the meetings of the London Group. Because of this change in focus, the Coordinating Committee was reduced in size and composed of the past and future host of the London Group' meetings, Statistics Canada as secretariat and the UNSD. Three sub-groups of the London Group were established in 2003 to address specific issues and develop compilation guidelines. They include:

- a) Sub-Group on Water Accounting, moderated by UNSD. The Sub-Group contributed to the *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water* (SEEA-W), which has recently been adopted as an international statistical standard by the UN Statistical Commission at its 38th session;
- b) Sub-Group on Mineral and Energy Accounts, moderated by Statistics Denmark. The Sub-Group carried out a survey on country practices in the

implementation of mineral and energy asset accounts and developed guidelines for a handbook on mineral and energy asset accounts;

- c) Sub-Group on the Expansion of the SEEA to social aspects, moderated by Statistics Sweden. The Sub-Group prepared discussion papers for discussion at the London Group.

2005-present

An important event in the international environment having repercussions on environmental-economic accounting and related statistics is the creation of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA), established by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2005 with the objectives of:

- a) mainstreaming environmental-economic accounting and related statistics;
- b) elevating the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA-2003) to an international statistical standard; and
- c) advancing the implementation of the SEEA at the global level.

The programme of work of the UNCEEA encompasses the following elements:

- a) coordination of groups working on environmental-economic accounting and related statistics;
- b) promotion and implementation of the SEEA;
- c) methodological research; and
- d) harmonization of data collection activities with environmental-economic accounting concepts and definitions.

Of particular relevance to the London Group are the coordination and the advancement of methodology.

Given its expertise and its role in advancing the methodologies in environmental-economic accounting, the London Group has accepted the request of the UNCEEA to develop a list of issues and solving a significant number of those issues in the research agenda for the revision of the SEEA-2003 as part of its work programme. Further, the London Group has re-evaluated its role and governance structure in order to meet the request of the Committee to undertake the research within an agreed time schedule.

On London Group Website

- 1994 to 2005
 - 1993 SEEA
 - 2003 SEEA
- 2005 to present
 - 2007 SEEA Water
 - 2012 SEEA CF
 - 2021 SEEA EA



Establishing SEEA Ecosystem Accounting

UN Process

The overlap of people in London Group was large

New people "in"

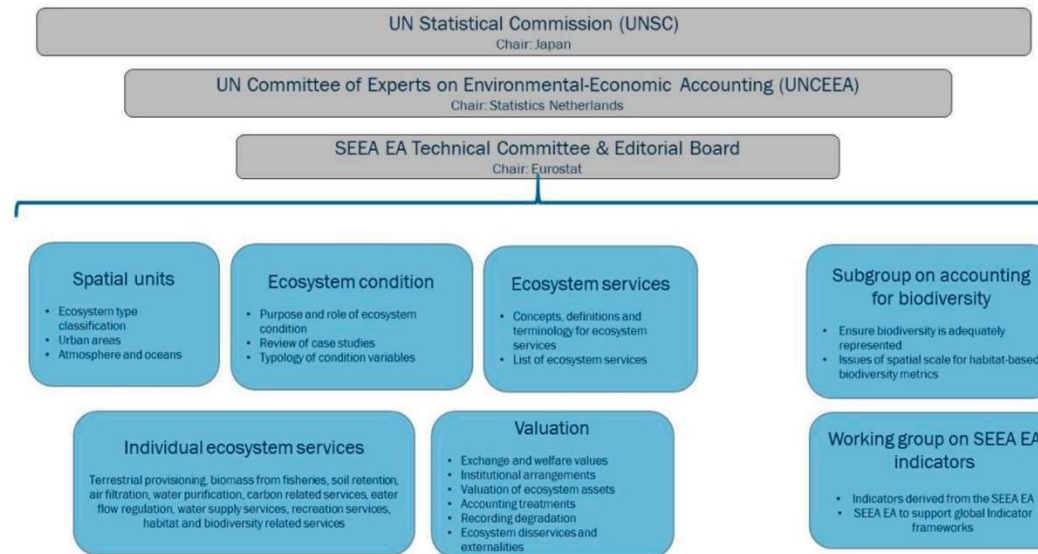


Fig. 2. Governance structure of the SEEA EA revision process (2018–2021).



<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2022.101413>



Clément Surun, PhD thesis

- Chapitre 3 – L'évaluation monétaire dans l'histoire du SEEA : hésitations entre durabilité forte et faible
- (Chapter 3 - Monetary evaluation in the history of SEEA: hesitation between strong and weak sustainability)

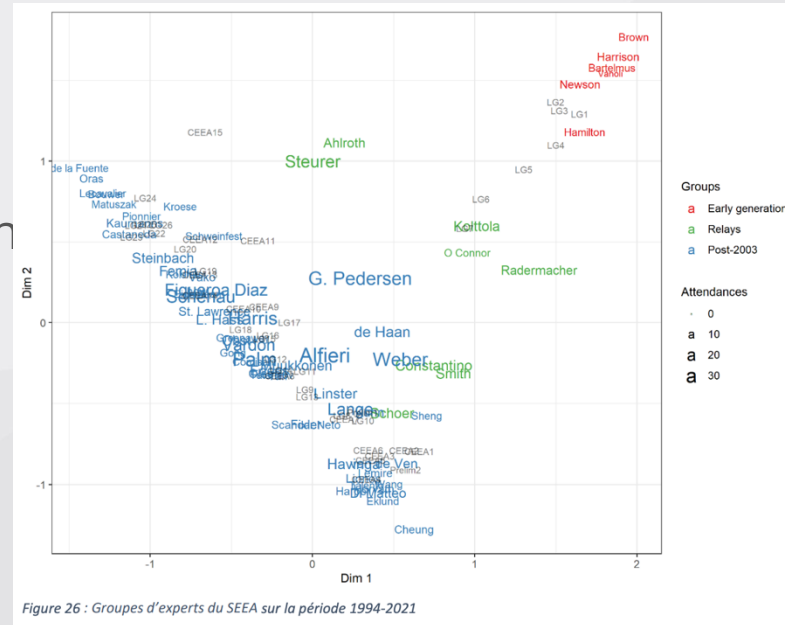
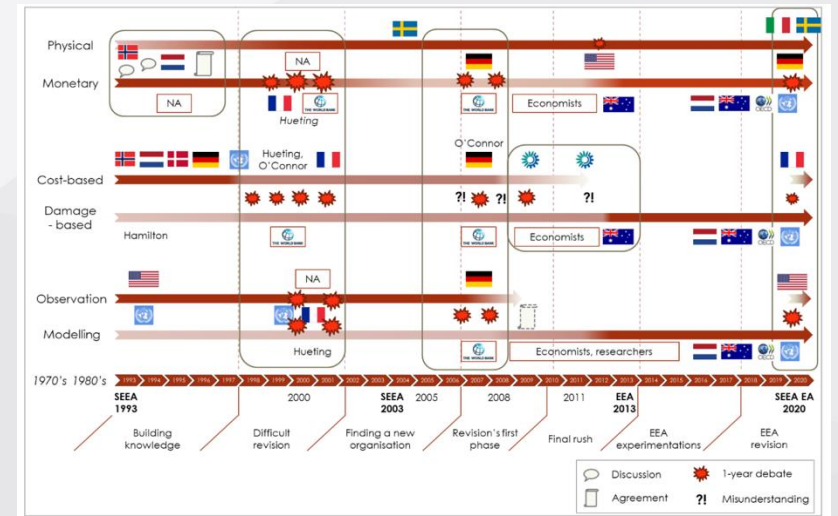


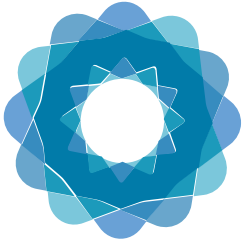
Figure 26 : Groupes d'experts du SEEA sur la période 1994-2021




L'étude détaillée de la controverse sur l'évaluation monétaire nous permet d'y voir plus clair sur le positionnement à adopter.

(The detailed study of the controversy over monetary evaluation allows us to see more clearly on the positioning to adopt.)

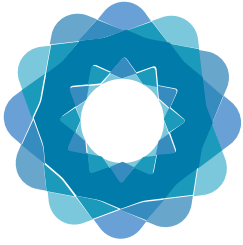
https://pastel.hal.science/tel-04135917/file/109291_SURUN_2023_archivage.pdf



An unauthorised celebration of the London Group on Environmental Accounting

 Compilation of contributions





Reflections

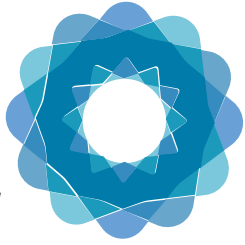
A social group

**A professional group: from “lone riders”
to a vibrant international community**

**Sometimes heated discussions (lots of
passion), but we always moved forward**

Without the LG there would be no SEEA

Ole Gravgård Pedersen
Walter Radermacher
Alessandra Alfieri
Glenn-Marie Lange
Rob Smith
Joe St Lawrance
Sjoerd Schenau
Nancy Steinbach
Simon Schürz



Personal reflections – Ole Gravgård Pedersen

"Before the meeting in London in 1994 only few statisticians were involved in environmental accounting and most often we were on our own in our offices or institutes.

With the meeting in London in 1994 and the following annual meetings in the London Group we went from being lone riders to being involved in a professional society with engaged colleagues from around the world.

*Through the **first LG-meetings' focus on "show and tell" and sharing experiences we got an increasing understanding of the possibilities** as well as the problems involved in environmental-economic accounting.*

*It is probably **impossible to overestimate the importance of the LG** for the development of the society and the profession of environmental-economic accounting.*

The London Group has always been based on hospitality and good will from countries hosting the meetings.

We have had a lot of fun, seen interesting places and met good friends through the meetings.



Personal reflections – Walter Radermacher

*"I remember the early years of the development of integrated environmental and national accounts very clearly. Consider the Brundtland Report at the end of the 1980s and the **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992**. In their final document, the 'Agenda 21', an attempt was made for the first time to combine economic, social and ecological goals."*

*The first meetings in London in 1994 and Washington DC in 1995 focussed precisely on these topics [theory and practice, valuation] and - **not surprisingly - very different cultures, quality perceptions and convictions clashed.***

*"The London Group was held in Ottawa in June 1997 and in the Abbey de Fontevraud in France in 1998. These sessions also focussed - sometimes with high blood pressure - on arguments and convictions that the various participants considered most suitable for approaching and solving the joint task. **It was not uncommon for the most heated arguments to centre on the topic of monetary valuation. The monastic atmosphere of Fontevraud, which cast a special spell over us during this time, helped to calm us down.**"*



Tokyo (Kimio Uno), Japan



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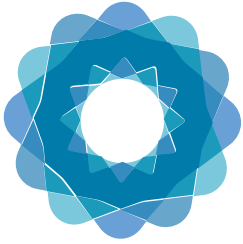
Washington 1995



Carsten Stahmer, Walther Radermacher and Ole Gravgård on tour to Mount Vernon outside Washington D.C.

Photos: Ole Gravgård Pedersen





Personal reflections – Glenn-Marie

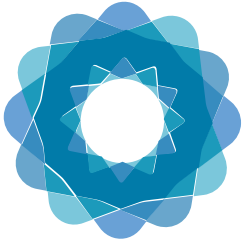
*“My first involvement with SEEA and the London Group began, in part, as a result of **Agenda 21, produced at the UN 1992 Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. Section 8.1.d (elaborated in 8.41-8.54) called for Establishing systems for integrated environmental and economic accounting.** All countries were called on to adopt IEEA as it was called then, with the recent IEEA handbook by Bartelmus, Van Tongeren and Stahmer an important methodological starting point. The role of UN DESA and the UN Statistical Commission were at the heart of this”*

*Agenda 21 was adopted in Rio by 178 countries, including the US. **Perhaps US policy makers not fully aware that they were signed on to environmental accounting, but those working on environment and development in the US viewed this as a commitment of the US government and started to push more strongly for environmental accounting.***

*“The first London Group meeting I participated in was a joint London Group-IARIW meeting in Tokyo in 1996 organized by Prof Kimio Uno of Keio University. A relatively small but dedicated group of practitioners, mostly from statistical agencies, presented their work and debated the issues. **There were very strong disagreements over a number of issues such as valuation and if/how to adjust GDP but the workshop was a lot of fun.***

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Personal reflections – Alessandra Alfieri



Alessandra in Canberra

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System of
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Stockholm 1996

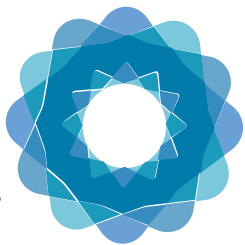


Photos: Ole Gravgård Pedersen



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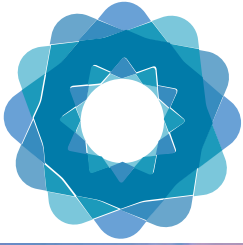
Ottawa 1997



Photos: Ole Gravgård Pedersen

**30 Year
Anniversary**

*of the London Group
on Environmental Accounting*



System of
Environmental
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Accounting

Fontevraud 1998



A beautiful setting



A lively sub-group discussion

Photos: Ole Gravgård Pedersen

30 Year
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of the London Group
on Environmental Accounting



System of
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Accounting

Canberra 1999

Photos: Ole Gravgård Pedersen





Personal reflections – Rob Smith



London group meeting 2006. From left: Kristine Erlandsen Kolshus, NO, Jean-Louis Weber, EEA, Chazhong Ge, CH, Anders Wadeskog, SE, Karl Schoer, DE, Jean-Michel Chéné, UN, Bram E. UNSD, Thomas Olsen, DK, Rocky Harris, UK, Sjoerd Schenau, NE, Yixuan Wang, CH, Joe de Beer, SA, Michael Vardon, AU, Ole Gravgård Pedersen, DK, Robert Smith, CA, Ivo Havinga, UN, Constantino Cesare, IT, Walter Radermacher, DE, Estrella Domingo, PH, Viveka Palm, SE, Jana Tafi, MO, Martin Lemire, CA, Jukka Muukkonen, FI, Glenn-Marie Lange, US, Alessandra Alfieri, UNSD, Jeremy Webb, UNSD/NZ, Ilaria DiMatteo, UNSD.

“For me, the most important meeting of the group was the one hosted by INSEE Fontevraud, France in May, 1998. I can remember sitting with a few folks over a beer one of the nights (Mark de Haan, Walter Radermacher, Jean-Louis Weber, Alessandra probably) and sketching out the framework (literally) on a napkin. (I also remember that we got busted for taking beers from the bar without paying for them - but that’s another story.) That meeting did a great deal to shape how environmental accounting has unfolded in the time since.”

New York 2006

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The Haag 2001

Photo: Ole Gravgård Pedersen





Personal reflections: Sjoerd Schenau



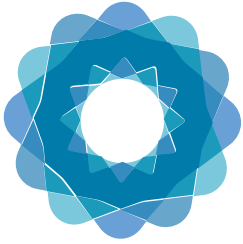
"I was first involved with the London group in November 2003 when I attended the meeting, in Rome, at the FAO headquarters. It was a strange but exciting experience. Being quite new in this area (having started working at Statistics Netherlands in 2001 and in environmental accounting at the end of 2002). I must admit that most of the time I had no clue what everybody were talking about."

"I had the privilege to be able to attend all London Group meetings from 2003 till now. This allowed me to learn a lot on the fascinating world of environmental accounting, but also to meet many wonderful people, all dedicated to bringing environmental accounting forward. Below some personal reflections on 30 years of London Group."

"Without the London Group there never would have been a SEEA. Although we can probably place the 'origin' of environmental accounting somewhere in the eighties of the previous century, predating the first meeting of the London Group (1993) within a couple of years, from the very beginning, the London Group played a key role in the development of SEEA. ."

"Thirty years and the London group is still going strong! Also in the coming years there is a lot of work to do. The London group will play an important role in the update of the SEEA CF (to be finalized in 2028). More and more countries are implementing SEEA and demand for compilation guidance and applying SEEA data for policy is increasing. Furthermore, as it is one of the few physical meetings that are still being organized, a London Group meeting provides each year an unique opportunity to have good discussions on topics in person."





Personal reflections: Carl Obst

*"For me the **London Group** has been a wonderful and welcoming community with a **great mixture of old heads, battle-hardened statisticians and new starters.***

*I've built many, many great connections to so many people both professionally and personally over the past 15 years. **Nightclubs in Stockholm, pisco sours in Santiago and beers in Ottawa** come to mind but equally the **rich and detailed debates about accounting treatments and discussions on the link between I-O tables and the first law of thermodynamics.***

*After my early, glancing, connection to SEEA in 2000 while I was at OECD and the SEEA 2003 was starting to take shape, little did I know the extent to which the LG and SEEA community would influence my life and career so richly. Thanks to all past and present London Groupers (if that's the word), **a special shout out to Michael B and Rocky H, and congratulations on 30 years.***



Wednesday, March 26, 2025

London Group on Environmental Accounting 2024 - Washington DC

A man with short brown hair, wearing a purple button-down shirt, is smiling broadly at the camera. He is holding a fan of Euro banknotes in his right hand. The background is a dimly lit room with a large mirror on the wall and a display cabinet. Another person is visible in the background, slightly out of focus.

Personal reflections: Joe St Lawrence

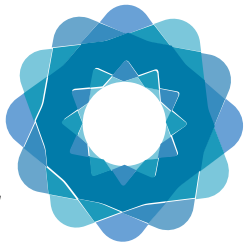
- *"I really enjoyed my time with the London Group between 2007 and 2015 (with an occasional meeting now and then since then). I met some great colleagues, made some long lasting friendships, and have enjoyed the opportunity to see some of the world. I wish the group great success in the coming years. All the best to you all."*



London Group on Environmental Accounting 2024 - Washington DC



Wednesday, March 26, 2025



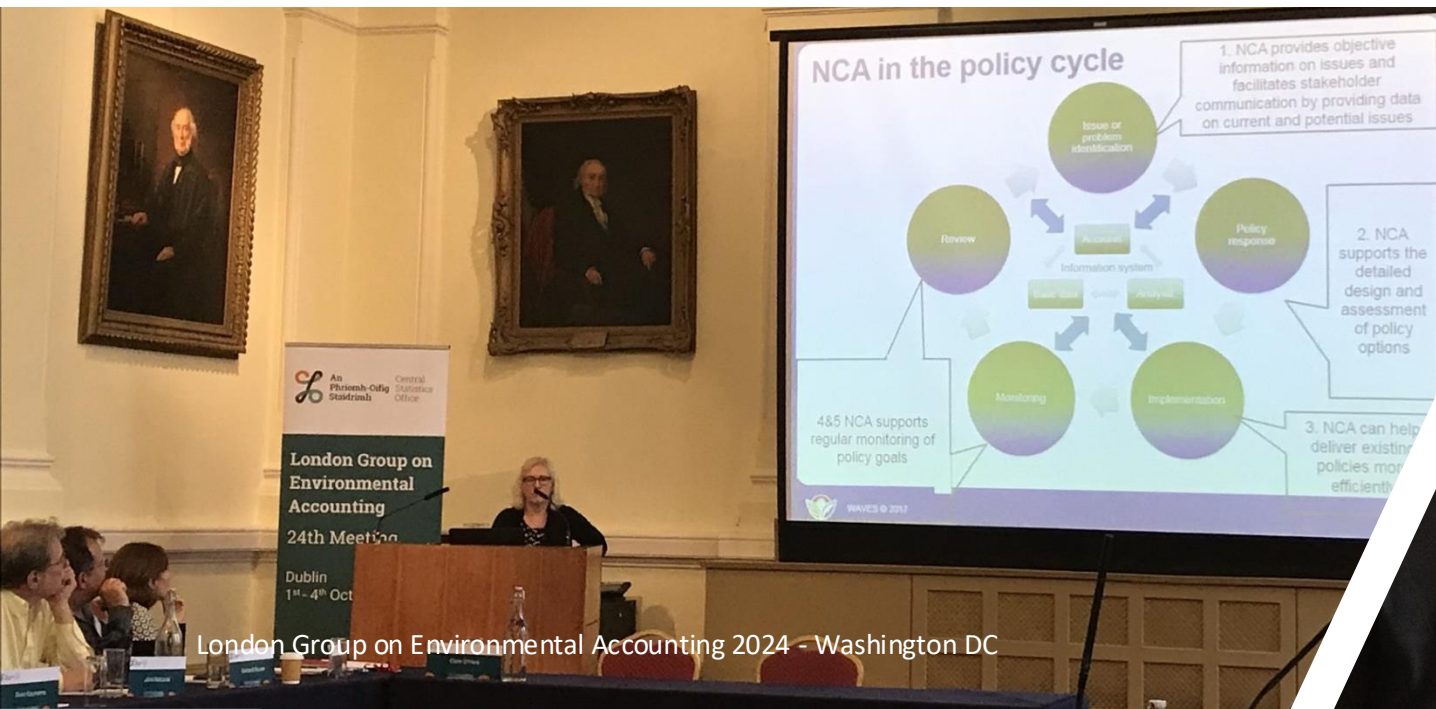
Personal reflections: Nancy Steinbach

"At my first meeting in 2007 Johannesburg I was struck by how global cooperation and discussions could also be conducted in a small restaurant in Soweto with pepper/salt/knives/forks as visualization tools 😊"

"We did not always agree, but we moved forward"

"In my current job as an analyst in a small government agency I have the possibility to use the SEEA (which I do!) and I can inform colleagues about the data. It's a long process to get people to dare to move towards new data, but each opportunity is taken! I'm also struck by how experts in other agencies are familiar with the SEEA!"

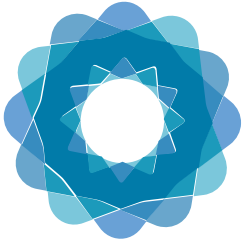
"Seeing the development of the SEEA I'm impressed at the combined knowledge and sharing of expertise that the LG has provided. It might not be seen or recognized in the whole scheme and is certainly not noted when data are published. But but without knowledge sharing, the data published and used worldwide would not provide the quality or standard needed."



London Group on Environmental Accounting 2024 - Washington DC

30 Year
Anniversary

of the London Group
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System of
Environmental
Economic
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Personal reflections: Simon Schürz





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THANK YOU

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