



SOCIAL IMPACTS IN EIA – CONFLICTS, DIALOGUE AND POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENTS

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AALBORG UNIVERSITY
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The Danish Center for Environmental Assessment



- Danish research center based at Department of Planning at Aalborg University
- Applied research and critical engagement: Sustainability, curiosity, responsibility and independence
- EIA, SEA, SIA, LCA, planning and governance – combining theory and practice
- Focus on dissemination and supporting networks
- Teaching at various planning and environmental programmes

Background



Based on:

- Larsen, Hansen, Lyhne, Aaen, Ritter and Nielsen 2015
- Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management
- EIAplus research project
- Cases of conflict in Denmark
- EIA/SEA as a “battleground”
- A sense that many conflicts were social and many assessments where environmental (physical, natural environment)
- Focus on renewable energy

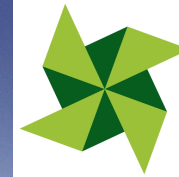


Cases explored

- Wind turbine test center
- Natural gas storage
- Radioactive waste deposit

19 EIA reports:

- Wind turbines, biogas, biomass and solar



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Included impacts

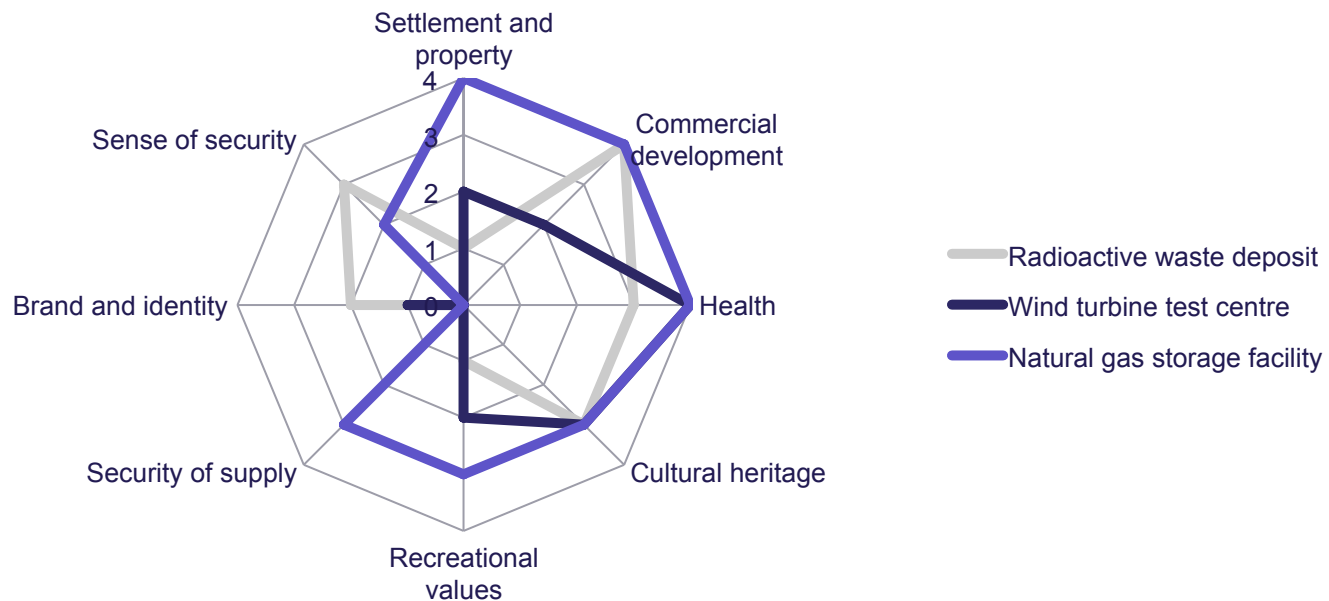
- Settlement and property
- Commercial development
- Health
- Cultural heritage
- Recreational value
- Security of supply
- Brand and identity
- Sense of security



- Many issues included
- Fairly technical, physical and related closely to environmental impacts and planning
- What's not included?: Culture, political system, fears and hopes
- Not a clear patterns of correlation between public and statement: More public focus on way of life, and less tangible effects.



Level of assessment of social impacts



- 0=not included
- 1=identified in statement
- 2=analysed in statement
- 3=assessed in statement
- 4=mitigated in assessment



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Geographical distribution



	Local	National/ international
Negative	Settlement and property (RWD, WTTC, NGSF) Commercial development (RWD, WTTC, NGSF) Cultural heritage (RWD) Recreational values (RWD, WTTC) Brand and identity (RWD, WTTC) Sense of security (RWD)	
Neutral		Health (RWD, NGSF) Cultural heritage (WTTC, NGSF) Sense of security (RWD)
Positive	Commercial development (WTTC, NGSF) Recreational values (WTTC, NGSF) Brand and identity (WTTC)	Commercial development (WTTC) Security of supply (NGSF) Health (WTTC)

- A very negative, very local focus
- Not surprising
....but clear

RWD=Radioactive waste deposit

WTTC=Wind turbine test center

NGSF=Natural gas storage facility

Barriers



Based on interviews with planners and consultants

- Lack of systematic approach to social impacts
- Focus on demands in legislation, guidance and thresholds
- Follows “template”
- Focus on technical and “countable” impacts
- Focus on a technical language and description
- Lack of competences and experience with “softer” impacts

Not enough to put it into an EIA, it should be part of a good dialogue

The conflicts



Review of written statements sent in during hearings

- Point out mistakes
- Lack of trust in authorities and proponents – and the cooperation
- The importance of a good inclusion and dialogue
- Lacking the argument for the project – they enter the process here
- Hold the authorities to their planning
- A sense of unfairness

The content of the EIA as a basis, but not the whole story...

Perspective on SIA



Narrow concept of social impacts?

- SIA definition of a social impact: *SIA therefore should address everything that is relevant to people and how they live* (Vanclay 2015)

Need for SIA in Denmark? EIA should be able to contain it!

- Minimum: Population, human health, material assets, cultural heritage
- Overload
- THE document: Background for discussion and mitigation

What does this mean for the competences, guidance etc.?



Reference: Vanclay, F. 2015. Social Impact Assessment: *Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects*.
IAIA

Ways forward? Preliminary views



Developing the content of the EIA

- The quality of the description and assessment of social impacts as a basis for discussion
- Use of local knowledge
- Argumentation for the project (the history)

Developing the process/dialogue

- Begin the dialogue early – all the “usual” guidelines
- Use planning ahead of projects
- Use of compensation
- How to secure impartiality

THANK YOU

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