

28th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Impact Assessment
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
IAIA08 Session Chair's Report

Session number and name: CS 1.3 Dealing with Uncertainties in Impact Assessment and Policy Design

Day: Tuesday **Date:** 6 May 2008 **Time:** 16:00-17:30 **# Persons attending session:** about 60

Name(s) of Session Chair(s)

Wil Thissen

Contributors

Farah Adeeb; Anne Knol; Parikshit Verna; Michael England; Wil Thissen

(a) Three current issues in application of assessment processes discussed in this session

- the omni-presence of significant uncertainties in virtually any kind of impact assessment
- Checklists/structures for identification and classification of uncertainties
- Approaches to (model-based) impact assessment under uncertainties
- Strategies/policy principles based on acceptance of uncertainties and explicit ways of acting in light of them

(b) One or more emerging trends

- To pay more attention to transparency about assumptions and uncertainties in impact assessment
- Emerging methods for identification and analysis/assessment of multiple or deep uncertainties
- Focus on deliberate policy/decision strategy development based on acceptance of uncertainties

(c) Issues relating to impact assessment effectiveness:

(i) dimensions of IA effectiveness (i.e. what are the characteristics of effective IA?)

- transparency about assumptions and uncertainties
- attention to alternatives design in light of large uncertainties

(ii) challenges/barriers to IA effectiveness

- Complexity: how to identify the limited set of key uncertainties/dilemma's in situations with multiple kinds and sources of uncertainty
- Communication of uncertainties with decision makers and lay people

(iii) how these barriers might be overcome

- improved analytic methods
- improved communication/visualization approaches

(d) Comments on the Art and Science of Impact Assessment (i.e. the relative importance and interplay between science and values/politics/subjectivity in impact assessment)

- Need both, as they are complementary
- Need both analytic depth as well as expert judgment
- IA professionals need to be continuously aware of the need for both science and values, and of the need to adapt the mix to the evolving situation