



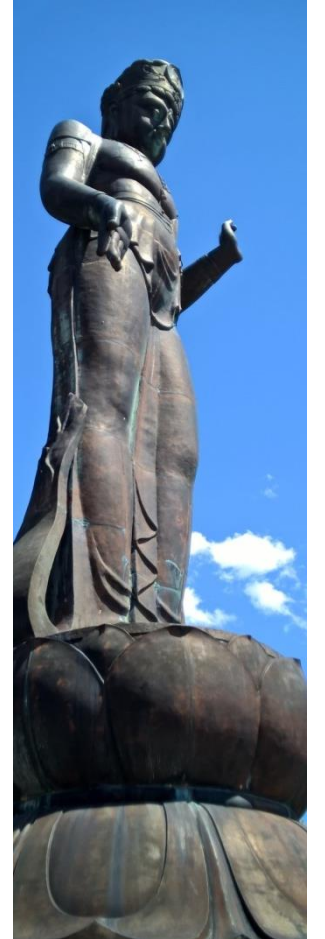
SOCIAL LEARNING IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN AND FINNISH EIA PRACTICES

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Jenni Neste, University of Oulu / Pöyry, Finland & Nick Simmons, University of Cape Town, South Africa

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Literature review

Case study: Wind farm EIAs

- aim was to establish viable social learning criteria to apply an analysis of EIA reports in the Finnish and the South African regimes
- reviewed the inclusion of social learning in domestic environmental policy and EIA regulatory provisions
- researched social learning in EIA both in Finnish and South African context
- the research conducted 75 EIA reports for recent onshore wind energy proposals in both countries from 2012 to 2015

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Need for social learning

- How social learning could be presented in the EIA reports?
- What kinds of benefits it would offer to participatory environmental decision making?



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Who is learning?

1. The practice (Cashmore et al., 2004; Bond et al., 2010; Bond et al., 2013)
2. The practitioner (Scholz et al., 2006; Bell and Morse, 2008; Retief et al., 2008; Bond et al., 2010; Bond et al., 2013)
3. The public (Blatner et al., 2000; Saarikoski, 2000; Sinclair and Diduck, 2000; Fitzpatrick and Sinclair, 2002; Wiklund, 2005; Crocker, 2007; Sims and Sinclair, 2008; Sinclair et al., 2008; Sipos et al., 2008; Bond et al., 2009; Sinclair et al., 2011; Bond et al., 2013; Partidario and Sheate, 2012)
4. The proponent/developer (Bond et al., 2013)
5. The consent regulator (Bond et al., 2010)

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Social learning in Finnish EIA legislation and literature



- Social learning or learning as a term is not mentioned in the EIA legislation and it is not mentioned as one of the Finnish EIA participatory objectives.
- EIA can be seen as a communication platform where various valuations are presented.
- EIA is most of all a learning process. The knowledge of the reviewers largely affects the quality and the adequacy of the EIA report.

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Social learning in South African EIA legislation and literature



- The term social learning is not explicitly encoded in South African environmental law.
- Public participation requirements of the NEMA provides that “all people must have the opportunity to develop the understanding, skills and capacity necessary for achieving equitable and effective participation...”
- More participatory decision making is needed to include aspects of social learning to the EIA.

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Public meetings and small group meetings

- Public meetings seems to be the most common participatory action in EIA procedures
- Focus groups or small-group meetings were not comprehensively analysed or reported in EIAs
 - In Finland these meetings were mainly organised for permanent residents, hunters or for the representatives of the reindeer husbandry
 - In South Africa these meetings were mainly organised for permanent residents to tell about the project and discuss of the possible impacts

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Site visits and repeated meetings

- Site visits were more referred as informal occasions where are possibilities to exchange the knowledge of the project area
- Repeated meetings were often mentioned to be connected with the expert support

“Should a wind farm be constructed, its EIA should include an assessment of the impacts on reindeer husbandry, as some of the impacts are impossible to predict. Also these impacts should be compensated or reimbursed when encountered, and alleviated when possible. A co-operative body, which meets annually or when necessary, should be formed for these cases. “

Wind farm EIA of the fell Ailanka (Finland)

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Public knowledge, values and interests



- Knowledge was usually related to the expert analyses, not to the local knowledge of the residents etc.
- If public opinions or values are taken account when assessing the sensitivity of the receptor, there has to be clarification of how these values are determined.

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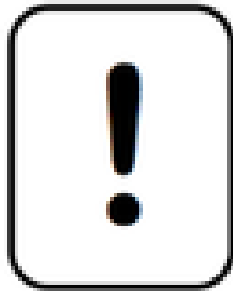
Educational aspects



- There were few mentions in the chosen wind farm EIAs of the educational aspects
- Chosen EIA cases highlight very limited evidence for active social learning or education
- Peoples' knowledge is fundamental in avoiding errors during the assessment and interpretation of the EIA results -> education needed!

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Avoiding errors and misunderstanding

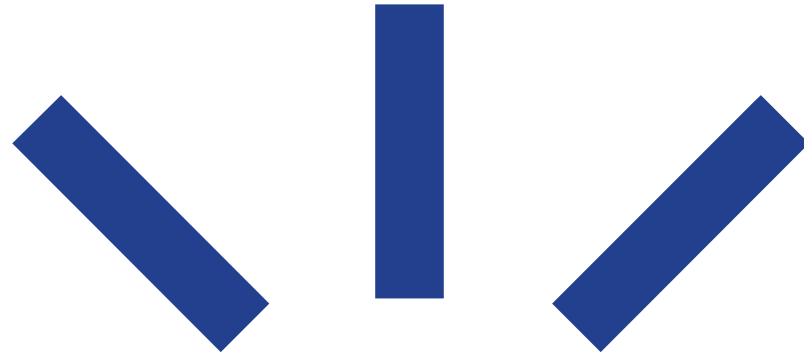


Understanding

- Idea of social learning is to guarantee that all different kinds of views are involved in the process
- Learning process eliminates the possibility of misunderstanding and e.g. delays of the project planning

12 Conclusions

- The EIA participation should be organized in a way that improves the conditions of social learning to all actors and stakeholders.
- Many countries have public involvement requirement but they may be limited to one or more formal public hearings.
- Social learning concept and practises are absent from the EIA (reporting). These could be improved with deeper communication process and transparent and systematic reporting.
- We also suggest for policy and administrators to address the role of social learning in EIA and EIA reporting.



Thank You! Arigatō! Kiitos!

Jenni Neste

PhD Student, University of Oulu / Environmental Expert, Pöyry Finland Oy
jenni.neste@poyry.com