
Evaluating the effectiveness of EIA: Learning from research on its substantive outcomes

Mat Cashmore (M.Cashmore@uea.ac.uk)
InteREAM, School of Environmental Sciences
University of East Anglia, UK

The Interminable Issue of Effectiveness

- Effectiveness is an overarching theme of the EIA literature.
- But a central paradox of EIA research is that effectiveness has only been partially addressed.
- Defining effectiveness:
 - Substantive criterion: does it achieve its purposes?
 - Procedural criterion: is it undertaken according to established expectations?

Study	Contribution to the consent decision	Contribution to project design
Kobus and Lee, 1993	0% 'very important'; 55% 'important'; no further data.	47% 'minor changes'; 11% 'major changes'; no further data.
Sadler, 1996	23% 'very influential'; 46% 'moderately influential'; 25% 'marginally influential'; 2% 'no influence'.	<u>Redesign of proposals:</u> 14% 'very influential'; 42% 'moderately influential'; 32% 'marginally influential'; 8% 'no influence'. <u>Siting of proposals:</u> 12% 'very influential'; 36% 'moderately influential'; 33% 'marginally influential'; 15% 'no influence'.
ten Heuvelhof and Nauta, 1997	<u>Direct impact:</u> 79% 'clear impact' (52% impact on development design and 68% impact on opinions); 21% no impact. <u>Indirect impact:</u> 65% indirect impact; 35% no indirect impact. <u>Net beneficial impact:</u> 14% 'large impact' 26% 'reasonable impact'; 30% 'small impact'; 30% 'no impact'.	
Wood and Jones, 1997	35% 'substantial' or 'considerable influence'; 26% 'some' or 'moderate influence'; 29% 'marginal influence'; 5% 'no influence'; 5% 'no comment'.	21% of projects modified before or after EIS published; 31% modified solely prior to EIS publication; 16% modified solely after EIS submission; 32% not modified.
Gwilliam, 2002	28% 'large influence'; 46% 'medium influence'; 24% (2%) 'small influence'; 2% (2%) 'no influence'.	Not assessed.

Decision-Orientated EIA

- EIA being used as a passive tool for provision of additional information.
- Needs of decision makers (e.g. information types and timing) have received minimal attention.
- EIA process, procedures and methods based on a largely uncritical application of one decision theory.
- Research literature dominated by “environmental assessment practitioners communicating amongst themselves” (Nitz & Brown, 2001).

EIA-Orientated Decisions

- Limited consideration given to institutional requirements when implementing legislative provisions for EIA.
- Few decision makers read entire EIS:
 - Shorter more concise EISs or improved resource allocation for decision makers?
- Image management: EIA as a positive, dynamic and creative tool for environmental management.