

Research Director

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YTK's current projects on the topic:

- **Social impact assessment in urban planning**
(Environmental Cluster, 2003-04)
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- **"Ihminen ja ympäristö: sosiaalisten vaikutusten arvioinnin teoriaa ja käytäntöjä"**
(edited by Rauno Sairinen & Johanna Kohl)
- **The needs of different population groups in their living environment** (YM, 2002) Maarit.Wiik@sitofin.fi

Background

- General needs to strengthen the principles of sustainability in land use management.
- Needs of participatory planning.
- In Finland the new Land Use and Building Act (2000) insists impact assessment of land use plans. This includes ecological, social and cultural dimensions.
- Context of Nordic welfare state

What is social impact assessment ?

DEFINITION :

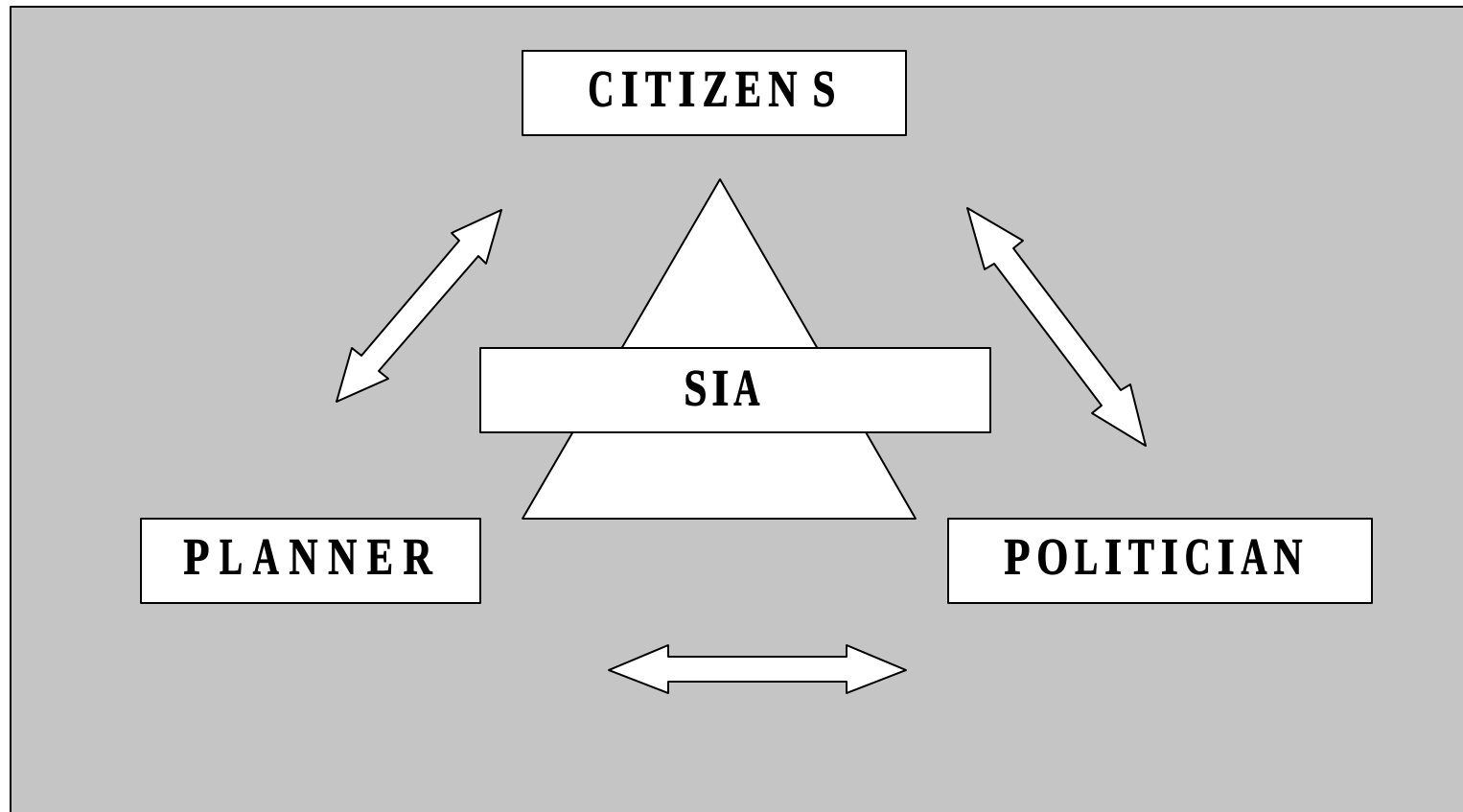
- Social impact assessment (SIA) includes the processes of analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions.

(International Association for Impact Assessment)

Principles and aims of the SIA

- Relative to environmental impact assessment (E IA).
- Is done in advance during the planning phase in order to offer better knowledge-base for the decision-making processes.
- Tool for developing alternatives and determining the full range of consequences for each alternative.
- Tool for developing mitigation, adaptation or compensation measures for the harmful social impacts.
- **Social impacts are not the social goals of the plan.**

Role of SIA in urban planning



Social dimensions in different scales of planning

■ **Regional plan**

- ❑ Welfare of growth areas vs. regional equity
- ❑ Identification of vulnerable groups
- ❑ Regional service structures
- ❑ Networks of public transportation
- ❑ Division of labour between different areas
- ❑ Siting of hazardous or polluting activities
- ❑ Differentiation of regional identities
- ❑ Networks of recreation areas
- ❑ Landscape and nature values

■ General plan

- ❑ Socio-demographic changes (age and family structures)
- ❑ Identification of vulnerable groups
- ❑ Socio-economic structures of different housing areas (possibilities of mixing, segregation or gentrification)
- ❑ Area-specific services (public, private, basic)
- ❑ Routes of public transportation
- ❑ Possibilities for walking distances
- ❑ Quality of living environments
- ❑ Possibilities for leisure and recreation
- ❑ Area-specific environmental health risks
- ❑ Experienced place identity

■ Detail plan

- ❑ Social balance in neighbourhood level
- ❑ Availability and quality of local services
- ❑ Integration of traffic routes and local services
- ❑ Accessibility in traffic and housing
- ❑ Neighbourhood satisfaction and security
- ❑ Potentials for privacy and social-interaction
- ❑ Important places (history, esthetics, nature, landscape, own activities)

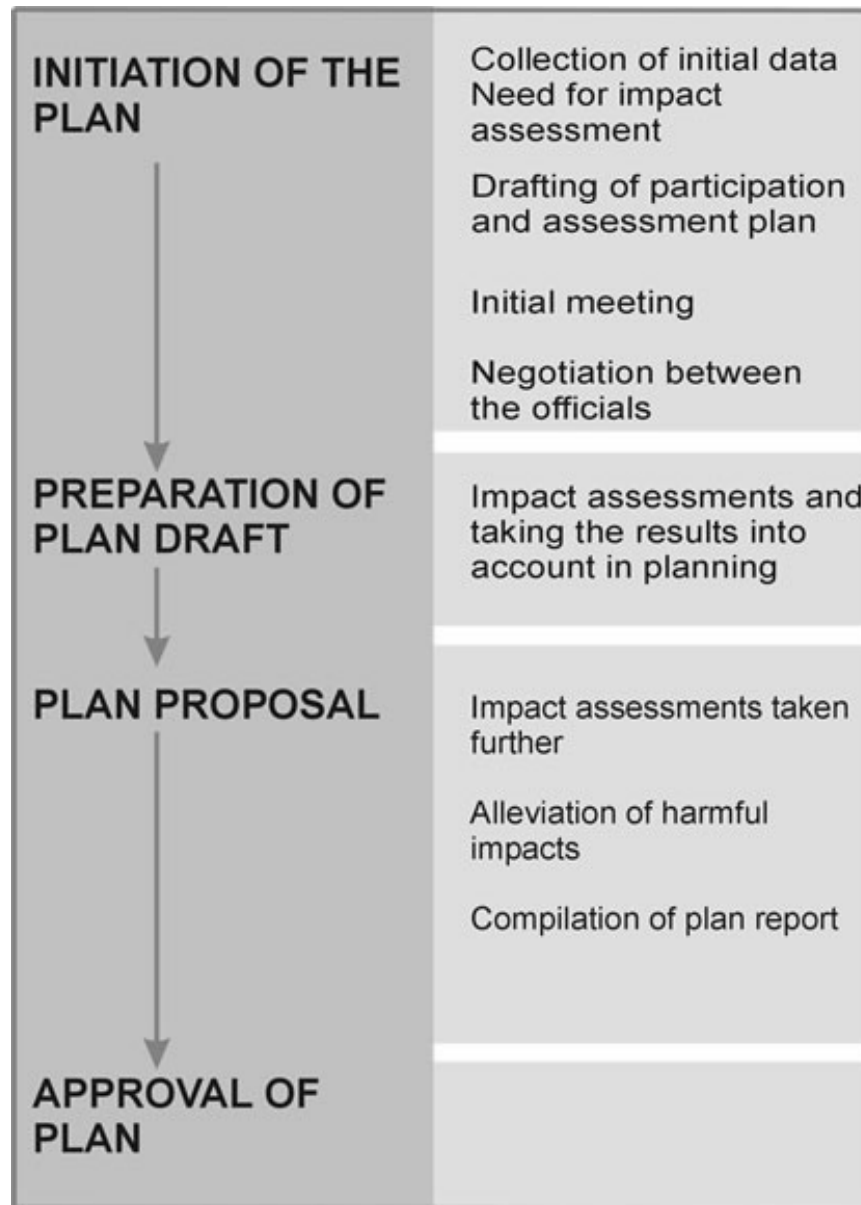
Interaction of biophysical and social impacts

- **Meanings:** What are the meanings of land-use or environmental changes for people's living, working, welfare, leisure time etc.
- **Integration:** How the information about the environment is produced, interpreted and linked to planning, to welfare and to decision-making systems?
- **Reflexivity:** People do not simply experience social changes, they react to them and are able to anticipate them.
- **Monitoring of environmental and societal changes:** What kinds of impacts are monitored for important signals? Needs sectoral co-operation.

Case of Jyväskylä city

Main principles for organising SIA in urban planning:

- SIA has to be natural part of the planning process and practices of social- and healthcenter.
- A special assessing form helps the assessment.
- There has to be basic data available on social conditions of the planning area.
- The wideness of the SIA and the need for scoping is defined separately in each plan.
- The possibilities and risks concerning the implementation of the plan have to be presented already during the preparations.



Benefits of SIA for planning organizations

- Systematic analysis of 'participation data'
- Better understanding on social conditions and impacts of the plan and the links between social and biophysical worlds.

“SIA has become very important tool for me. All the networking and co-operation in connection to it is essential part of the planning process, and it has provided better argumentation and deeper understanding.” (Urban planner in Jyväskylä)

- Better management of urban development in changing conditions.

“Nowadays we are working more inside the already built areas and these conditions form the starting point for land-use planning. ... In earlier times, there were targets and instruments in planning. Then the future became a moving target. Now we have projects and impacts. The matter which is beneficial or worth of aspiring for someone is not at all so good for another. One's target can be a problem for another.”

Benefits of SIA for planning organizations

- Tool for sectoral cooperation

“When thinking about these matters (social impacts of planning), the importance of interprofessional co-operation become stressed; and it is important that different policy actors are presenting their views by emphasizing their own professional competence. For my own work, it has been very nice to notice how much new information one has got about the area.”

- Tool for developing the quality of environment.
- Tool for conflict management.
- **Improved understanding on the contents of social sustainability.**

Tool for community empowerment

- Builds on local knowledge and utilises participatory processes.
- Raises consciousness and the level of understanding of the community and puts the residents in a better position to understand the broader implication of the proposed action.
- Promotes community development and empowerment.
- Develops social capital: social networks and trust.