SESSION 2

THINKING ABOUT SOCIAL IMPACTS

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WHAT MAKES A THING BIG?

- It is threatening or disturbing

- It worries a lot of people

- Something has to be done about it

SO

- Experts get paid to assess its impact

IMPACTS AND BENEFITS

- Practice of 'IMPACT ASSESSMENT ' born from concern about BIG THINGS causing damage to the NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- All ENVIRONMENTAL impacts are also SOCIAL impacts if people worry about them, but some social impacts may NOT count as environmental impacts

- 'IMPACTS' normally thought to be BAD THINGS (or COSTS) which detract from ECONOMIC (and maybe social or even environmental) BENEFITS

BUT THERE ARE LOTS
OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS

DISCUSSION TOPIC 1

Should we now assume that all impacts are bad things and focus attention on the so-called 'trade-offs' between impacts and benefits, as happens in Canada when people negotiate 'impact-benefit agreements'?

NOW LET'S TALK PARADIGMS

No, they are not horrible monsters, they are just different types of social impact study

13 IMPACT STUDY PARADIGMS

1. **Environmental Planning**
2. **Poverty Alleviation**
3. **Corporate Responsibility**

4. New Technology
5. Public Policy
6. Public Health
7. Climate Change
8. Nasty Accident

9. Gender Relations
10. Involuntary Resettlement
11. Indigenous Peoples
12. Protected Areas
13. Human Rights

HOW DO PARADIGMS DIFFER?

- WHAT sort of thing is having an impact?
- WHO or WHAT is affected?
- WHAT TYPE of impacts are studied?
- HOW are they studied?
- WHO commissions the study?
- WHY is the study undertaken?
- WHEN is the study undertaken?

PARADIGM	BIG THING	IMPACTED
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING	Planned disturbance	Social environment
POVERTY ALLEVIATION	Aid/welfare projects	Human well-being
CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY	Social pressures	Business practices
PUBLIC HEALTH	[Anything]	Public health
GENDER RELATIONS	[Anything]	Gender relations
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES	[Anything]	Indigenous peoples
HUMAN RIGHTS	[Anything]	Human rights
NEW TECHNOLOGY	New technology	[Society/people]
PUBLIC POLICY	Public policy	[Society/people]
CLIMATE CHANGE	Climate change	[Society/people]
NASTY ACCIDENT	Nasty accidents	[Society/people]
INVOLUNTARY RESETTLEMENT	Involuntary resettlement	[Society/people]
PROTECTED AREAS	Protected areas	[Society/people]

US NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT 1969

"NEPA was created to ensure **Federal agencies** consider the **environmental impacts** of their actions and decisions. NEPA requires all Federal agencies to consider the values of environmental preservation for all significant actions and prescribes procedural measures to ensure that those values are in fact fully respected. Federal agencies are required to systematically assess the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and consider alternative ways of accomplishing their missions in ways which are less damaging to the environment. **Multi-disciplinary identification and analysis of impacts is also required**."

ORDER OF STUDIES UNDER NEPA

- Initial environmental assessment of development proposal to determine if there will be significant impacts on the bio-physical environment

- IF YES, then full environmental (and social) impact statement is required and social impact assessment process is triggered

- IF NO, then no social impact study is undertaken (the thing is not big enough)

COMMON FEATURES OF PARADIGM

- Studies undertaken in advance to guide decision of a government regulator under environmental planning laws

- Social impact studies secondary or subservient to environmental impact studies

- Social impacts squeezed in trade-off between economic benefits and environmental costs of development

- Distinction between impact assessment (a process) and impact statements (reports and recommendations)

- Distinction between technical (top-down) and political (bottom-up) approaches to assessment

GLOBAL SPREAD OF PARADIGM

- Most countries now have environmental planning laws that include some requirement for social impact assessment of major development projects

- World Bank and other members of the donor community have been influential in spreading environmental planning paradigm to developing countries

- But there are some variations in policy and practice between different countries (whether rich or poor)…

INTERNATIONAL VARIATIONS

- Location of government decision making power in federal or decentralised systems (e.g. case of Australia)

- Whether studies are commissioned and funded by government regulator or corporate developer

- Amount of time and money spent on impact assessment process

- How social (or socio-economic) impact studies are related to environmental impact studies

CASE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

- *Environmental Planning Act 1978* administered by national Dept of Environment & Conservation

- Dept of Minerals & Energy still responsible for 'socio-economic impact studies' of mining projects until 1989

- New *Environment Act 2000* not effective until 2004 (needed regulations and guidelines)

- Draft SIA guideline produced 1998 (never finalised)

- NGOs still accuse DEC of corruption in grant of development approvals (common phenomenon)

PNG ENVIRONMENT ACT PROCESS

- Project proponent advises DEC of development plans

- DEC advises proponent of need for impact assessment

- Proponent submits Environmental Inception Report

- DEC comments on impact issues identified in EIR

- Proponent submits Environmental Impact Statement

- EIS subject to departmental and public review

- EIS referred to Environment Council for advice to Minister

- Minister grants Environment Permit with conditions

DISCUSSION TOPIC 2

How do Pacific island countries differ from each other in their application of the Environmental Planning Paradigm to studies of the social impact of big development projects, including major resource projects?

DISCUSSION TOPIC 3

Which of the other twelve paradigms, aside from the Environmental Planning Paradigm, might be relevant to an assessment of the social impact of major resource projects?

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