

How good is good? Searching for *quality* in impact assessment

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Searching for *quality* in impact assessment

What is quality?

What is impact assessment?

How can we assure quality in impact assessment?

Reviewing impact assessment reports



Bond A, Retief F, Cave B, et al. A contribution to the conceptualisation of quality in impact assessment. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* 2018; **68**: 49-58. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2017.10.006>



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Conceptualising *quality* in impact assessment

- The term *quality* is applied to different aspects of any given field of practice.
- For example, in the business literature, *quality* can be framed in terms of quality management, product quality and business performance.

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Quality is socially constructed

- The *quality* of a given product or service is rarely static.
- It is a dynamic value which is debated and agreed upon amongst different parties.
- It is hard-won and easily lost.
- Those in charge of delivering *quality* construct their own understandings of how it should be achieved and whether it is achieved.

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Impact Assessment (IA) is ...

... applied at all levels of decision making and across many sectors and includes

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA);
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA);
- Social Impact Assessment (SIA);
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA);
- Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA)
- ... etc



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Plans and projects and environmental assessment



Silvertown Tunnel Project

- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Health Impact Assessment



London Plan

- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Includes a policy for HIA



Greenwich Local Plan

- Strategic Environmental Assessment



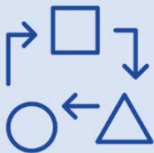
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Impact Assessment has a **dual** nature



A technical **tool** for analysing the consequences of

- planned interventions (policy, plan, programme, project), providing information to stakeholders and decision makers; or
- unplanned events, such as natural disasters, war and conflicts.



A legal and institutional **procedure** linked to the decision-making process of a planned intervention.

What is impact assessment? International Association for Impact Assessment (2010) <http://bit.ly/XHuar6>.



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The process and the outcomes of IA are concerned with



scientific observation and analysis,



principles of design,



the application of regulations and law, and



the interpretation of local and contextual rights and understandings.

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Quality in impact assessment ...

- We held sessions at three IAIA conferences ...
- Article based on conference observations, review of literature on quality and on impact assessment
- Peer review



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Quality dimensions in impact assessment (i-iv)





Efficiency		spend the least amount (time/resources) possible without jeopardising the substantive effectiveness of the process
Optimacy		adopting the best procedures
Conformance		legal compliance and adherence to Terms of Reference set during the process
Legitimacy		consent from the responsible authority and societal approval (Social Licence to Operate)

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Quality dimensions in impact assessment (v-viii)

Equity		fairness and justice - requires dialogue with affected parties
Capacity maintenance		training and accreditation - embedding quality within the mindset of those conducting the assessment
Transformative capacity		transforming individual, professional and organisational norms and practices in support of sustainable development
Quality management		the internal management of quality (as opposed to conformance which is external)

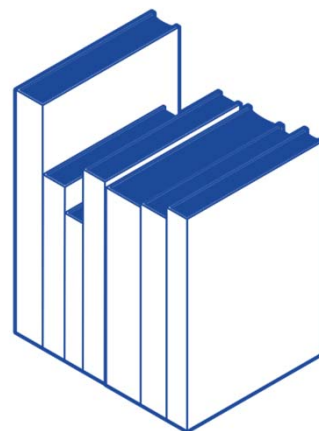
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Reviewing an impact assessment report

- The report is a key output so it should be carefully scrutinised.
- This will not capture all aspects of quality ... but it is a good start.



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When is a report reviewed?



- Quality control stage *internal*
- Consultation stage *external*
- Decision on acceptability *external*



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Research into quality of Environmental Impact Assessment reports

Study	Sample size	% satisfactory
Wood & Jones 1991	24	37
Coles & Tarling 1991	15	65
Smith 1990	25	20
King & Wathern 1991	22	45
Jones 1991	16 (UK) 9 (Dutch)	19 100
Barker & Wood 1999 (91/92)	12	58
Barker & Wood 1999 (94-96)	12	66



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Finished ...

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