

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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Practical Solutions to Recurrent Problems and Contemporary Challenges

SECOND EDITION

David P. Lawrence

Lawrence Environmental

WILEY

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To Barbara

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Preface

Impact assessment (IA), as a field of theory and practice, has changed substantially since 2003 when the first edition of this book was published. Numerous changes have been made to regulatory requirements and guidelines, both within and across jurisdictions. The conceptual foundation of IA, as represented by IA literature and by conference and symposium proceedings, has greatly evolved, especially in terms of good practice guidance and insights. IA also has undergone something of a reorientation during this period, with a greater emphasis, for example, on strategic environmental assessment, sustainability assessment, human health impact assessment, and impact assessment from an inter-jurisdictional, international and global perspective. This reorientation has resulted in a title change (impact assessment rather than environmental impact assessment) for this book and the integration of the perspectives and practices of various IA types (sustainability assessment, strategic environmental assessment, project-level environmental impact assessment, ecological impact assessment, social impact assessment, health impact assessment) into each chapter.

Many issues and challenges have arisen during this period—issues and challenges that have been addressed, to varying degrees and often from conflicting perspectives. Notwithstanding these advances, IA remains a field whose relevance and legitimacy continues to be challenged from a variety of quarters. Within this context, the recurrent problems identified in the first edition of the book are still present and the solutions offered still remain largely valid. The challenge for this new edition then has been to retain and update those still relevant elements of the original book while, at the same time, reflecting the new reality of IA as it has become and is becoming. Changes to pertinent IA requirements and guidelines have been incorporated into the regulatory level analysis. Insights from relevant IA literature have been integrated into the applied level analysis. A new set of practice-based stories, with a greater orientation toward strategic level decision making (i.e., policies, plans, and programs), has been included. A series of contemporary challenges are addressed. They include good practice SEA (Chapter 2), good practices for influencing decision making (Chapter 3), follow-up good practices (Chapter 4), siting “locally unwanted land uses” (Chapter 5), horizontal integration (Chapter 6), cumulative effects assessment good practices (Chapter 7), multijurisdictional IA (Chapter 8), capacity building good practices (Chapter 9), significance determination good practices (Chapter 10), climate change IA good practices (Chapter 11), and IA context adjustments good practices (Chapter 12).

The continuing challenge of the influence of IA on decision making has been addressed in a separate chapter. The remaining part of the book is divided into the same chapters as the first edition. However, significant changes have been made to each chapter. Substantially more good practice guidance has been added. A range of major, often problematic, issues and contemporary challenges are explored. A host of additional concepts and frameworks are presented. Collectively, it is hoped that these refinements, additions, and modifications, together with the retained portions of the book, will represent a worthwhile contribution to the resources available to IA practitioners and to other IA process stakeholders.

The analyses and solutions offered in this book are far from definitive. Hopefully, they are practical. I believe that sufficient knowledge and experience now exist regarding the recurrent problems and contemporary challenges that major pitfalls can be identified and possible improvements suggested. I am not sufficiently naive to suggest that we are on the brink of delineating that elusive core body of common knowledge that is supposed to characterize “mature” fields. I have serious doubts as to whether such a quest is even desirable. I also appreciate that there are immense impediments to significant improvements to IA practice, many of which lie beyond the control or influence of IA practitioners. But I still believe that sufficient operating room remains within which IA practice enhancements are possible. I also maintain that the IA process is at the core of many such improvements. Hopefully, this book will contribute to such efforts.

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