Baffled systems or culturally competent impact assessment?
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To colonise

To subjugate a country or establish control over foreign territories or peoples for the purposes of settlement
Colonised impact assessment

To subjugate a country set up dominant institutions that establish control over foreign territories complex knowledge systems or peoples’ worldviews for the purposes of settlement impact assessment
Many projects disturb land to which First Nations people retain relationships and stewardship

“For Aboriginal people, a key purpose of SIA is to help end their marginalisation from decision-making about development on their ancestral lands” (O’Faircheallaigh 2009)

Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is a starting point
Why it matters

Aashukan Declaration 2017

“Indigenous People’s rights are the foundation upon which all discussions must be initiated. Following international best practice, this includes territorial Rights, the Right to self-determination and the Indigenous Right to say YES or No.”

“We may support development, but not at any price!”

“We welcome Impact Assessment, but not of any kind!”
Self-determination

- First Nations people have agency
- Shared decision-making draws on cultural authority and knowledge
- First Nations control or co-manage impact assessment systems (not just studies)
Hierarchy of empowerment

EMPOWERED DECISION-MAKING

First Nations regulatory systems or co-management: First Nations agencies control the planning, process and regulatory decisions for projects on their land.

First Nations ownership or equity: Shared or full control over project planning, access to benefits.

Holistic, harmonised assessment: Equal status of scientific and Indigenous knowledge and integrated studies.

Indigenous led: First Nations control of research principles, objectives and process.

Dedicated cultural reports but in a silo: Reports on cultural impacts as appendices, with little obligation to consider them.

Tokenistic inclusion in biophysically dominant systems: Minimalistic consultation after key decisions made, narrow scope of issues considered.

DISEMPOWERED DECISION-MAKING

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Key components

A culturally competent system

**A mandate:** To consider broader values and impacts

**Governance structures:** To provide real influence over planning, process and decisions

**Screening out:** Early power to say no

**Communities benefit:** Based on strategic resource planning and community aspirations

**Intercultural capacity:** Systems have the skills, knowledge and aptitude to incorporate First Nations’ holistic knowledge systems and worldviews

**Intercultural spaces:** Individuals have the capacity to work in the intercultural spaces where impacts occur and co-production of knowledge evolves
Baffled systems

Barriers or cultural deficits

- **Cultural capture**: Biophysical impact assessment systems that privilege quantitative, Western science over insightful, community-driven social and cultural impact assessment
- **Organisational**: the degree to which leadership and an agency’s workforce reflect the affected population
- **Institutional**: including diversity
- **Structural**: bureaucratic processes and communication
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonised</th>
<th>Empowered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silos</td>
<td>Holistic, seamless</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose is approval, outcome is a document</td>
<td>Outcomes are community wellbeing, shared benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western science, rational</td>
<td>Shared knowledge systems</td>
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<td>Knowledge is appropriated</td>
<td>Knowledge is shared</td>
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<td>Power is with the developer</td>
<td>Power is with the community</td>
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<td>Peripheral to decisions</td>
<td>Strong influence on decisions</td>
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<td>Bureaucratic</td>
<td>Grounded in cultural authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tokenistic consultation</td>
<td>First Nations control, agency</td>
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THANK YOU

Guideline on Social Impact Assessment:

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Let’s continue the conversation!
Post questions and comments in the IAIA24 app.

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