Visual communication in EIA: stakeholders' perspectives

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Centro de Investigação em Sociologia Económica e das Organizações

CiTUA Territory, Urbanism and Architecture

Centre for People, Place & Planet
Strategic Research Centre
Australia ECU Edith Cowan University

CSG Investigação em Ciências Sociais & Gestão

ISEG U Lisboa

IST Técnico Lisboa

WRG
Water Research Group
Unit for Environmental Sciences and Management
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
North-West University, Potchefstroom

Inclusive Public Participation & Visual Literacy

Ana Roque de Oliveira

Maria Partidário

CEG · IST
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS DE GESTÃO DO INSTITUTO SUPERIOR TÉCNICO
TÉCNICO LISBOA

“[Image] is the worthiest, most striking translation of thought ”

Frédéric Mistral (1830 – 1914)

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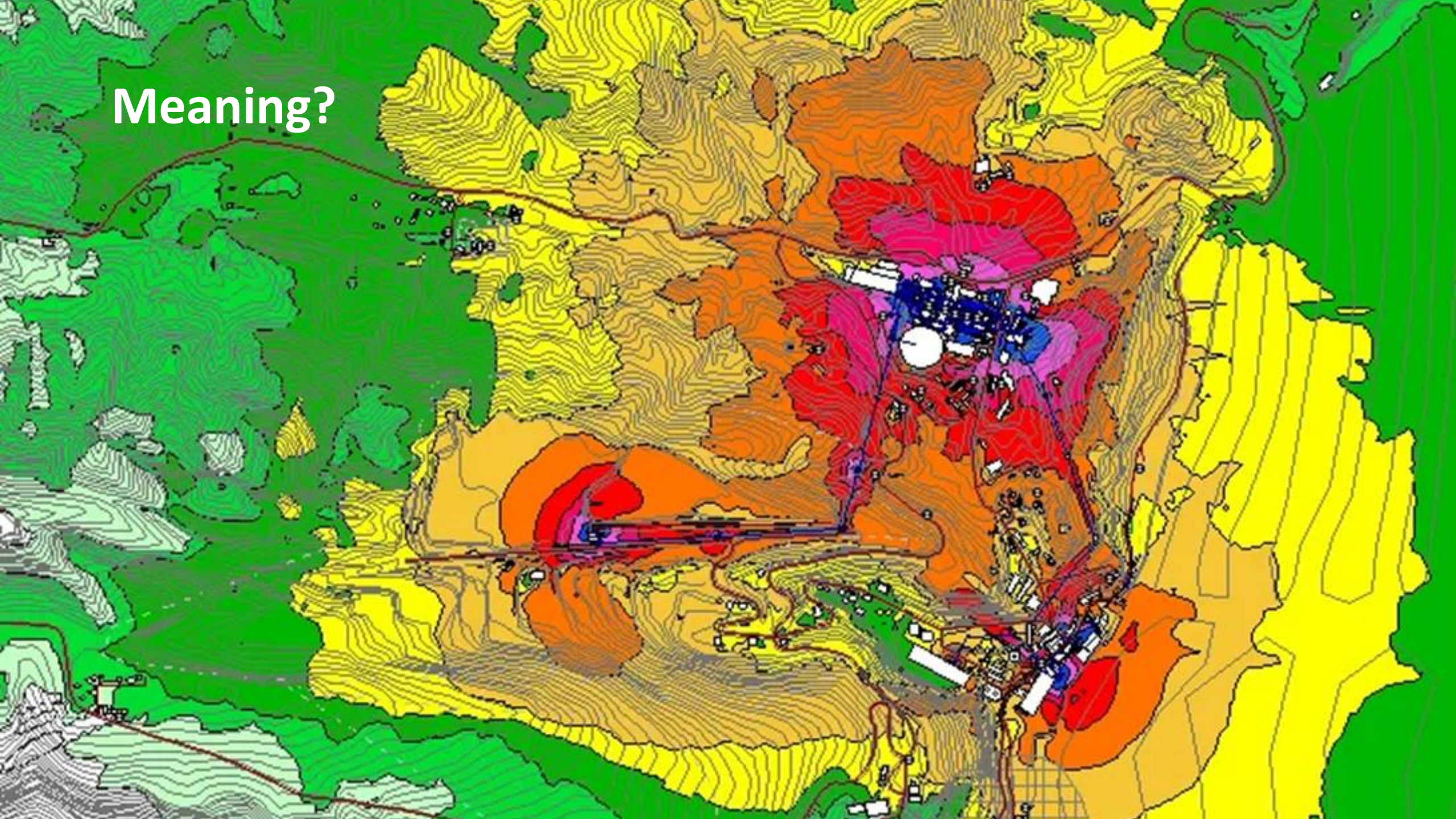
“Without emotion we do not reason well.”

© Luiz Munhoz

K.I.S.S.

Meaning?

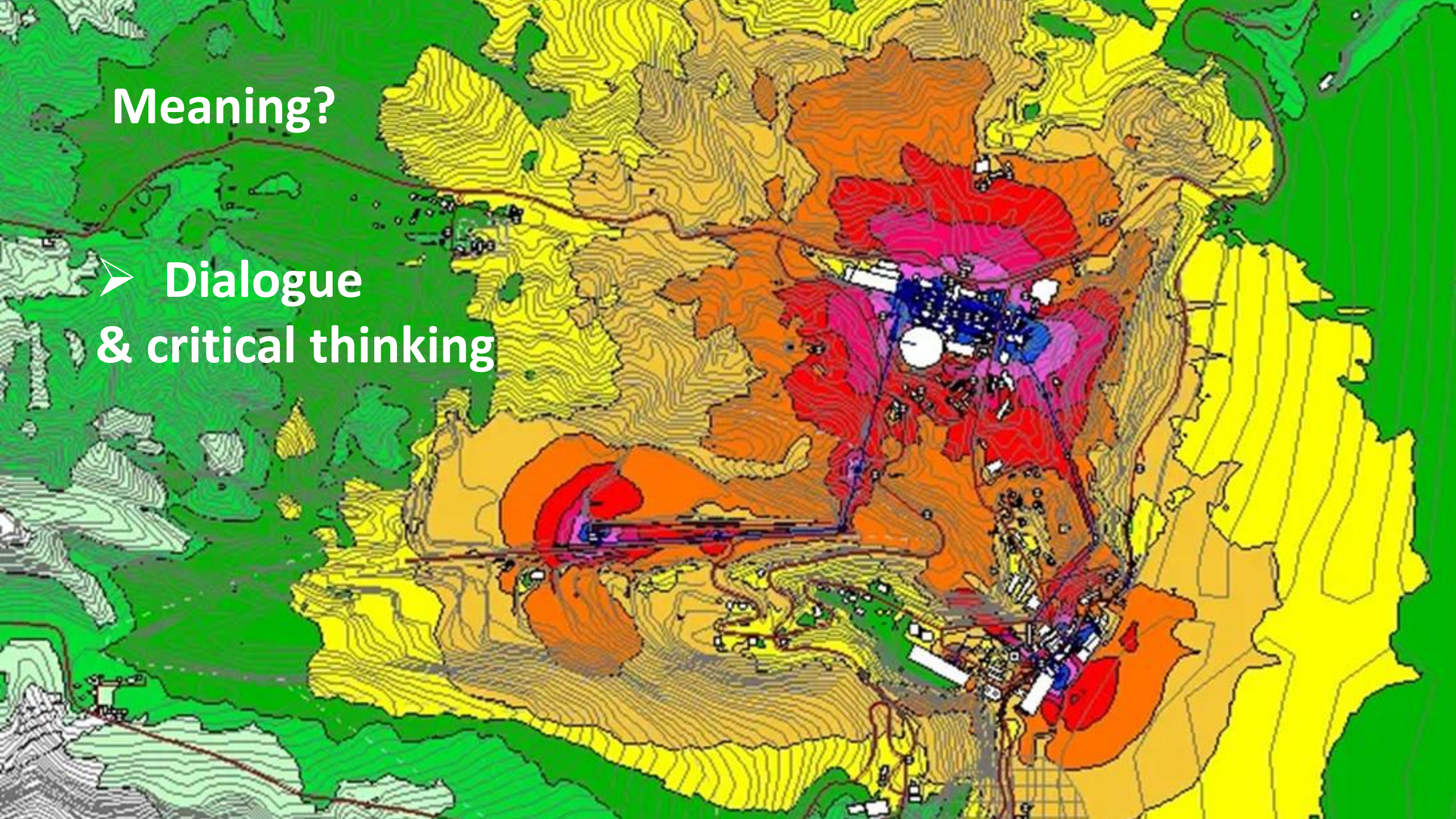


“each map/diagram is a mental construct,

which can tell something about

how different groups of people see reality.”

Cees Leeuwis (2004)


Meaning?
➢ Dialogue
& critical thinking

Visual literacy

The ability to successfully decode and interpret visual messages and to encode and compose meaningful visual communications.

Bamford (2003)

PHOTOGRAPHY
Photo visioning
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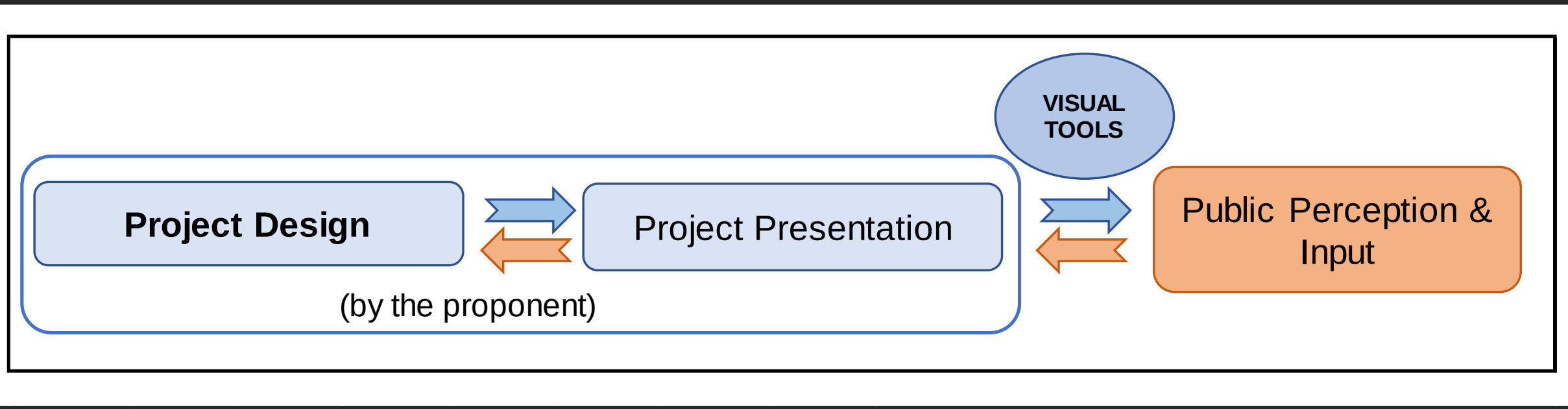
METROPOLIS


VISUAL TOOLS
Project Design
Project Presentation
Public Perception & Input
(by the proponent)

©Blangy et al, 2008

Visual literacy

Contexts (e.g. verbal form) and relationships

Questioning, challenging, interacting

Critical visual literacy

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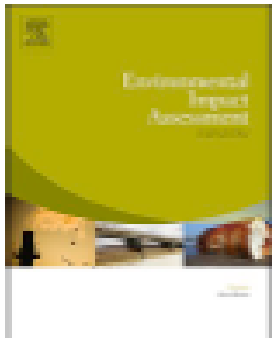

You see what I mean? – A review of visual tools for inclusive public participation in EIA decision-making processes

Ana Roque de Oliveira*, Maria Partidário

CEG-IST, Instituto Superior Técnico, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal

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IAIA21

STAY
HOME

VISUAL TOOLS IN TODAY'S EIA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ana Roque de Oliveira & Maria Partidário

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IAIA21 VIRTUAL EVENT

CEG - IST
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS DE GESTÃO DO INSTITUTO SUPERIOR TÉCNICO
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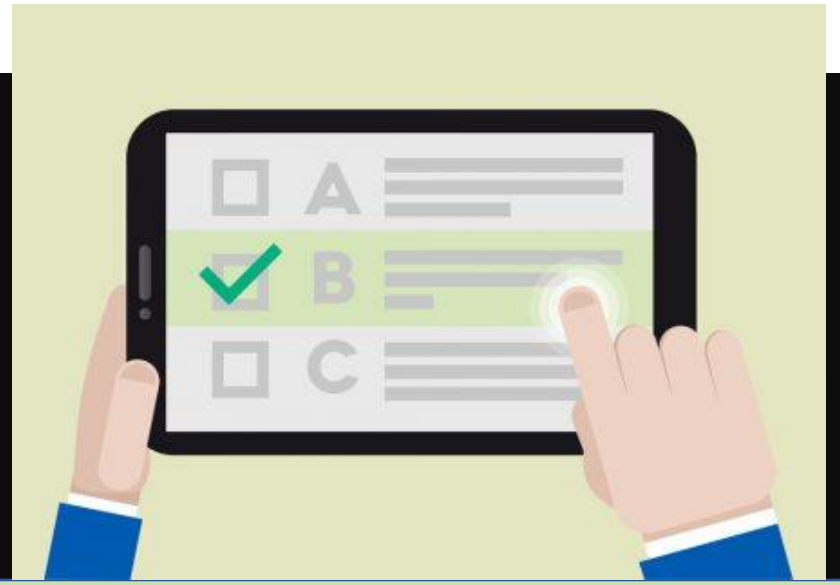
VISUAL TOOLS IN TODAY'S EIA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

How to design? Who to involve?

IAIA21
VIRTUAL EVENT

SURVEYS



ARCTIC EIA

ARCTIC COUNCIL

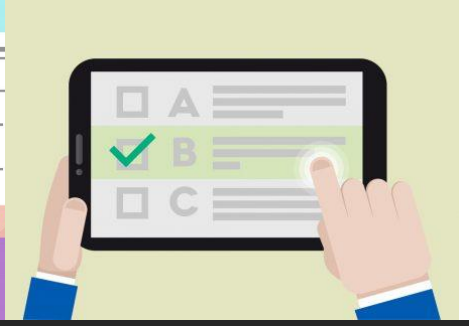
Sustainable Development Working Group

Nordic Council of Ministers

IAIA Connect

Rovaniemi, Finland
December 2017

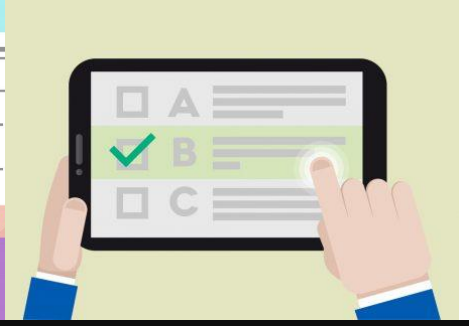
January-March 2018



CONCLUSIONS

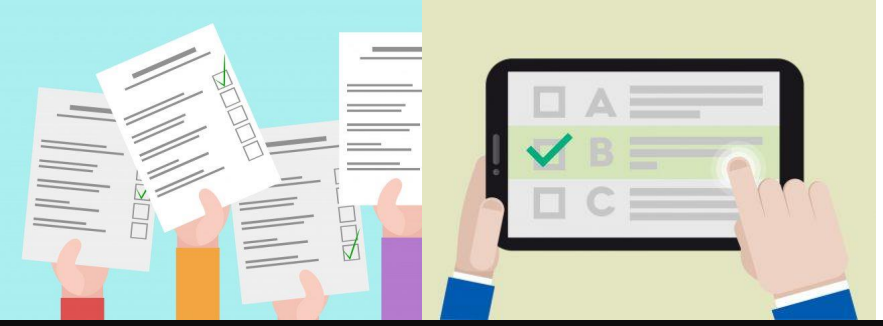
1 Visual Tools may promote inclusive public participation

2 **Visual Tools should be adequate to the stakeholders**



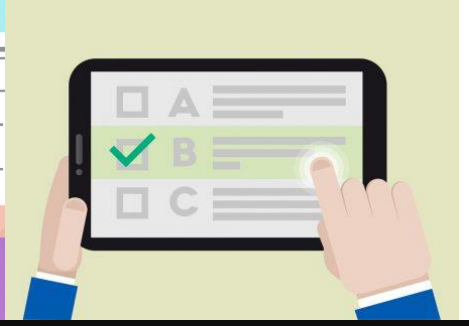
RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Move away from the “**one size fits all**” approach



RECOMMENDATIONS

Customize your visual tools!

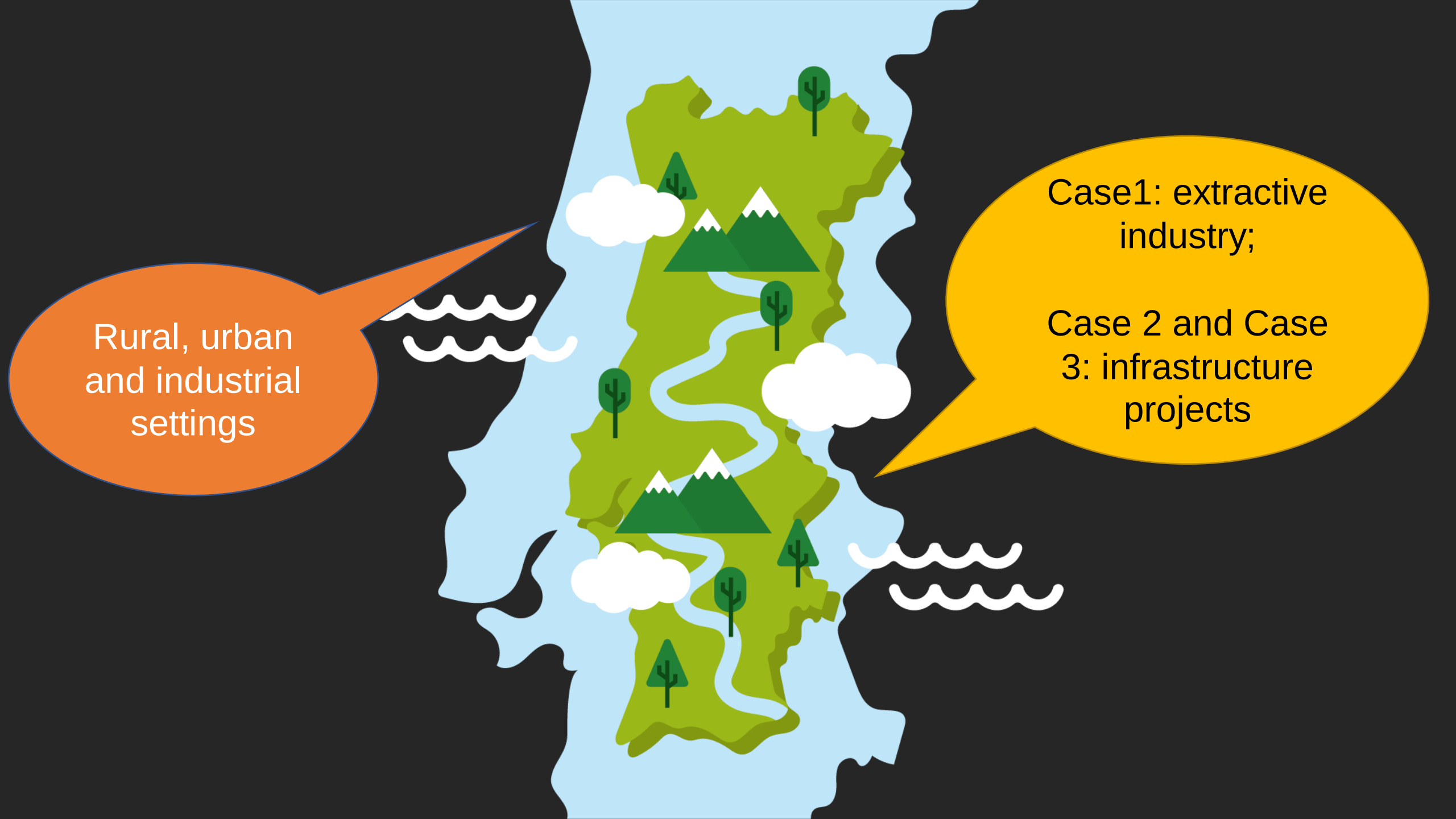


RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Move away from the “**one size fits all**” approach

2 Allow for stakeholders’ active participation in the **choice and design** of the Visual Tool

Visual communication in EIA: stakeholders' perspectives


Rural, urban and industrial settings
Case1: extractive industry;
Case 2 and Case 3: infrastructure projects

(Non-participant) observation

In-depth interviews

Interview Guide – Proponent/Consultant

Introduction

This research is being conducted as part of my PhD at Instituto Superior Técnico, in Lisbon, to get to know the views of public participation participants/visitors to information centers about the use of visual tools such as photographs, maps, charts, videos, models, etc.

I am especially interested in knowing the basis for the choices about content and type of the visual tools used in this public session/information center. The conclusions of this research can be used to improve future communication between the project proponents and the public, and to guide the incorporation of local knowledge into the design of future projects.

All the information you provide in this interview will only be used for this research project and will not be shared outside the research team. Your name will not be used, so that nobody can identify you with any answers. This interview will be audio recorded, including your verbal consent. Do you consent to this interview? [if requested by interviewee, sign consent form]. If yes, **do you have any questions before we begin?**

Background information

No. of interview:

Stakeholders

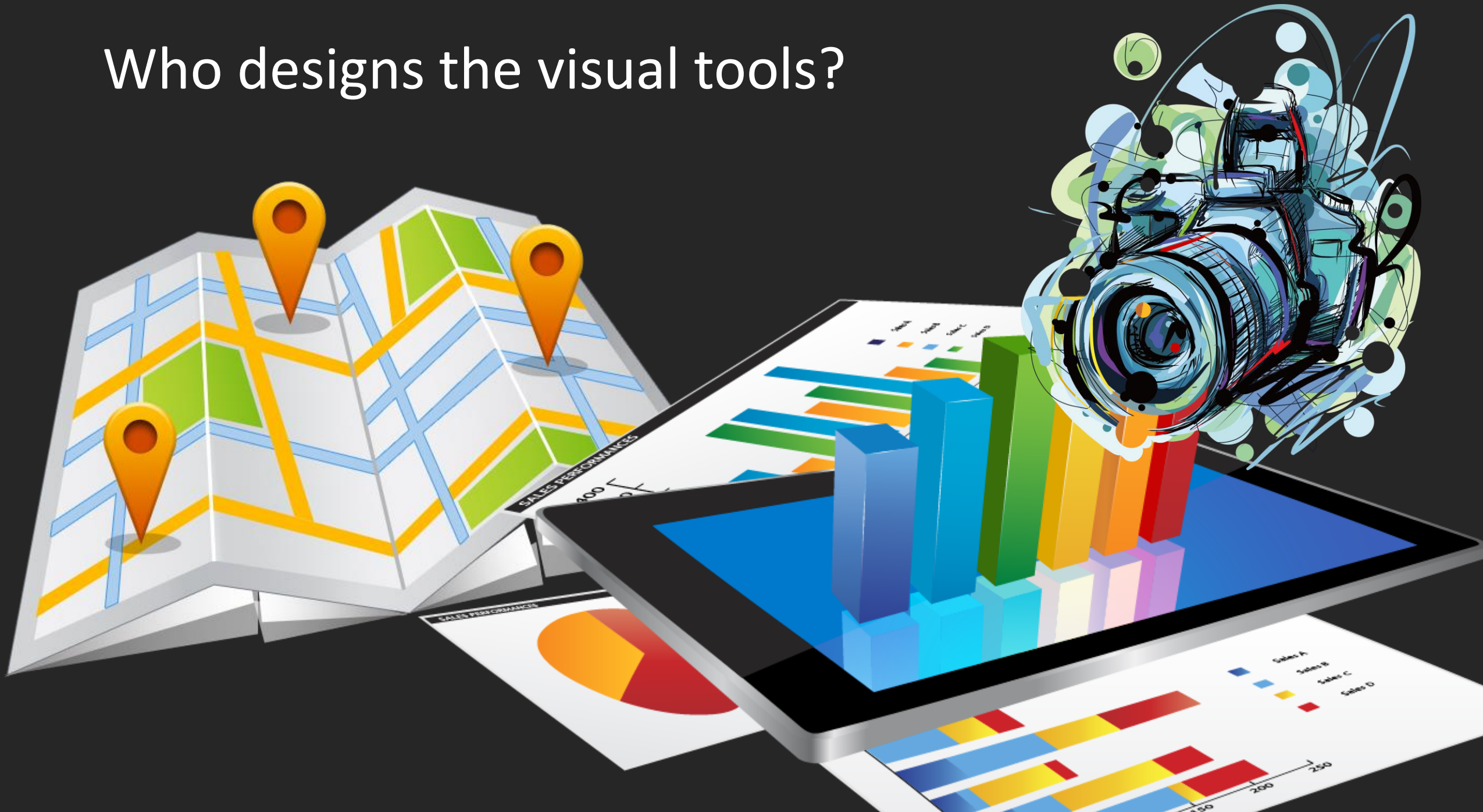
Project proponents

Public

Proponent perception about the design and use of visual communication

Public perceptions regarding their understanding and experience of visual communication

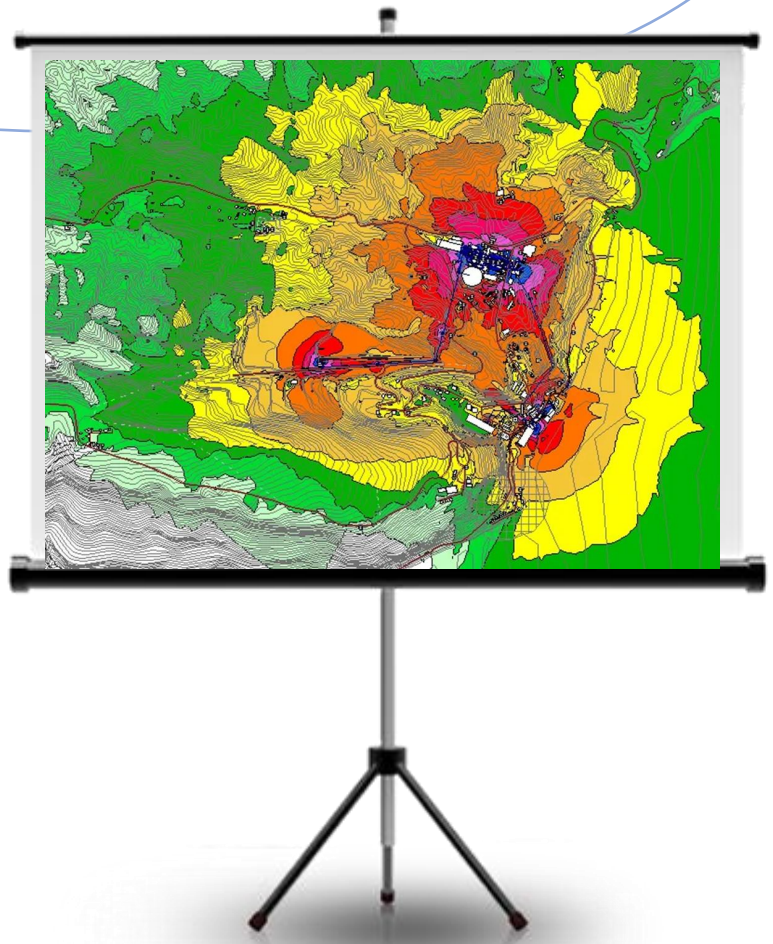
Who designs the visual tools?



Who designs the visual tools?

We defined, together with the consultants that we used to conduct the environmental impact report, the presentation guide. So, we defined what we wanted to communicate and how we wanted to communicate (…). ***I believe [it] involved the people that it should involve (…)***

[we used] noise maps (…) so <u>they would understand</u> (…)



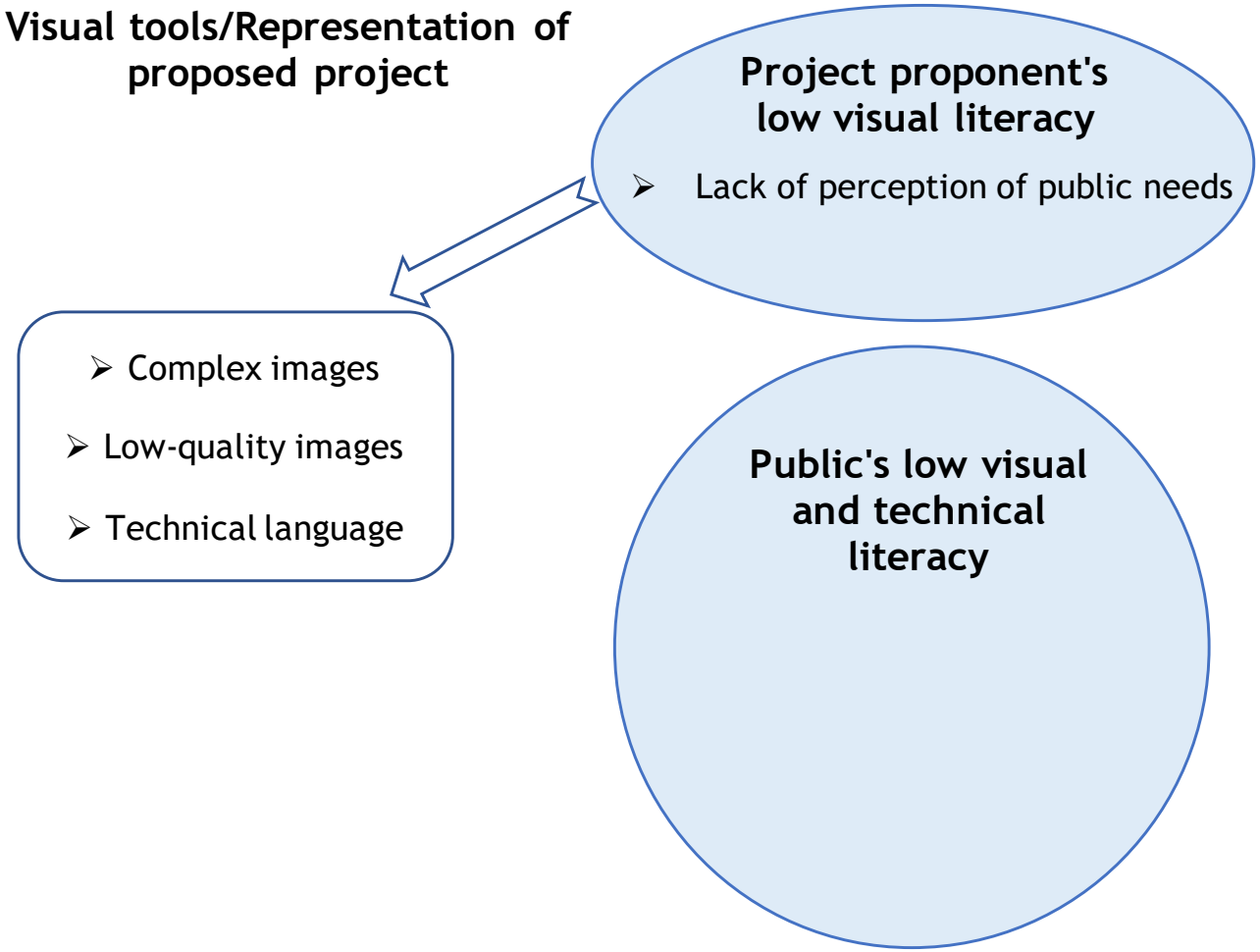
(…) <u>I don’t understand anything</u> (…)

Project proponent's low visual literacy

- Lack of perception of public needs

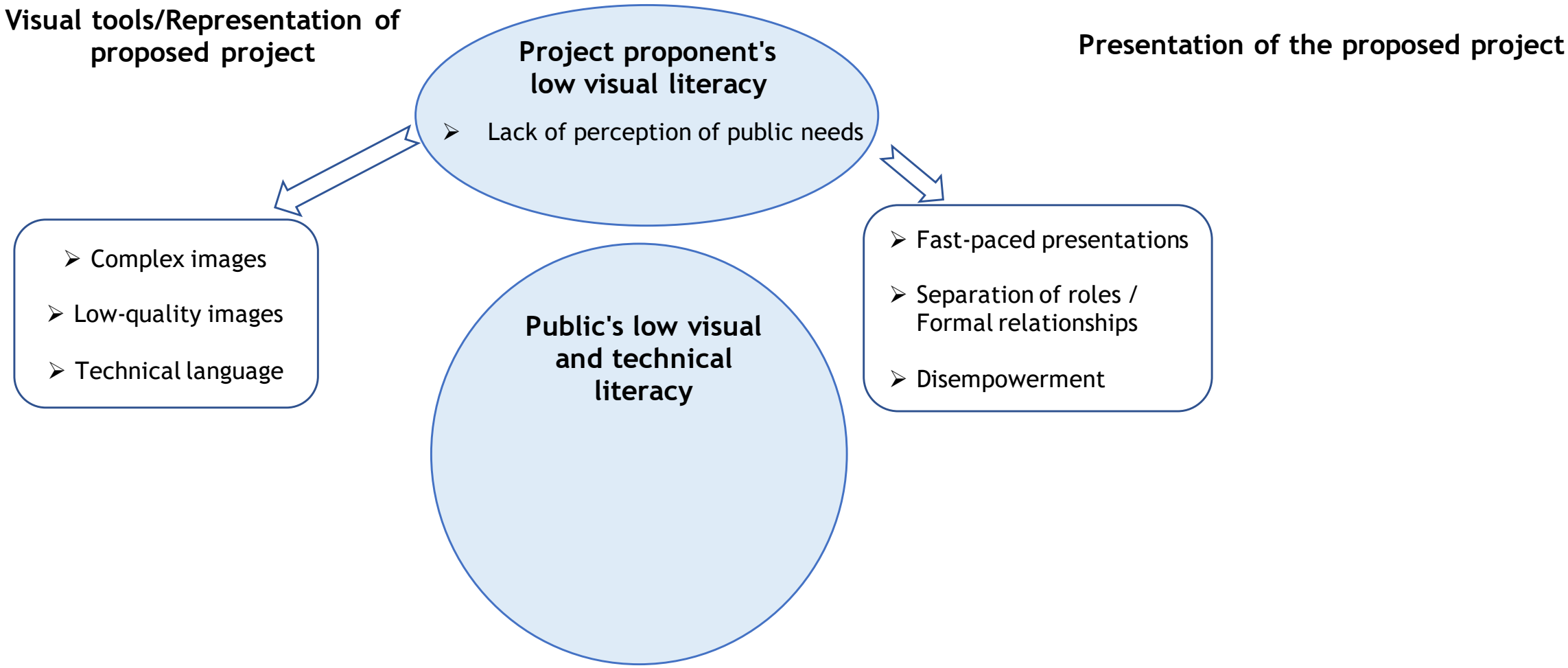
Public's low visual and technical literacy

Visual tools/Representation of proposed project



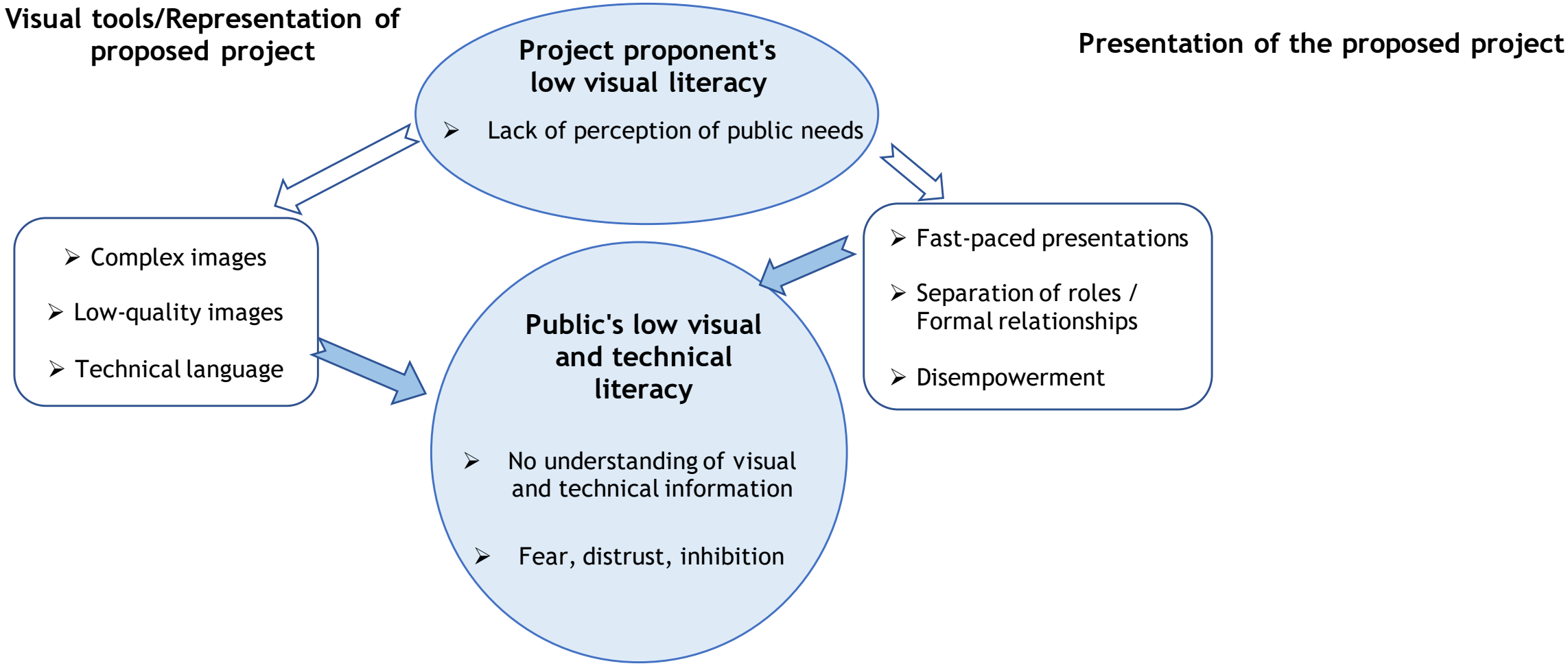
Technical language

Those who make these presentations are ***very technical people****, very technical engineers, very familiar with the project, and with the concepts and the technical terms, right?*


Visual tools/Representation of proposed project
Project proponent's low visual literacy
Lack of perception of public needs
Presentation of the proposed project
Complex images
Low-quality images
Technical language
Public's low visual and technical literacy
Fast-paced presentations
Separation of roles / Formal relationships
Disempowerment

Fast-paced presentations

(…) after unloading all that quickly, [they asked] ‘do you have any questions?’ That is not how it should be. (…).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No understanding of visual and technical information
Fear, distrust, inhibition
Fast-paced presentations
Separation of roles / Formal relationships
Disempowerment

Distrust…

the truthfulness of ‘well-rehearsed’

oral information

the real intentions of proponents

- simply complying with an obligation
- overcoming the public through weariness

…lack of power…

The one that presents has to come down

off the pedestal, to come down to earth

no legitimacy to intervene*:*

‘The oral part did not seem that bad, but who am I to say so?, right?’

…and other strong feelings

<u>fear</u>

of making a fool of themselves

indignation

- not being heard in the project design
- not being well informed about the project's impacts

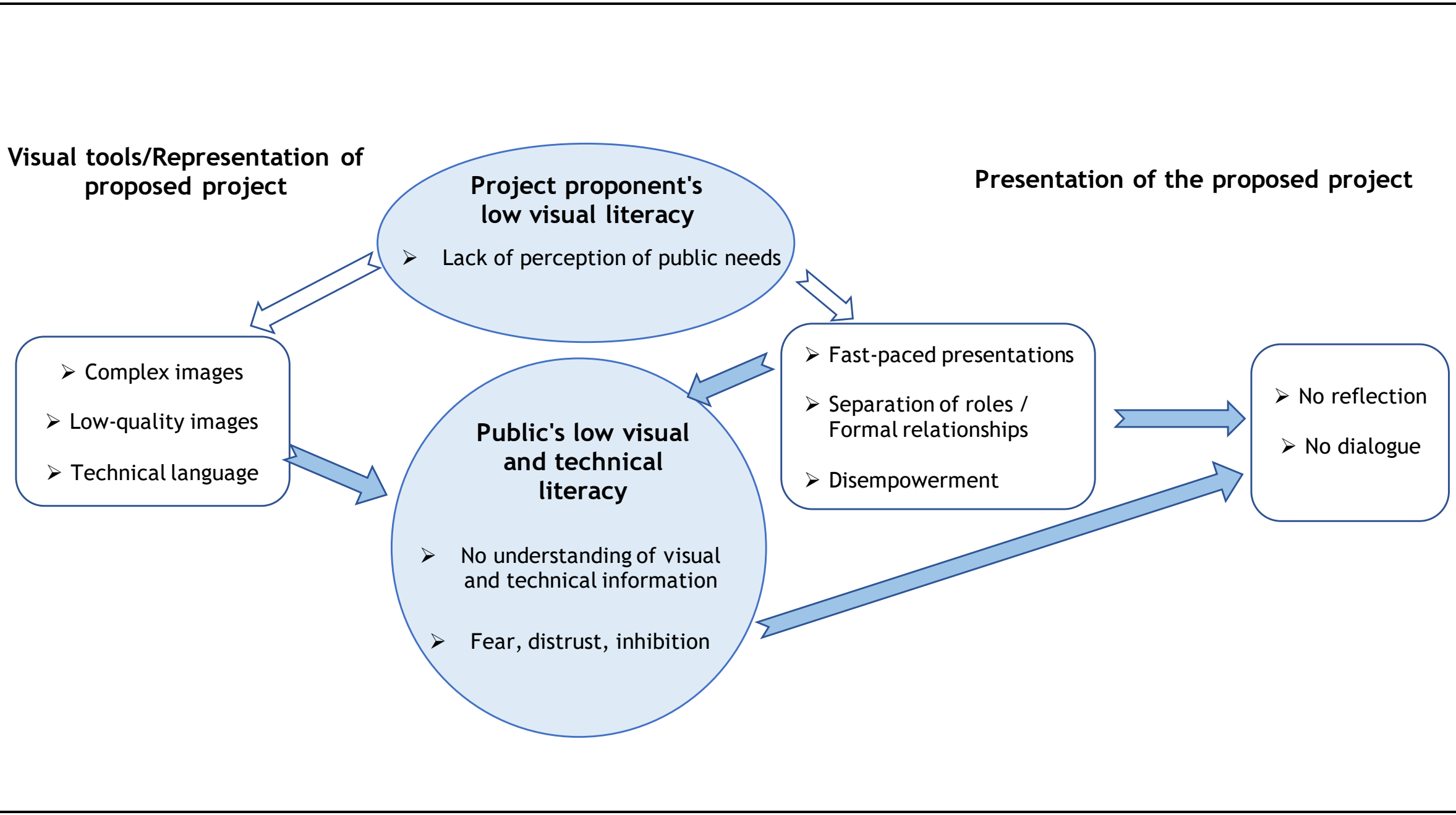
frustration:

‘Oh, those numbers

[pictograms with statistics],

don’t ask me because

I don’t know how to read that!’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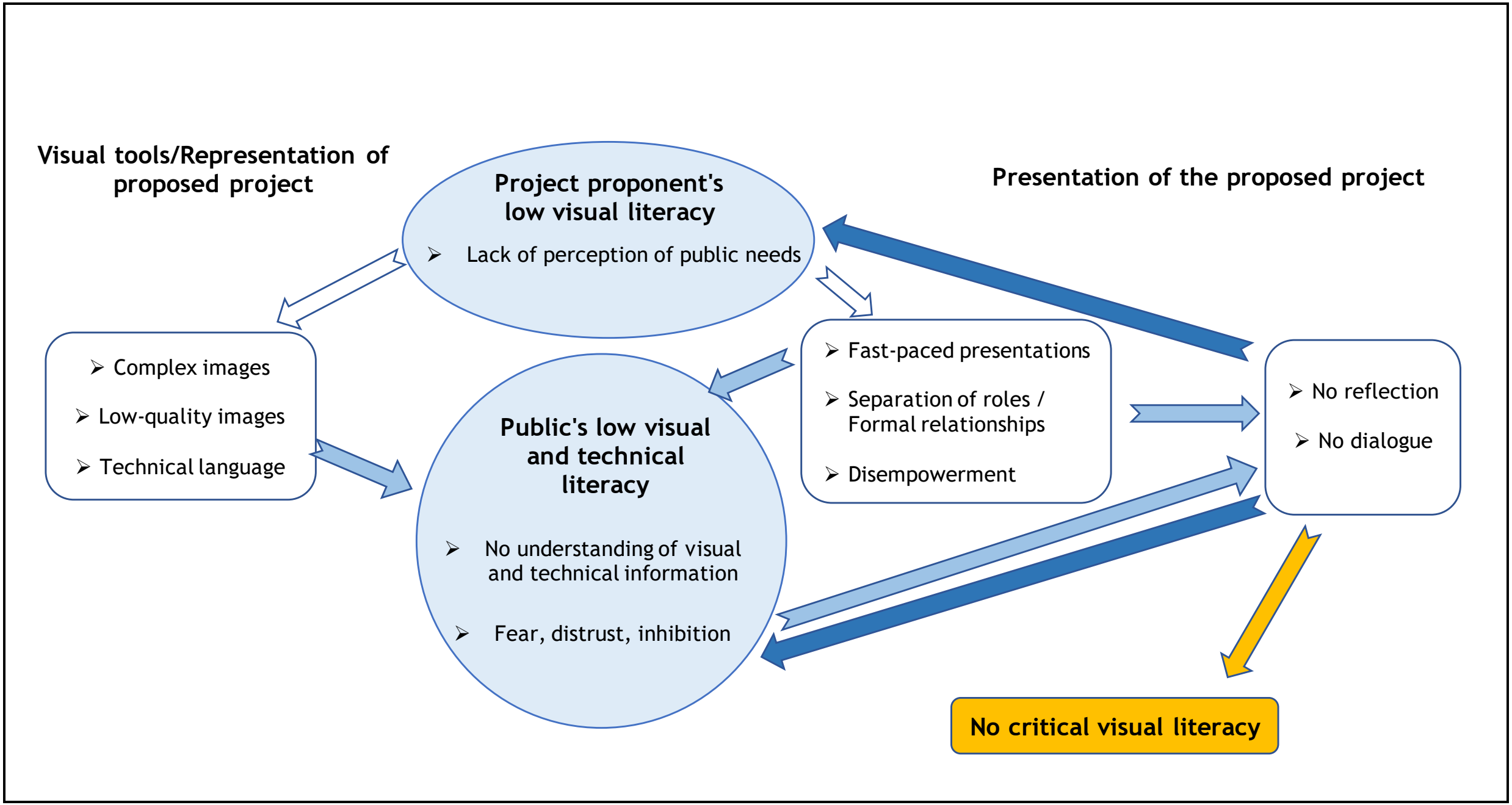
Separation of roles / Formal relationships
Disempowerment
No reflection
No dialogue

Time for reflection

(…) meanwhile the information settled in, right?,

(…), and only later we remember that, hey, and

what if we had asked this or that?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Understanding stakeholder experiences with visual communication in environmental impact assessment

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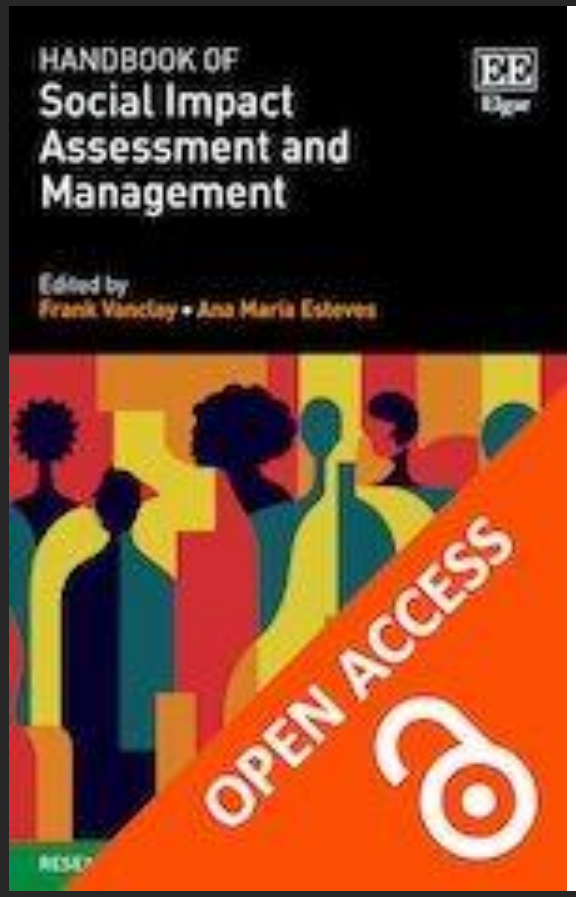
The Role of Visual Tools in Inclusive Public Participation in Environmental Impact Assessment

PDF

PhD Thesis (2022)



Handbook of Social Impact Assessment and Management

Edited by

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Ana Maria Esteves

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32. Visual tools in social impact assessment: issues of perception, communication, and ethical dilemmas

Ana Roque de Oliveira

Let’s continue the conversation!

Post questions and comments in the IAIA24 app.

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