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**THE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT
OF SOCIAL IMPACTS IN URBAN TRANSPORT
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

*Exploring relationships between urban governance,
project management and impact assessment practices
in different geographical contexts*

Lara Katharine Mottee

L K. Mottee

The assessment and management of social impacts in urban transport infrastructure projects.

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MACQUARIE
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The assessment and management of social impacts in urban transport infrastructure projects

Exploring relationships between urban governance, project management and impact
assessment practices in different geographical contexts

PhD thesis

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the decision by the College of Deans

and

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on the authority of the
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the decision by the Research and Research Training Council

Double PhD degree

This thesis will be defended in public on

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THE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL IMPACTS IN URBAN TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

**Exploring relationships between urban governance, project management
and impact assessment practices in different geographical contexts**

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A thesis presented to Macquarie University in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Supervised under cotutelle agreement with the University of Groningen

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Preface

“Geographers can contribute to a way of doing impact assessment research which is committed to local empowerment, good planning and more equitable distribution of costs and benefits of development, in other words, an applied peoples’ geography” (Howitt, 1993, p. 138).

Richie Howitt’s 1993 paper describing Social Impact Assessment (SIA) as ‘The Applied Peoples’ Geography’ addressed a research-action opportunity for the *professional geographer* to undertake research that represents everything SIA in the present strives to be – empowering, participatory and interventionist. When I was first introduced to this paper in 2014, as an Environmental Consultant writing the ‘social bit’ for many Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), I had never considered the possibility of using my human geography studies in this way. It made me realise that I had reached a point where it was time for me, not just to be a professional, but to also be a *geographer*, and allow myself to explore the underlying causes somewhat freer from the institutional constraints of my work. As such, this thesis represents my manifesto, many years in the making. It draws from my career experiences and academic learnings from those fellow geographers who have inspired me to challenge the status quo, advocate for positive change, and contribute to a more sustainable future for all. It applies a geographical lens to ambitiously investigate a problem I identified in my practice career: how to improve transport planning practices in the assessment and management of social impacts in an objectivity-obsessed technocratic urban environment.

Moving continents to Groningen (The Netherlands) part way through my first year, participating in Dutch life and culture, having our first child in my final year, and writing my conclusions in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic, also made me appreciate more than ever before, the value of social relationships, personal mobility, global accessibility and family well-being. The international experience of living in The Netherlands placed me in a better position to understand the nuances of the spatial and infrastructure planning context in the Netherlands, as compared to my own Australian-based work experiences. Investigating these issues on an international scale has cemented my view that we must prioritise social issues equally with economic and engineering concerns in assessing future alternatives for transport planning in cities, to be better *urban* practitioners, no matter what type of professional we trained as, whether planner, lawyer, scientist, engineer or other.

My professional career and life experiences have undoubtedly shaped the position I adopted in the research. After more than 12 years participating in environmental infrastructure consulting, writing Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) and management reports, the value of ESIA practice in guiding decision-making and influencing outcomes delivered from projects became a key driver for my intellectual endeavours. For government projects, the political, economic and strategic justification for projects always focused on the ‘public need’ or ‘public interest’. Thus, having worked on government projects for many years, I came to this understanding about how they are assessed, planned, managed and justified in this way.

I brought this knowledge from past experiences to the focus groups and interviews conducted in both countries. It influenced how questions were developed and shaped discussions. In turn, my own views and experiences have been enriched and challenged by the participants who have been involved in the research. Their willingness and openness to share their experiences have made me

discover a bigger picture in the urban context than what I had come to expect in my narrow worldview as an environmental consultant in practice. Participants felt comfortable to share their experiences with me, someone with knowledge in their professional practice to whom they could relate. I cannot dispute that without my work experiences, I would not have known of what behaviours to be critical of, what processes to expect and to what goals to aspire to, in seeking answers to how improved practice might lead to better social outcomes.

This research and the questions I have proposed are very personal aspirations for both my own practice and for the interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary social science that is SIA. I am very much cognizant that with my practice experience and these aspirations in mind that during this research journey I have become a 'pracademic', sitting at the nexus between practice and academia, and an Activist Researcher, advocating that practitioners and SIA can do better. But what my participants have also shown me is that my own practice, impact assessment practice, is one very small part of the wider urban fabric. There are many complex relationships that fit together to create the urban system and power and influence in those relationships constantly shifts between the interests of political decision-makers, corporate actors, activists and populations. What this research experience has shown me, is that this complexity is not unique to one geographical context but is a characteristic of global cities.

Whatever city my family and I choose to live in, whichever city I choose to work in, my research will always be influenced by my surroundings and the familiarities I draw from my urban global experiences.

Lara Katharine Mottee

Utrecht, August, 2020

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They say it takes a village to raise a child – I would say the same to raise a thesis! My research journey and the development of this thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, mentorship, support and friendship over the past three and half years (and more!) of my supervisory team. I am lucky enough to have four fantastic, knowledgeable and intelligent supervisors each of whom brought their own individual experiences and ideas to help shape my research.

I firstly want to acknowledge and thank Richie, who has believed in me from the beginning – long before I believed in myself. The words in this thesis have undoubtedly been moulded by your inspiration and endless dedication to seeing me finish – especially in all the moments I felt everything was all too much. Many times I've burdened you with more than a supervisor should have to handle, from paperwork to polishing prose. No matter what, you're always there to greet me with a smile and a hug, virtual or otherwise. You have been my biggest academic 'fan' through the past four years, and I'll be forever grateful for all the support you've given me.

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My fellow PhD candidates, at both Macquarie University and the University of Groningen. Wherever I was in the world, whatever the timezone, I always had someone I could message, call, complain to, cry with, or rely on to get me through the good and bad parts of doing a PhD. In Australia, Yayut, right from the beginning of my MRes journey, you were there encouraging me! Nav, Tracy, Sufia, Sunita – you have been such an inspiration and support, I am so grateful to you all. In The Netherlands, my two paranymphs, Nina and Eva. I couldn't have survived my Dutch experience and PhD journey without you both! I will never forget our chats, catch-ups, and endless hugs, coffees and teas. Thank you so much, you mean the world to me. Suzan, my go-to-person for all things Dutch and first-time motherhood, and for stepping-up at the last minute as my on-the-ground paranymph, you're amazing, thank you! I am also very grateful to Gwenda and Robin for their support with the Dutch translation and for answering my many language questions, and fantastic chats and friendship over my PhD. Also, thank you to my PhD friends, office-mates and other colleagues in both faculties and departments who have mentored me on many things in life and research. You have all been such wonderful peers to have worked with, and I could not have asked for better.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
DoT	Department of Transport
DoP	Department of Planning
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment
DPIE	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
ECRL	Epping to Chatswood Rail Link
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
IANZ	Environmental Institute of Australian and New Zealand
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EP&A Act	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> (Australia)
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
GSC	Greater Sydney Commission
IA	Impact Assessment
IAIA	International Association of Impact Assessment
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LCNP	Lane Cove National Park
MaaS	Mobility as a service
MP	Member of Parliament
NSW	New South Wales
NZL	North-South Metro Line (<i>Noord-Zuid MetroLijn</i>)
PERL	Parramatta to Epping Rail Link
PRL	Parramatta Rail Link
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SEMS	Social and Environmental Management System
SIMP	Social Impact Management Plans
SMS	Social Management System
SWG	South West Growth Centre
SWRL	South West Rail Link
UTS	University of Technology Sydney

List of Publications

This PhD thesis is by publication and includes four chapters that are reprints of publications as listed below.

- Chapter 2** Mottee, L. K., & Howitt, R. (2018). Follow-up and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in urban transport-infrastructure projects: Insights from the Parramatta rail link. *Australian Planner*, 55(1), 46-56. DOI: 10.1080/07293682.2018.1506496
- Chapter 3** Mottee, L. K., Arts, J., Vanclay, F., Howitt, R., & Miller, F. (2020). Limitations of technical approaches to transport planning practice in two cases: Social issues as a critical component of urban projects. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 21(1), 39-57. DOI:10.1080/14649357.2019.1696980
- Chapter 4** Mottee, L. K., Arts, J., Vanclay, F., Miller, F., & Howitt, R (2020) Metro infrastructure planning in Amsterdam: How are social issues managed in the absence of environmental and social impact assessment? *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 38(4), 320-335. DOI: 10.1080/14615517.2020.1741918
- Chapter 5** Mottee, L. K., Arts, J., Vanclay, F., Miller, F. & Howitt, R. (2020) Reflecting on how social impacts are considered in transport infrastructure project planning: Looking beyond the claimed success of Sydney's South West Rail Link, *Urban Policy and Research*, 38(3), 185-198. DOI: 10.1080/0811146.2020.1730787


Statement of Originality

This thesis is being submitted to Macquarie University and the University of Groningen in accordance with the cotutelle agreement dated 12 September 2017. This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university except as agreed under cotutelle arrangement.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

The content of this thesis is a result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program.

All research reported in this thesis received the approval of the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. Protocol numbers: 5201700424 and 5201600247.

(Signed)  _____

Lara Katharine Mottee

Date: 28 August 2020 _____

