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ABSTRACT

The social impact assessment (SIA) field is moving into a critical and central position in resource decision making in our society. Initially conceived as part of the environmental impact statement (EIS) process, SIA is beginning to be recognized as having dimensions far beyond its early scope. This article focuses on the extension of SIA work into the area of social impact management. Current trends in the SIA field leading to the emphasis on management are reviewed, followed by a discussion of the issue-centered approach to SIA. A discussion of decentralization trends sets the stage for understanding the emerging demand for impact management services. A definition of and rationale for social impact management are provided, and four principles of social impact management are described. Finally, the process by which impact management systems are developed is discussed through selected examples.

Since the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in the 1970s, social impact assessment (SIA) has claimed increasing attention in the overall environmental assessment process. This has occurred, in part, because of public demand. As we move through the 1980s, people are more aware of the social and cultural effects of resource development on their lives and they are insisting on early participation in decisions. The courts, moreover, have been interpreting NEPA in such a way as to give the social components of impact statements greater weight.

The regulations that direct the EIS process have also changed. Revised environmental quality regulations call for documents that use jargon-free language, are shorter, and aid in the decision-making process. In addition, the mitigation phase of the EIS process is receiving greater attention. Officials not only want to know what impacts are predicted, but also insist that options for dealing with them be developed and early mitigation agreements be reached.

In short, the EIS is moving away from being a declaratory document which merely discloses impacts to becoming a management tool which citizens, industry, and government can use to reach decisions about the future.

SIAs that are performed within the legally prescribed EIS arena often do not lend themselves to effective management of impacts or socially responsive decisions. Even well-conceived, locally grounded mitigations will not be useful unless all parties have been actively involved in developing the mitigations. The dialogue between citizens, government agencies, and private interests that would promote mitigation agreements is frequently not part of the formal process. Also, the involvement of the social scientist often ends as the impact reports are submitted, so these additional resources are not available to residents and officials for carrying out the mitigation phase. However, when social scientists are able to stay involved, the first steps in the management of impact have been made. Social impact management (SIM) is a people-centered, ongoing decision-making process designed to identify, evaluate, respond to, and monitor the public issues arising from major industrial and government activities. The role of the clinical sociologist is viewed here as spanning both social assessment and social impact management.

Clinical Sociology and Social Impact Management

During the past fifteen years, the authors have been working as social scientists in the growing fields of social impact assessment and management, organizing and documenting clinical sociological systems, mapping the real geographic units within which people function in an ecological state. Clinical sociologists are best suited to address the profound shift in our society from a vertical (power elite-based) to a horizontal (community-based) decision-making system. Once outside the influence of the vertical system, one can see that clinical sociology emphasizes the ecological process working with rhythms and multilevels of interaction. The ecological focus replaces the mechanistic and hierarchical focus of past sociological concentration. We have assembled many of the tools needed to understand and function in this new horizontal age. Social impact management represents a statement on how our tools are used and offers a model for intervention at the community and organizational levels.

Four Principles of Social Impact Management

Intervention in social impact management systems and the training of management groups to implement these systems are guided by a series of four principles rooted in social ecological and critical approaches in sociology:

1.   Individual power is essential for maintaining the productivity of the human environment.

2.   Human-geographic boundaries are natural management boundaries.

3.   Horizontal social networks form the structure by which communities sustain themselves.

4.   Direct contact with citizens is necessary for managers seeking to understand and respond to public issues.

Principle 1: Individual power is essential for maintaining the productivity of the human environment. Perhaps the most fundamental principle of all is the singular importance of the individual person. Power is the ability of the individual to understand, participate in, predict, and control his or her environment.[2] Individual power is essential to maintain a vigorous community and a healthy relationship between citizens, industry, and government.

If individual power is not maintained, people become demoralized and sooner or later will resist. Sometimes resistance takes place openly, as in the case of protest demonstrations or labor strikes, but more often it takes place in such subtle and indirect forms as alcoholism, absenteeism, malingering, transience, crime, and similar acts that erode the ability of individuals and communities to sustain themselves. It is assumed here that the social and financial costs of powerlessness are far greater than the costs of cultivating citizen empowerment. This holds regardless of whether it is citizens, business, or government which ultimately suffer the costs.

The key to addressing effectively the consequences of powerlessness lies in the facilitation of individual power through citizen participation, which includes the following components:

> Citizens are able to understand the full meaning of the social and cultural implications of proposed changes in their environment.
>
> Citizens share in the decision-making processes which determine what will happen to them, their families, friends, and neighbors, and to the common environment they share.
>
> Citizens assume their share of responsibility for carrying out the decisions they have helped to make in the interests of the greatest good for all.
>
> Citizens have continuing opportunities to track the resolution of their issues through the planning and implementation process.

Citizen participation is essential for effective management since managers will inevitably experience conflicts with various publics over proposed changes. Significantly, it does not rest solely on occasional public hearings that

often fail to build upon traditional modes of public interaction, are scheduled inconveniently for many people, and are not conducted in comfortable settings.

Principle 2: Human-geographic boundaries are natural management boundaries. Environmental law and the social ecology tradition emphasize the concept that human and physical resources are ecologically unified. When this basic principle is combined with the previous principle of individual power through citizen participation, a new form of *human resource mapping* emerges based upon natural geographic patterns of cultural values, networks, and daily routines. Social boundaries become administrative units for program implementation and decision making, as has been done by Region 2 of the Forest Service. Boundaries based on social criteria are natural ways to group issues for managerial attention.

Natural boundaries of actual human communities rarely coincide with arbitrary administrative districts such as counties or regional government units. The mitigation efforts of large-scale development projects, for example, are difficult to administer at local and regional levels when natural boundaries are not considered. An example is the "jurisdictional mismatch" occurring on the Western Slope of Colorado; problems associated with political jurisdictions prevent oil-shale-impact dollars from reaching targets where they are most needed.

Principle 3. Horizontal social networks form the structure by which communities sustain themselves. A crucial distinction is made between the *vertical structures* of formal authority relations and the *horizontal structures* of voluntary cooperation that pattern day-to-day living and survival for most people.

While vertical structures are instrumental and necessary in a complex society, planning and management activities that rely solely on the "official" version of reality as defined by lawmakers, bureaucrats, and corporate representatives of vertical structures run the risk of misrepresenting the public for whom they hope to speak and of contributing to "government by ambush," disruption, and surprise tactics. Public outcry at the eleventh hour of implementing a decision is a sign that vertical structures have worked more effectively than horizontal structures.

The changes currently occurring in American society are far-reaching and are reflected in the growth and development of the SIA field. A profound influence on the institutions of society is the shift from a centralized to a decentralized society and the meaning of this change on centralist-trained thinkers. Increasing diversity and self-determination are affecting all aspects of life. Centralized decision making is losing ground; companies and institutions that are not responsive to this change are finding it increasingly difficult to function effectively.[3]

To adapt to the fundamental and profound changes now gathering momentum, some business leaders and public officials are becoming more flexible, humanistic, accommodating, and socially responsive. In business environments, the dictates of the marketplace are forcing companies to address the social consequences of their actions. Similarly, in a democratic society where public participation is increasingly being mandated by law and official regulations, government offices and agencies are becoming legally liable when they have not responded to the full range of public issues related to their activities.

This shift means that increasingly it is the general citizenry who are the real decision makers. Successful politicians and industrial leaders are those who can communicate with people and expedite decisions in a way that is sensitive to diversity and leaves control in the hands of citizens.

The social changes described above have led to an increased demand from industry and government for training and consultation services for the management of impacts and the public issues created by impacts. These are services that are not required by law and, while applicable to an EIS process, are not limited by it. However, they have become increasingly necessary in carrying out a resource development project. Projects that do not have social impact management components risk conflict and costly failure.

Management activities and decisions that are described to be responsive to the public must be tailored to the daily routines of citizens. For this reason, effective management depends on the ability of managers to understand and work with horizontal systems; no longer is it sufficient, for example, to hold public meetings with time and place determined by the managers. The horizontal structure indicates the functional groupings and boundaries people use in their everyday activities.

The term *networks* is used to describe the informal social relationships of daily life. These are patterns of communicating, caretaking, gathering, and interpersonal support around common interests which reflect and help shape values and perceptions people hold regarding their lives and their environment. The identification of networks is an integral part of the development of social impact management programs since networks are the vehicle through which people in the horizontal system express and manage their issues.

Principle 4. Direct contact with citizens is necessary for managers seeking to understand and respond to public issues. Social impact management is a process and not a product. It is mediated in face-to-face relations; its successful application therefore depends on the personal commitment and skills of specific individuals. For this reason, the importance of experiential learning through direct contact is stressed in the training of different management groups. Managers and their staffs, or professionals under contract to perform

such services for managers, must directly enter the communities in which they operate to verify their understanding of public issues and to assure broad-based contact. As with any human-service professionals, managers who make decisions about people must continually reassess their own cultural biases, which may distort true understanding. The clinical sociologist can facilitate this values clarification and the direct contact which social impact management systems are designed to provide.

Planning and Impact Management

Since social impact management begins with assessment and includes other planning functions, the distinction between synoptic and transactional planning is an important one. Hudson (1979) notes that the most dominant form of planning is called *synoptic planning,* which involves the process of goal-setting, identification of policy alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, and implementation of decision. It involves looking at problems using conceptual or mathematical models, and is heavily reliant on numbers and quantitative analysis. Its primary focus is on the development of "plans," technical relationships, and objective realities — to the exclusion of subjective or emotional discussions which arise from divergent perceptions of problems being addressed.

In contrast, *transactive planning* is never carried out with respect to anonymous beneficiaries, but requires face-to-face contact with the people affected by decisions. This approach to planning "consists less of field surveys and data analyses, and more of interpersonal dialogue marked by a process of mutual learning." When following such an approach, "plans are evaluated not merely in terms of what they do for people through delivery of services, but in terms of the plans' effect *on* people — on their dignity and sense of effectiveness, their values and behavior, their capacity for growth through cooperation, their spirit of generosity" (Hudson 1979:389). Transactive planning is compatible with the values and perspectives common to clinical sociologists.

It can be seen that synoptic planning may be entirely appropriate for management of the "internal" environment of a business organization or government unit. However, management of the "external" — or social — environment is the appropriate arena for transactive planning. Care must be taken that planning activities that are designed to understand and respond to the external environment are not based on the cultural biases of the managers or the professional under contract to managers. Principles used in social impact management that are designed to prevent this occurrence are discussed later.

The Issue-Centered Approach to SIA

An issue-centered approach to SIA, based on horizontal network focus and a commitment to transactive planning, has been developed to promote citizen involvement in the EIS process and ownership of its outcomes. Efforts are made to maximize people's understanding of the proposed actions and to stimulate their interests and active involvement in the assessment and eventual management of expected impacts. Several points distinguish an issue-centered SIA from more traditional approaches. Throughout, the use of the full panoply of sociological research methods, from participation observation to survey research, is crucial for effective data gathering.

1. Issues are identified using indigenous language. Field workers live in the study area and have routine contact with the informal networks of people who make up local neighborhoods and communities. The network approach is an effective way to get information about the full range of interests and issues people have in relation to the proposed project, and to facilitate participation of citizens in the decision-making process. Relating with people in settings that are natural to them improves the quality of information received and facilitates involvement. Also, the need for attitude surveys and other statistical approaches is reduced since a thorough, systematic, and legally defensible understanding of issues is possible with the network approach.[4] Issues are identified according to NEPA regulations for accuracy, prevalence, intensity, and duration.

2. Public issues and management concerns are the driving forces for the collection of social and economic data. Concerns of responsible government agencies are also identified, revealing possible long-term effects that can be included in the assessment process. Once qualitative data are generated by the field team through participant observation and informal contacts with citizens and networks, quantitative data are generated (if possible) to substantiate and more fully document the scope of the potential impacts. Citizens and local officials thus participate in the development of the assessment through a discussion of their issues and concerns.

3. The analysis of the proposed development uses public issues and management concerns. The heart of the assessment includes how issues and concerns are affected by different levels of development (including no action), the project as proposed, and other alternatives that are identified through the course of the review. In this way, local residents and government officials receive direct feedback about how their issues or concerns are affected; they can then act in their own self-interest.

4.   Citizens are able to track their issues throughout the decision-making process. Project assessment questions are derived from public issues and management concerns. Social and economic data are then collected to answer these questions regarding the project. In addition, possible opportunities to resolve the issues or concerns are identified by citizens and agencies at the local, state, and federal levels. This information is relayed to people in the community via informal contact, published reports, and media coverage. The series of documents produced through the course of the EIS becomes part of the decision-making record. Not only is this a clear benefit to citizens, but it fulfills the legal requirement that agencies institute a mechanism enabling citizens to "track" their issues.

5.   Mitigations are grounded in local conditions. Ongoing contact with people in the local area as to expected impacts, the degree to which their issues are being addressed, and critical points in the decision timeline are vital components of an issue-centered SIA approach. As a result, possible mitigation measures that could be taken to resolve issues and minimize impacts are identified and developed by citizens and officials, rather than emanating from outside "experts." The appropriate individuals, citizen groups, or agencies with ability to respond to the issue are identified. In this way, people have a clear idea of *whom* they should approach to obtain action. A local commitment to implement or sustain mitigation measures therefore develops in support of decision makers who are attempting to use the SIA as a management tool.

The Adam's Rib Case

The approach to SIA was recently used to review a proposal for a major ski development, Adam's Rib Recreational Ski Area, 40 miles west of Vail, Colorado.[5] The project had been planned for over seven years, but was so controversial that the first review ended in disarray and without a decision. While the Forest Service eventually approved a scaled-down version of the project, the county rejected it, citing inconsistencies with its Master Plan in a number of areas.

The significance of the decision, for local residents as well as for SIA professionals, is the process of issue resolution that helped determine the final decision. The proponent, government officials, and citizens had good information about public issues and management concern; the proponent chose to address many of them during the course of the review. However, significant impacts remained unaddressed, including high growth rates during the construction period and an inadequate road for projected traffic demands. In view of the high financial costs of resolving these and other issues, the proponent chose not to address them. The Adam's Rib decision, although not a final

one, was a community choice because people stayed involved throughout the process and consistently managed their issues. In the few weeks prior to the final hearings, field team members assisted citizens, business people, and the developer to prepare for testimony by helping them to clarify their issues, to understand the impacts that had been identified, and to apply the laws and regulations pertinent to the decision. Officials at both sets of hearings commended community members on their well-disciplined and well-documented testimony.

The Development of Social Impact Management Systems

The key focus of social impact management is to determine how an existing culture functions, to identify the informal methods of problem solving people use in their routine experience, and to clarify how decisions are arrived at and implemented in the community. Once the cultural mechanisms are identified, then specific communication links into that culture can be established so that it can efficiently process outsiders and new ways of doing things with minimal confusion and disruption. By tapping into the way a community communicates daily and resolves its problems, strategies to resolve issues related to social impacts are assured of being practical and grounded to the social context.
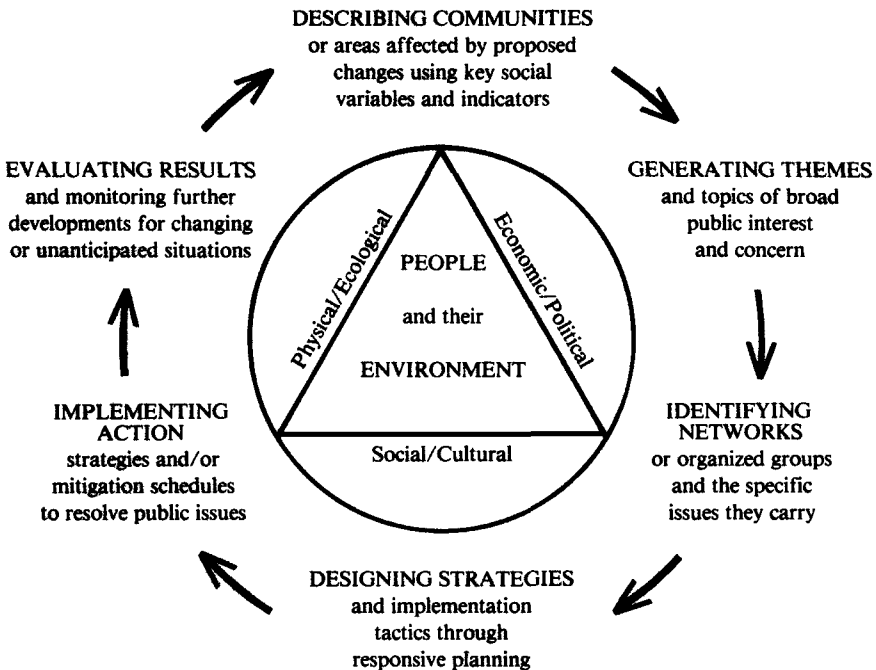
The goal of social impact management is to assist government and industry to externalize management so as to understand the grass-roots issues of the individuals and their affected cultures and communities. Once externalization takes place, the company or agency then organizes its internal operations to fit what they have found.

Figure 1 indicates the six steps involved with the development and implementation of a social impact management system. In practice, the procedures from step to step are considerably more detailed and methodical than outlined. As indicated by the clockwise motion, the process both begins and ends with *description* in a continuous ongoing loop, which means that it never actually ends as long as the organization keeps the cycle of impact management alive. Methods to organize incoming data in a systematic way are developed with the client. Managerial action or intervention can be taken at any stage of the process when it seems desirable and feasible to do so.

The process for resolving issues and facilitating mitigation agreements occurs in the design and implementation of strategies. Emerging and existing issues are cycled back into the management sequence and addressed as opportunities for creative responses in management practices. A primary intent is to prevent emerging issues from becoming disruptive and to create a climate of mutual trust and open communication. An issue that is resolved early main-

tains the stability and integrity of the management system by preventing costly aberrations in its functioning while fostering stable relationships with the community. An issue that is allowed to become disruptive tends to constrict or eliminate the options of management to deal with it, since it is then often handled by higher levels of authority, media attention, or the courts. A disruptive issue still influences management activities, but usually in ways that are not desired.

Figure 1
Steps in the Development and Implementation
of a Social Impact Management Process

DESCRIBING COMMUNITIES
or areas affected by proposed
changes using key social
variables and indicators

EVALUATING RESULTS
and monitoring further
developments for changing
or unanticipated situations

GENERATING THEMES
and topics of broad
public interest
and concern

PEOPLE

and their

ENVIRONMENT

Physical/Ecological

Economic/Political

Social/Cultural

IMPLEMENTING
ACTION
strategies and/or
mitigation schedules
to resolve public issues

IDENTIFYING
NETWORKS
or organized groups
and the specific
issues they carry

DESIGNING STRATEGIES
and implementation
tactics through
responsive planning

The Application of Social Impact Management Programs

The process for the management of social impact outlined in this paper takes many years of ongoing commitment to implement. In recent years, the authors have worked (through FUND — Foundation of Urban Neighborhood Development) with local governments, federal agencies, multinational energy corporations, telecommunication firms, and other clients. Different communities and agencies FUND has worked with are in varying stages of institutionalizing this process.[6] Three examples are offered here.

Honolulu. The most recent and comprehensive example is a series of contracts FUND has had over the last two years with the city and county of Honolulu to develop what is being called a Social Impact Management System (SIMS).[7] Prior to our entry, land-use conflicts had been growing. The dominance of the tourist economy and decline of diversification had limited the ability of citizens to control their future. Growth impacts had reached high levels: six out of nine council members were under recall, development projects were being stopped in their tracks, and the deterioration of neighborhoods was visible daily in crime rates, youth unemployment, and social service demands.

By using the social impact management process described in Figure 1, neighborhood units and public issues were identified and contacts with citizen networks established. This activity led to the development of city ordinances which were drawn up to incorporate social impact guidelines, including a Social Impact Permit, into the city charter. If the city council votes to adopt these measures, Honolulu will be the first municipality in the nation formally to institute social impact guidelines. The process of full development in terms of establishing a long-term culture of involved citizens able to control their destiny will require many more years of intentional effort.

Forest Service. Another example is the Forest Service in Region 2, which is attempting to institutionalize a program called Socially Responsive Management (SRM).[8] After five years of effort, the fine tuning of the program is now in progress and includes such considerations as how to improve regional coordination for resolving issues and how to build personnel incentives for socially responsive management.

The Forest Service has acknowledged the following results from its SRM Program: increased awareness of the social environment of which their organization is a part; a better understanding of the mutual influence between Forest Service activities and local communities has been realized on a practical level; Forest Service personnel have regular contacts with citizen networks to monitor changing interests and to update information on how issues are being addressed; public involvement has been implemented in a way that fulfills legal requirements while providing more useful information than is available from surveys; legal requirements are fulfilled so that citizens are able to "track" their issues throughout the formal planning process.

Upper Eagle Valley. FUND's most inclusive effort to date has been the town of Minturn and other communities in the Upper Eagle Valley, Colorado. Over the last eight years, FUND has had a series of contracts and grants from the ski industry, the Forest Service, and foundations to assist local communities as they continue their transition from a timber, mining, and railroad economy to one of recreation.[9] A management process was not included in formal govern-

ment or corporation structures, but a culture of involvement and control has been established with the people. The following results have been realized: the small-town character, Hispanic population, and strong family orientation that its residents wanted to protect from the condos and the "eternal vacation" atmosphere of nearby ski areas have been sustained; the first social impact mitigations in the nation to be included in a Forest Service permit included provisions for employee housing and a career conversion program; the stabilization of the local communities required a $5.4 million land purchase from Vail Associates to protect land uses at the entrance to Upper Eagle Valley; the land was deeded to the Forest Service to protect it from development and to provide local recreation opportunities (the closing of the Gilman mine required career conversion efforts to help miners in the transition to a recreation economy); eighteen minority-owned businesses were established and a career conversion program developed; pressure was added to a state-wide effort for a policy on mine closings that would require mitigation efforts.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a clinical sociological approach for responding to the increased demand of industry and government for socially responsive management training and consultation. This approach to social impact assessment and management is applicable for legally required SIAs or for efforts undertaken by industry or government as good management practice. Two professional goals are realized: (1) an issue-centered, comprehensive, scientific, and predictive assessment of social effects; and (2) the professional ethic which demands an accurate reflection of the social reality that leads to increased ability of communities to control their future.

The number of contracts related to social impact prevention and management is growing beyond legal requirements and is likely to continue to grow. Social science professionals who can build cultural bridges in a practical way between different groups in a diverse society will be in high demand. Opportunities for leadership in social impact assessment and management are available for clinical sociologists with training in methodology, community and urban theory, and environmental sociology.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper appeared in *Social Impact Assessment Newsletter,* Nov./Dec. 1981, C. P. Wolf, editor. Special acknowledgement is due to FUND staff members who have contributed to the conceptual development of the present paper: Linda Bacigalupi, Hugh Gardner, Rick Greiwe, and Bob Gallegos.
2. Power in this sense operates in a manner that draws people together in networks for mutual action but discourages the exercise of power over others. See Kent (1972).

3. See, for example, Toffler (1970); Ferguson (1980); and the works of John Naisbitt, publisher of the Washington, D.C., Trend Report.

4. It is becoming increasingly difficult, incidentally, for federal agencies to get approval for surveys through the Office of Management and Budget, particularly during the Reagan administration.

5. Published reports related to the social and economic impact assessment of the proposed Adam's Rib Recreational Area are available through FUND, Denver, Colorado.

6. In addition to those mentioned here, organizations currently implementing this process include selected forests in Regions 2, 4, 8, and 9 of the U.S. Forest Service; the State of Virginia Division of Forestry; and the Bureau of Forest Development, Philippines.

7. Documentation is available through FUND Pacific Associates, Honolulu, Hawaii.

8. Richard J. Greiwe, FUND's manager of training programs, has prepared four handbooks used in Forest Service SRM training, available through FUND, Denver, Colorado.

9. Publications discussing the recommendations stemming from the Redcliff, Gilman, and Minturn areas (by Jean Bailey and James A. Kent) and on the Upper Eagle Valley (Susan E. Massman, ed.) are available through FUND, Denver, Colorado.

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