Collaborative Sustainability Assessment for Significant Land-Use Planning and Development

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institute.

…………………………………..

Caroline Raphael

April 2011
Abstract

There is an increasing need to integrate sustainability and deliberation within land-use planning and development. In Western Australia, despite much rhetoric, there are no effective frameworks or guidelines to support their integration. Sustainability assessment is considered one option to integrate greater levels of sustainability within planning and development (see for example, Pope 2007, Gibson et al. 2005). This thesis explores this possibility, asking the question: “how could sustainability assessment and deliberation best be applied for significant land-use planning and development undertakings in Western Australia?”

The thesis first reviews the literature on sustainability assessment and deliberation. This review reveals that existing approaches have substantial limitations. It is argued that a new approach which draws upon the strengths of these approaches and addresses their limitations is needed. The review also reveals that, in respect to deliberation, limited knowledge exists regarding which dimensions of deliberation are more important from the perspective of those involved and how best to link deliberation to sustainability assessment.

In order to seek insights from practice that could address these gaps, a case study methodology is then used. Two Western Australian cases are examined: the Fremantle Harbours Policy process and the ING Commercial Development, which commenced in 2006 and 2003, respectively. Both cases applied various forms of assessment and deliberation at the policy level and the development application level. The case study analysis reveals that the separation of assessment and deliberative processes does not address key issues or areas of concern. Indeed, the outcomes are less than optimal, with harmed and fractured relationships between key parties resulting. With regards to deliberation, for those interviewed, seeking inclusivity and capacity to influence decision-making were the most important dimensions of deliberation. From their perspective and for both cases, the right people were not involved effectively and capacity to influence key decision-making processes was granted superficially. In both cases, understanding of the issues and their implications was hampered by limited time, resources and aids to fully appreciate the impacts/benefits associated. Honesty, trust and respect were not fostered throughout the deliberative and assessment processes, resulting in a lack of honest responses and preferences being revealed. Deliberative events, in particular, were too large to hold intimate conversations and dominant players had the effect of silencing others. Finally, the media limited deliberation in both cases, restricting rather than enhancing communication on the projects.
Both cases reveal that despite rhetoric for sustainability, it is not adequately integrated into the assessment process. None of the processes revealed the divergent frames and supported frame-bridging, frame-shifts, frame-reflection or reframing to the extent which could enable the resolution of controversy surrounding both cases. In the case of the ING Commercial Development, long after the approval for the development, conflict continued about poor design and execution of deliberative events.

Based on these findings, collaborative sustainability assessment is presented as a more suitable approach for significant land-use planning and development undertakings. The emphasis on collaboration is to develop and foster positive and productive relationships with key parties to enable sustainability assessment and deliberation to take place, and help deal with conflict which may arise. The argument is that, had collaborative approaches been undertaken, issues surrounding deliberation and assessment could have been better dealt with in both cases and relationships fostered, not harmed in the process. Better outcomes would also have resulted.

Building on the findings from the literature review and cases, this thesis proposes collaborative sustainability assessment, emphasising the key dimensions of deliberation and sustainability assessment which should be undertaken within this framework. This framework should help practitioners and theorists in devising, implementing and examining collaborative sustainability assessment in practice. The key contribution of this framework is that it intimately links theory and practice on deliberation and sustainability assessment, providing a sense of reality to collaborative sustainability assessment.

This thesis can be seen as a starting point and an important aspect will be to examine how collaborative sustainability assessment should fit into planning and, importantly, help integrate planning into the broader sustainability agenda. This should be the focus of future theoretical and empirical research.
Publications

Sections of this dissertation have already been presented as a conference paper:


Sections of this dissertation have also been presented at the following conferences:


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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIA</td>
<td>Biodiversity Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEA</td>
<td>Cumulative Effects Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIA</td>
<td>Demographic Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPD</td>
<td>Development Plan Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSA</td>
<td>Deliberative Sustainability Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFIA</td>
<td>Economic and Fiscal Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Assessment</td>
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<td>ESIA</td>
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<td>EOI</td>
<td>Expression Of Interest</td>
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<td>HIA</td>
<td>Health Impact Assessment</td>
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<td>IA</td>
<td>Integrated Assessment</td>
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<td>IAIA</td>
<td>International Association for Impact Assessment</td>
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<td>IEA</td>
<td>Integrated Environmental Assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIA</td>
<td>Integrated Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISA</td>
<td>Integrated Sustainability Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LULU</td>
<td>Locally-Unwanted-Land-Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIMBY</td>
<td>Not-in-My-Back-Yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPDM</td>
<td>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIA</td>
<td>Privacy Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPA</td>
<td>Political and Policy Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS</td>
<td>Regional Spatial Strategy</td>
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<td>Sustainability Assessment</td>
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