



RESOURCE

Strategic environmental assessment in post-modern times

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Description / Abstract

The increasing awareness of the findings of policy and decision making theory in the environmental assessment community has recently led to an intensifying debate on the theoretical foundations and the appropriate practical use of strategic environmental assessment (SEA). In this context, most of the recent suggestions on how to improve practice have been influenced—consciously or sub-consciously—by the post-modernist paradigm, focusing particularly on a better integration of SEA into ‘real’ decision making and procedural flexibility. There have also been suggestions that traditional project environmental impact assessment (EIA)-based SEA approaches are generally inadequate. Reacting to the latter criticism, this paper aims at defending ‘traditional’ systematically structured and normative approaches to SEA. While it is acknowledged that a purely professional and technological paradigm to SEA is something of the past, it is proposed that leaving the design of ‘flexible’ SEA to the will of proponents and stakeholders might ultimately render it incapable of protecting the environment.

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