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## **Book Review:**

### **'Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment' – fifth edn.**

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## **Publication Details**

*"Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment"* by Glasson, J. and Therivel, R. (2019) – Abingdon, Routledge, 978-1-138-60075-1, Paperback - UK£40.99 (also available in hardback and e-book)

## **General Overview**

Glasson and Therivel's *'Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment'* has been comprehensively updated in the fifth edition of what has become one of the key textbooks used in both teaching EIA and for reference by practitioners.

With over 50% new content since the previous (2014) edition, this book offers valuable insights into the theoretical basis from which environmental assessment has grown, as well as a comprehensive overview of the practicalities of authoring an EIA report.

The revised title comes at time of reflection and renewal in the environmental assessment community. The practice will soon celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the United States, while revised European legislation has caused practitioners across the continent to reconsider how they approach their work. Glasson and Therivel's revised

text offers comprehensive insight into these changes while maintaining the approachable and authoritative tone which has made this title essential reading since it was first published 20 years ago.

### **Theoretical Perspective / Evaluation**

The book guides readers through recent legislative changes and outlines contemporary theory and practice in four plosive parts - detailed below - allowing students who are new to EIA and allied assessment techniques to quickly access the information they need.

#### (Part 1) Principles and Procedures

Chapter 1 begins by offering succinct definitions and clearly illustrated guides to the EIA process. This is crucial information for both students of EIA and their peers across architecture, engineering, and construction who may only touch on what their colleagues do. The chapter is also reflective, calling into question some of the issues which have emerged through a half-century of professional practice.

Chapter 2 looks back through the last 50 years from the emergence of EIA through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1970 through the international diffusion of environmental assessments. This is joined with a European perspective in chapter 3, which outlines the introduction and subsequent revisions to EIA across the continent. This chapter is perhaps Anglocentric, but the lessons from practice in the UK should apply to the rest of the EU through their harmonised environmental policies (Brexit, notwithstanding).

#### (Part 2) Process

The EIA process is detailed in four chapters that make up one third of the book's contents. Chapter 4 guides readers through various tools used to manage the assessment process before looking at specific techniques used to predict impacts in chapter 5. Both of these chapters offers readers a wide array of assessment techniques which may inform their work in practice, including tackling contention issues around uncertainty and significance of impacts.

Chapter 6 considers the effectiveness of different forms of public participation in projects before discussing how the EIA's findings can be published, touching on issues around increasingly voluminous reports. Monitoring – the frequently neglected end of the EIA process – is considered in chapter 7. This is again illustrated with case studies and best practices which may serve as an example for practitioners who are keen to become more involved the full life cycle of EIA projects.

### (Part 3) Practice

Having documented the overall EIA process from pre-screening through to monitoring, part 3 looks at contemporaneous practice with detailed insights into UK practice in chapter 8. This includes recent illustrations of the frequency with which different topics are included in EIA reports, as well as offering brief insights into the costs and legal considerations around EIA.

Case studies include the on-going proposals for a third runway at London Heathrow airport and the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station – both of which are likely to still be underway and have resonance with readers should a sixth edition of this book come to press.

Chapter 9 looks beyond British practice and offers readers a continent-by-continent overview of the international use of EIA through case studies involving both megaprojects and more regional-scale developments. The authors also include

discussion of projects taking place beyond national jurisdictions in emerging maritime and arctic developments.

(Part 4) Prospects

The book's final section allows the authors to take a more reflective look at the future prospects for EIA, as many of us might after having reached as significant a milestone as EIA has on its 50<sup>th</sup> year.

Chapter 10 begins by looking at the growing number of EIA topics, as well as the more socio-economic factors which have grown into assessment techniques in their own right. In chapter 11, Glasson and Therivel look at how the shortcomings in EIA might be addressed. These range from the effectiveness of EIAs as a decision-making tool, through to concerns with the ever-growing scale of EIA reports and understanding how new digital-led reporting might help each of these issues.

The overall scope of the book is increased in chapter 12 as the authors offer readers a look at strategic environmental assessment (SEA) in what serves as a brief aside from the book's core topic, offering readers a useful introduction to EIA's sibling assessment tool.

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The raft of legislative changes that have been introduced since the last edition of this textbook – and the extent to which they have been addressed in this title – make the fifth edition of “Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment” essential reading for students and new practitioners alike. Glasson and Therivel have crafted a book which guides readers through the EIA process with helpful illustrations and case studies which recognise issues with current practice.

Concerns around proportionality are tempered with the recognitions that complexity is not a vice. In a world looking for easy solutions or quick soundbites, perhaps environmental assessors owe it to decision-makers to present their best, fullest assessment of the environmental constraints and opportunities which must be addressed. Students and practitioners adopting the tools set out in this textbook should hopefully meet these challenges.

“Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment” (2019) is published by Routledge and is available now in both paper- and hardback, as well as eBook editions.

### **Reviewer Information**

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