

# THE EFFECT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ON DEVELOPMENT

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# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

“The process of identifying, predicting, evaluating and mitigating the biophysical, social, and other relevant effects of development proposals prior to major decisions being taken and commitments made.” (IAIA 1999, p.2)

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- Political imperative (Cashmore et al 2004)
- Aspirational – but vague (Jay et al. 2007)
  - Fundamental shift in values
  - EA – the action forcing mechanism
- Emphasis on developing legislative and procedural requirements (Caldwell 1998, Cashmore et al 2004)
- Neglected theoretical basis? (Owens et al. 2004; Lawrence 1997)

# PURPOSE

- “Ensure environmental considerations are explicitly addressed and incorporated into the development decision making process;
- Anticipate, avoid, minimize or offset adverse significant biophysical, social and other relevant effects of development proposals;
- Protect the productivity and capacity of natural systems and the ecological processes which maintain their functions; and
- Promote development that is sustainable and optimizes resource use and management opportunities.”

(IAIA 1999, p.2)

# PURPOSE

- Impose a procedure, force a decision and promote governance, accountability and transparency in association with decision making

(Caldwell 1998; Richardson & Cashmore 2011; Wood 2003)

- Promote stakeholder engagement and involvement, allow for discussion and deliberation

(Elling 2009; Rozema & Bond 2015; Owens et al. 2004)

- Transform organisations – mainstream environmental considerations into everyday procedures, activities and decisions, potentially shift underlying values in relation to environment and development

(Lawrence 1997; Bartlett 1989; Caldwell 1989)

# SUPPORTING THEORY

- Scientific prediction
- Decision making
- Social and political theory
- Organisational learning

# DOES EA HAVE ANY EFFECT?

Those involved generally agree that EA does make a difference to development (eg Sadler 1996)

Difficult to measure outcomes as improved levels of environmental protection or [more] sustainable development (Jay et al 2007)

## Observed effects include:

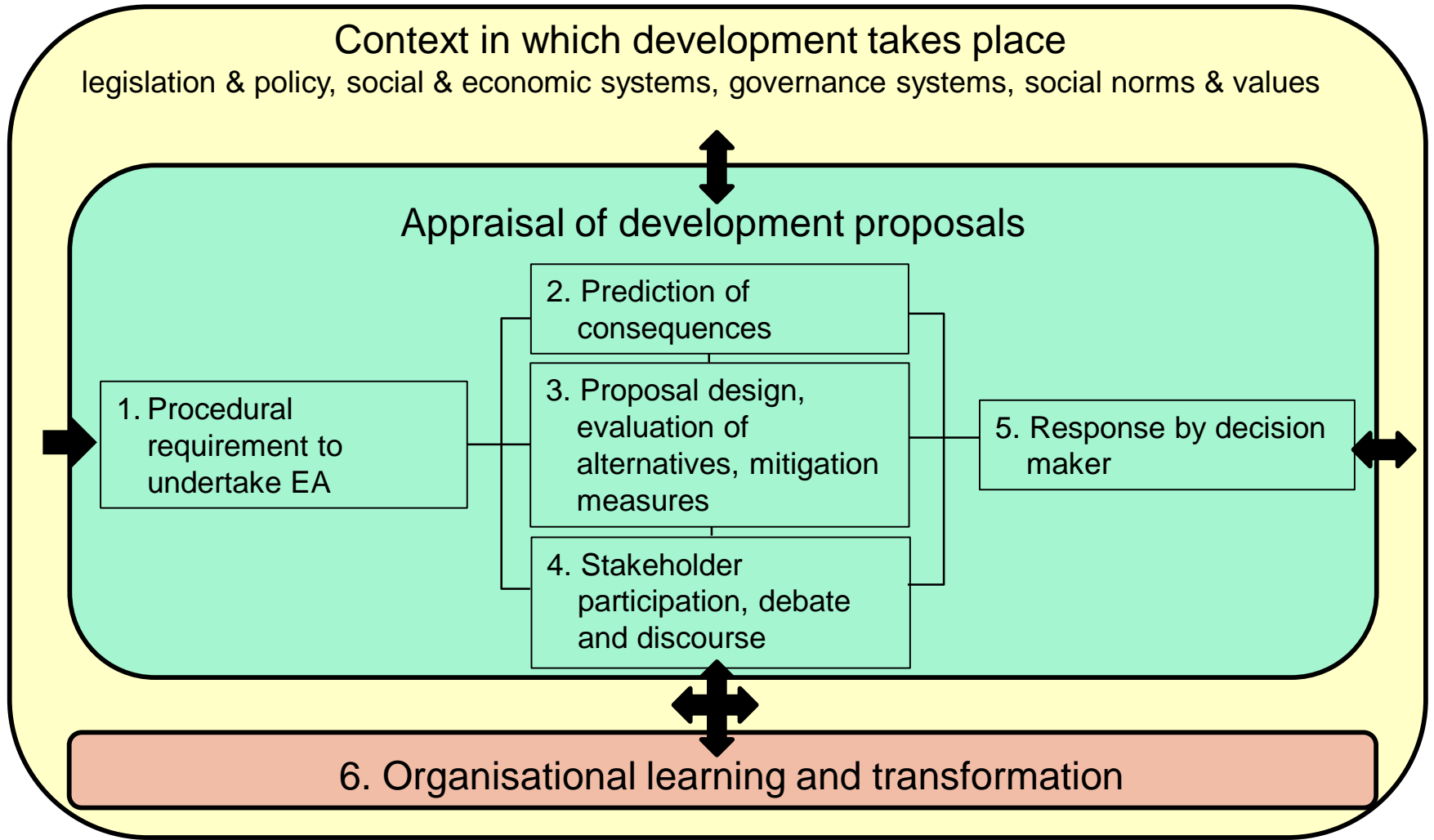
- Pre-screening effect (Sadler 1996; Christensen et al. 2005)
- Modifications to development proposals, adoption of mitigation measures (Wood and Jones 1997)
- Increased attention to environmental matters in decision making, conditional approvals (Wood and Jones 1997)

Effects are not delivered consistently, expectations not always met

(Cashmore et al 2004)



# Conceptual Framework: Causal Mechanisms for the Effect of EA



## Supporting theoretical perspectives

### Scientific prediction:

- Accuracy, uncertainty, complexity
- Types of knowledge

### Social and political theory:

- Coalitions and conflict
- Power
- Governance

### Decision making:

- Processes
- Underlying values and norms

### Organisational learning:

- Single/double loop
- Organisational transformation

# FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS

