

Foreword

Major politically important development projects seem to pose challenges to Nordic Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) systems. We have experienced during recent years several cases of quite large negative environmental impacts occurring from major development projects and the need for EIA is still, in some cases, being questioned. Recently there have been several large-scale developments projects in all the Nordic countries that have received political and public attention, not least in relation to their environmental effects. Despite implementation of environmental legislation since at least the 1960-ies and implementation of EIA legislation since the beginning of the 1990-ies the Nordic countries are still experiencing in some instances negative environmental impacts deriving from major development projects. The EIA systems in the Nordic countries still must be considered to be in a build up phase compared to some international experiences. So far there is not a wealth of evaluation studies that could shed light on the current achievements of the Nordic EIA systems.

The aim of the project, “*The role of EIA in the planning and decision process of large development projects in the Nordic countries*”, presented in this report, was to get a closer examination of some major Nordic development cases in order to reflect on how efficient and satisfactory the EIA legislation and implementation has become in the Nordic countries, in relation to major development projects. Has the EIA implementation failed in several major development projects? Or are the expectations of the outcomes and effect of the EIA process too high? Are the different Nordic EIA systems designed to cope with highly politicised and controversial major development projects? Where can the reasons be found for at least some of these failures? Are there also success stories opposing the negative picture of EIA performance in this context? Are the weaknesses found just “childhood sicknesses” or are there more fundamental causes to be found? The comparative analysis aims at finding mutual or diverging experiences as input to the processes of reflecting on the current status of National Nordic EIA legislations.

The results from the project were presented and discussed at a Nordic seminar, 17-18 September 2000, at Reykjavik Iceland. The programme, summary of the seminar, overheads etc are found on the home page of Nordic EA Network, www.nordregio.se.

Five case studies, one from each of the Nordic countries, were selected. The Norwegian case, the localisation of the national airport Gardermoen, and the Swedish case, the construction of a railway tunnel through Hallandsåsen, were chosen because of their importance as national development projects, for their political interest, for the environmental impacts that occurred and because major official evaluations reports existed as a good ground for the analysis. The Finnish case with final disposal of nuclear waste was chosen because of its importance as a national development project, for its political interest and because the project has been monitored by other research projects which provided a good basis for analysis. The Icelandic case was chosen because of its importance as a national development project, for its political interest and because of the possible environmental impacts. The Danish case, the upgrading of the railway link between Fredericia and Århus, was chosen because of its special outcome and the role of public participation.

The following persons have been responsible for the analysis of the national case studies:

Denmark	Ulf Kjellerup, Roskilde University
Finland	Pekka Hokkanen, University of Tampere
Iceland	Hólmfrídur Sigurdadóttir and Ásdís Hlökk Theodórsdóttir, Planning Agency
Norway	Morten Stenstadsvold, Institute of Transport Economics
Sweden	Josefin Päiviö and Hans-Georg Wallentinus, Uppsala Agricultural University.

Tore Sager, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, has in his contribution, commented on the case study experiences from a planning theory perspective.

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