University of Groningen

The assessment and management of social impacts in urban transport infrastructure projects

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DOI:
[10.33612/diss.146359554](https://doi.org/10.33612/diss.146359554)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2020

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Mottee, L. (2020). *The assessment and management of social impacts in urban transport infrastructure projects: Exploring relationships between urban governance, project management and impact assessment practices in different geographical contexts*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen]. University of Groningen. <https://doi.org/10.33612/diss.146359554>

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THE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL IMPACTS IN URBAN TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

*Exploring relationships between urban governance,
project management and impact assessment practices
in different geographical contexts*

Lara Katharine Mottee

L K. Mottee

The assessment and management of social impacts in urban transport infrastructure projects.

Thesis, University of Groningen, The Netherlands and Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.

Publication of the thesis was co-supported financially by Macquarie University and the University of Groningen.

Cover design: Loes Kema, GVO printers & designers, Ede.

Cover photo: [Back to Front] Sharon Dijksma (Alderman of the City of Amsterdam). Mark Lohmeijer (Acting CEO of GVB), His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and Hoite Detmar (Project Director of the Noord/Zuid Metrolijn project). This photo was taken on 25 September 2020, the day that the King visited the Noord/Zuid Metrolijn project and met with Hoite and others. The conversation that day included not only lessons about time, money and technique, but also about open and transparent communication (also about risks and mistakes) with the public and the many parties involved to work together to solve problems and how to structure organisations internally. EM-Press/Mischa Schoemaker. © Copyright 2020 used with permission from Hoite Detmar.

Layout & Printing: GVO printers & designers, Ede.

ISBN (printed book): 978-94-6332-704-6

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 groningen**

MACQUARIE
University
SYDNEY · AUSTRALIA

The assessment and management of social impacts in urban transport infrastructure projects

Exploring relationships between urban governance, project management and impact
assessment practices in different geographical contexts

PhD thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof. C. Wijmenga
and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans

and

to obtain the degree of PhD at
Macquarie University
on the authority of the
University Council
and in accordance with
the decision by the Research and Research Training Council

Double PhD degree

This thesis will be defended in public on

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THE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL IMPACTS IN URBAN TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

**Exploring relationships between urban governance, project management
and impact assessment practices in different geographical contexts**

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A thesis presented to Macquarie University in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Supervised under cotutelle agreement with the University of Groningen

Submission Date: Monday, 31 August 2020

Preface

“Geographers can contribute to a way of doing impact assessment research which is committed to local empowerment, good planning and more equitable distribution of costs and benefits of development, in other words, an applied peoples’ geography” (Howitt, 1993, p. 138).

Richie Howitt’s 1993 paper describing Social Impact Assessment (SIA) as ‘The Applied Peoples’ Geography’ addressed a research-action opportunity for the *professional geographer* to undertake research that represents everything SIA in the present strives to be – empowering, participatory and interventionist. When I was first introduced to this paper in 2014, as an Environmental Consultant writing the ‘social bit’ for many Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), I had never considered the possibility of using my human geography studies in this way. It made me realise that I had reached a point where it was time for me, not just to be a professional, but to also be a *geographer*, and allow myself to explore the underlying causes somewhat freer from the institutional constraints of my work. As such, this thesis represents my manifesto, many years in the making. It draws from my career experiences and academic learnings from those fellow geographers who have inspired me to challenge the status quo, advocate for positive change, and contribute to a more sustainable future for all. It applies a geographical lens to ambitiously investigate a problem I identified in my practice career: how to improve transport planning practices in the assessment and management of social impacts in an objectivity-obsessed technocratic urban environment.

Moving continents to Groningen (The Netherlands) part way through my first year, participating in Dutch life and culture, having our first child in my final year, and writing my conclusions in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic, also made me appreciate more than ever before, the value of social relationships, personal mobility, global accessibility and family well-being. The international experience of living in The Netherlands placed me in a better position to understand the nuances of the spatial and infrastructure planning context in the Netherlands, as compared to my own Australian-based work experiences. Investigating these issues on an international scale has cemented my view that we must prioritise social issues equally with economic and engineering concerns in assessing future alternatives for transport planning in cities, to be better *urban* practitioners, no matter what type of professional we trained as, whether planner, lawyer, scientist, engineer or other.

My professional career and life experiences have undoubtedly shaped the position I adopted in the research. After more than 12 years participating in environmental infrastructure consulting, writing Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) and management reports, the value of ESIA practice in guiding decision-making and influencing outcomes delivered from projects became a key driver for my intellectual endeavours. For government projects, the political, economic and strategic justification for projects always focused on the ‘public need’ or ‘public interest’. Thus, having worked on government projects for many years, I came to this understanding about how they are assessed, planned, managed and justified in this way.

I brought this knowledge from past experiences to the focus groups and interviews conducted in both countries. It influenced how questions were developed and shaped discussions. In turn, my own views and experiences have been enriched and challenged by the participants who have been involved in the research. Their willingness and openness to share their experiences have made me

discover a bigger picture in the urban context than what I had come to expect in my narrow worldview as an environmental consultant in practice. Participants felt comfortable to share their experiences with me, someone with knowledge in their professional practice to whom they could relate. I cannot dispute that without my work experiences, I would not have known of what behaviours to be critical of, what processes to expect and to what goals to aspire to, in seeking answers to how improved practice might lead to better social outcomes.

This research and the questions I have proposed are very personal aspirations for both my own practice and for the interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary social science that is SIA. I am very much cognizant that with my practice experience and these aspirations in mind that during this research journey I have become a 'pracademic', sitting at the nexus between practice and academia, and an Activist Researcher, advocating that practitioners and SIA can do better. But what my participants have also shown me is that my own practice, impact assessment practice, is one very small part of the wider urban fabric. There are many complex relationships that fit together to create the urban system and power and influence in those relationships constantly shifts between the interests of political decision-makers, corporate actors, activists and populations. What this research experience has shown me, is that this complexity is not unique to one geographical context but is a characteristic of global cities.

Whatever city my family and I choose to live in, whichever city I choose to work in, my research will always be influenced by my surroundings and the familiarities I draw from my urban global experiences.

Lara Katharine Mottee

Utrecht, August, 2020

Acknowledgements

They say it takes a village to raise a child – I would say the same to raise a thesis! My research journey and the development of this thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, mentorship, support and friendship over the past three and half years (and more!) of my supervisory team. I am lucky enough to have four fantastic, knowledgeable and intelligent supervisors each of whom brought their own individual experiences and ideas to help shape my research.

I firstly want to acknowledge and thank Richie, who has believed in me from the beginning – long before I believed in myself. The words in this thesis have undoubtedly been moulded by your inspiration and endless dedication to seeing me finish – especially in all the moments I felt everything was all too much. Many times I've burdened you with more than a supervisor should have to handle, from paperwork to polishing prose. No matter what, you're always there to greet me with a smile and a hug, virtual or otherwise. You have been my biggest academic 'fan' through the past four years, and I'll be forever grateful for all the support you've given me.

Fiona: I want to thank you for all your academic inspiration and guidance as my supervisor and as the HDR coordinator. You also gave me the opportunity to assist you as a marker in the SIA course, which provided me with much-needed academic experience of which I am very proud of.

Jos: you were my surprise bonus supervisor when I came to Groningen and I would not trade you for any other! You've been a massive support in so many ways: finding participants, teaching me Dutch, making professional connections, academic advice, many proof-reads, and above all you've been a wonderful friend.

Last but not least, I want to thank you, Frank. I was incredibly humbled and a little bit star-struck by the opportunity to work with you. The experience did not disappoint – you have been a model supervisor, spending numerous hours helping me with countless edits and re-writes, listening to my complaints and having supportive conversations, and teaching me about all things academia. Thank you so very much for your contribution to this research and my career into the future, I am incredibly grateful.

My fellow PhD candidates, at both Macquarie University and the University of Groningen. Wherever I was in the world, whatever the timezone, I always had someone I could message, call, complain to, cry with, or rely on to get me through the good and bad parts of doing a PhD. In Australia, Yayut, right from the beginning of my MRes journey, you were there encouraging me! Nav, Tracy, Sufia, Sunita – you have been such an inspiration and support, I am so grateful to you all. In The Netherlands, my two paranymphs, Nina and Eva. I couldn't have survived my Dutch experience and PhD journey without you both! I will never forget our chats, catch-ups, and endless hugs, coffees and teas. Thank you so much, you mean the world to me. Suzan, my go-to-person for all things Dutch and first-time motherhood, and for stepping-up at the last minute as my on-the-ground paranymph, you're amazing, thank you! I am also very grateful to Gwenda and Robin for their support with the Dutch translation and for answering my many language questions, and fantastic chats and friendship over my PhD. Also, thank you to my PhD friends, office-mates and other colleagues in both faculties and departments who have mentored me on many things in life and research. You have all been such wonderful peers to have worked with, and I could not have asked for better.

Thank you also to the administrative staff at both universities. Navigating the paperwork and rules for a cotutelle has been a massive undertaking. Your support helped me achieve what I have done

in two countries, under two sets of regulations. I am also grateful to both the Department of Cultural Geography at University of Groningen and the Department of Geography and Planning at Macquarie University for sponsoring me to undertake this research. Both universities supported me in two countries for which I am extremely fortunate.

I greatly appreciate the contributions of my participants, who gave their time willingly and without compensation (sometimes even buying me a coffee!) to take part in my research. This research is the sum of their contributions and would not have been possible without them. To the government organisations who hosted my workshops and focus groups, thank you for being a tremendous support in bringing participants together. Also thank the International Association of Impact Assessment and the Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand for allowing me to host workshops and focus groups at their annual events. A special thank you to Rachel Maas, Richard Parsons and Jane Munday, who went out of their way at many points during my research journey to encourage me, bring the best of my abilities out, and make sure I had the right people to talk to.

My beautiful friends, new and old, inside and outside my academic and professional circles – you are truly incredible people and have inspired me to keep going every day. Thank you for believing in me and reminding me of all the wonderful things that life has to offer outside of work.

To my in-laws, Jann and Doug, you are the most kind and generous people, I am a very lucky daughter-in-law. Reading and re-reading my chapters, picking up my mistakes, endless positive accolades, and spoiling us always. A massive thank you to you both!

My little brother, not so little anymore, thank you so much for the intelligent chats, motivating words, and for being my rock and much more whenever I needed you. To my mum and to my dad (from up above), thank you so much for supporting me through my PhD and throughout my life. From supporting me to head overseas, both financially and with an Italian passport, and through the unexpected: COVID-19. Mum, I never anticipated having you living with us for so many months in 2020, but the support you gave us in looking after Sofia was what got me through the last few chapters. I am eternally grateful.

To my husband, Phil: a million ‘thank yous’ will never be enough to say how grateful I am to you. The words “I could not have done this without you” cannot be truer for any other person. You have been, and still are, my emotional and financial support, chief masseur, hugger and barista, my knight in shining armour, my idiot in tin foil, my best friend and partner in crime on this epic life adventure. From day one when I decided I wanted to do a PhD, you were right there to support me and cheer me on. You took my stressed moments, my tantrums and tears in your stride, and have given me many smiles and laughs in return. Thank you so much for your many sacrifices, being so patient over the years, and for staying by my side, especially in the extended final sprint to the finish line over the past few months with the new addition of Sofia in our lives. I am in awe of you every day. Love you forever and always.

To my daughter, Sofia, you are too little to read this right now, but I hope one day you will and that you will be proud of your mama, like I am of you, little one. You give me a sense of purpose that I’ve never had before, your laughter fills my ears with joy, and your smiles fill my heart with love. It makes me the happiest to know that now I have finished this thesis, I can spend a lot more time with you and your dad.

To everyone else I met on my research journey and has inspired me along the way, it has been a long but challenging and rewarding ride, many thanks to you all!

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures.....	iv
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	v
List of Publications	vi
Statement of Originality	vii
Chapter 1 – Introduction: transport infrastructure projects and urban context	1
1.1. Background to the research.....	3
1.2. Key concepts and conceptual framework underpinning the research	6
1.3. Relevance of the research	15
1.4. Research aims and questions	17
1.5. Methodological approach.....	19
1.6. Outline of the thesis.....	31
1.7. References	32
Chapter 2 – Follow-up and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in Urban Transport Infrastructure projects: Insights from the Parramatta Rail Link	39
Publication details.....	40
Publication background.....	40
Statement of authorship.....	40
Abstract	40
2.1. Introduction.....	41
2.2. Problem background: evaluating the success of major infrastructure projects in society	41
2.3. Managing the social impacts of transport development in Sydney: local context	44
2.4. Parramatta rail link: exemplar of good practice or lessons to be learned?.....	45
2.5. Results: key insights in the management of social impacts.....	49
2.6. Lessons learned and implications.....	52
2.7. Conclusions and future directions.....	53
2.8. References	55
Chapter 3 – Limitations of technical approaches to transport planning practice in two cases: Social issues as a critical component of urban projects.	59
Publication details.....	60
Publication background.....	60
Statement of authorship.....	60
Abstract	60
3.1. Introduction.....	61
3.2. Social impacts and transport planning	62
3.3. Methodology and background to the cases	67
3.4. Assessing the social Impacts of urban transport infrastructure development	69
3.5. Conclusion	77
3.6. References	79

Chapter 4 – Metro Infrastructure Planning in Amsterdam: How are social issues managed in the absence of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment?	85
Publication details	86
Publication background	86
Statement of authorship	86
Abstract	86
4.1. Introduction	87
4.2. Background to the North-South Metro Line	88
4.3. Environmental Impact Assessment and the North-South Metro Line	92
4.4. Methodology	92
4.5. Reflections on assessing and managing the social impacts of the North-South Metro Line	94
4.6. Discussion and reflections for managing future social impacts	104
4.7. Conclusion	108
4.8. References	110
Chapter 5 – Reflecting on how social impacts are considered in transport infrastructure project planning: Looking beyond the claimed success of Sydney’s South West Rail Link	113
Publication details	114
Publication background	114
Statement of authorship	114
Abstract	114
5.1. Introduction	115
5.2. Integrated development planning and social impacts in transport infrastructure	116
5.3. Methods	118
5.4. Description of Sydney’s South West Rail Link	119
5.5. Results: Reflections on key issues in the planning, assessment and management of social impacts in the South West Rail Link	121
5.6. Discussion: How the challenges and barriers influenced the planning, assessment and management of social impacts	126
5.7. Conclusion	128
5.8. References	130
Chapter 6 – Advancing beyond project-scale Social Impact Assessment of transport infrastructure: Insights into contextual constraints on practice	133
Chapter background	134
Note	134
Abstract	134
6.1. Introduction	135
6.2. Background: Constraints on good professional practice	136
6.3. Methodology	140
6.4. Professional perspectives I: Constraints on practice	143
6.5. Professional Perspectives II: Overcoming constraints	149
6.6. Conclusion	157
6.7. References	159

Chapter 7 – Conclusion: Improving social outcomes from urban transport infrastructure projects	163
7.1 Introduction	165
7.2 Key findings	167
7.3 Urban governance, project management and impact assessment practices: their interactions in different geographical contexts	175
7.4 Reflections on the research journey	187
7.5 Avenues for future research	190
7.6 A final word	193
7.7 References	194
Summary (English)	199
Summary (Dutch)	209
Appendices	221
A - Semi-structured Interview Guide(s)	223
Parramatta Rail Link	223
South-West Rail Link	227
North-South Metro Line	230
Expert Infrastructure Professionals	232
B - List of Study Participants	234
Parramatta Rail Link	234
South-West Rail Link	235
North-South Metro Line	236
Expert Infrastructure Professionals	237
Workshop & Focus Groups	237
C – Workshop & Focus Group Questions/Statements	239
International ESIA Practitioners Focus Group	239
Dutch IA Professionals, Urban Planners & Policy makers Focus Group	239
Australian ESIA Practitioners Workshop	239
Sydney-based Urban Planners / IA Professionals (Government) Workshop	239
Amsterdam-based Government Workshop	240
D - Ethics Approval (Macquarie University)	241
Master of Research Ethics Approval (Parramatta Rail Link)	241
Doctoral Research Ethics Approval	243
E - Consent Forms	245
Parramatta Rail Link	245
Generic – Expert Interviews & South West Rail Link	246
North-South Metro Line [English/Dutch]	247
Focus Groups	249
About the Author	251

List of Tables

Table 1.1	The ‘four sublimes’ that drive megaproject development.....	14
Table 1.2	Methods and data and research questions by chapter	21
Table 2.1	Parramatta Rail Link case study research participants.....	46
Table 2.2	Parramatta Rail Link - key statutory dates	46
Table 3.1	The phases, stages and activities in managing social issues in public infrastructure megaprojects	70
Table 4.1	Timeline of key events relating to the North-South Line	91
Table 5.1	South West Rail Link key dates	121
Table 6.1	Research methods overview	142

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Conceptual framework for the research	8
Figure 1.2	Parramatta Rail Link	28
Figure 1.3	South West Rail Link	29
Figure 1.4	North-South Metro Line [Noord/Zuid MetroLijn]	30
Figure 2.1	PRL Alignment	47
Figure 2.2	ECRL Alignment.....	48
Figure 4.1	Noord/Zuidlijn	89
Figure 5.1	Stages of the South West Rail Link	120
Figure 7.1	Conceptualising influences on the assessment and management of social impacts in urban transport infrastructure planning	176

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
DoT	Department of Transport
DoP	Department of Planning
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment
DPIE	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
ECRL	Epping to Chatswood Rail Link
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
IANZ	Environmental Institute of Australian and New Zealand
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EP&A Act	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> (Australia)
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
GSC	Greater Sydney Commission
IA	Impact Assessment
IAIA	International Association of Impact Assessment
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LCNP	Lane Cove National Park
MaaS	Mobility as a service
MP	Member of Parliament
NSW	New South Wales
NZL	North-South Metro Line (<i>Noord-Zuid MetroLijn</i>)
PERL	Parramatta to Epping Rail Link
PRL	Parramatta Rail Link
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SEMS	Social and Environmental Management System
SIMP	Social Impact Management Plans
SMS	Social Management System
SWGC	South West Growth Centre
SWRL	South West Rail Link
UTS	University of Technology Sydney

List of Publications

This PhD thesis is by publication and includes four chapters that are reprints of publications as listed below.

- Chapter 2** Mottee, L. K., & Howitt, R. (2018). Follow-up and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in urban transport-infrastructure projects: Insights from the Parramatta rail link. *Australian Planner*, 55(1), 46-56. DOI: 10.1080/07293682.2018.1506496
- Chapter 3** Mottee, L. K., Arts, J., Vanclay, F., Howitt, R., & Miller, F. (2020). Limitations of technical approaches to transport planning practice in two cases: Social issues as a critical component of urban projects. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 21(1), 39-57. DOI:10.1080/14649357.2019.1696980
- Chapter 4** Mottee, L. K., Arts, J., Vanclay, F., Miller, F., & Howitt, R. (2020) Metro infrastructure planning in Amsterdam: How are social issues managed in the absence of environmental and social impact assessment? *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 38(4), 320-335. DOI: 10.1080/14615517.2020.1741918
- Chapter 5** Mottee, L. K., Arts, J., Vanclay, F., Miller, F. & Howitt, R. (2020) Reflecting on how social impacts are considered in transport infrastructure project planning: Looking beyond the claimed success of Sydney's South West Rail Link, *Urban Policy and Research*, 38(3), 185-198. DOI: 10.1080/08111146.2020.1730787

Statement of Originality

This thesis is being submitted to Macquarie University and the University of Groningen in accordance with the cotutelle agreement dated 12 September 2017. This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university except as agreed under cotutelle arrangement.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

The content of this thesis is a result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program.

All research reported in this thesis received the approval of the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. Protocol numbers: 5201700424 and 5201600247.

(Signed) _____

Lara Katharine Mottee

Date: 28 August 2020 _____