3. Looking beyond impact assessment to social sustainability

Ilse Aucamp, Stephan Woodborne, Jan Perold, Anita Bron and San-Marié Aucamp

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (or Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro, and a decade later at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (Earth Summit +10) in Johannesburg, the world embraced the concept of 'sustainable development' to redress looming problems of poverty and environmental degradation. Internationally, policy makers were challenged to respond. In South Africa, this challenge coincided with the transition to democracy, which ultimately occurred in 1994. This transition brought about constitutional recognition and protection of cultural diversity and traditional social structures (such as traditional or tribal leadership) that had been previously suppressed during the apartheid era. This milieu presented a challenge to the development and implementation of social impact assessment (SIA) procedures because seemingly irreconcilable ideologies and cultural norms that had been separated and strictly censured in respect of economic development were democratized in an instant. Before 1994, the rules governing access to education and economic opportunity, where one might live and who one might marry were different depending on one's race. The consequence was a society with a multitiered mosaic economy in which rural subsistence farming communities, commercial farmers, urban poor and urban rich were not only culturally diverse, but manifested extreme socioeconomic disparities. South Africa has a skewed distribution of income in which few are extraordinarily rich while many are extraordinarily poor, giving the country one of the highest Gini coefficients in the world (Van Aardt and Coetzee, 2010). Whereas cultural diversity in a country is often linked to a range of cultural identities, the 'South African identity' had been socially engineered by apartheid, and was being re-engineered by the democratization of the country. The norms that define the South African identity were not common to all those who would now call themselves 'South African'.

01_Part I_001-114.indd 38 05/09/2011 10:23

Social and ideological divisions in South Africa are different from most other countries. The constitution is socially liberal in that it protects the rights of individuals (e.g. homosexual people, women, children), but it is also economically conservative, strongly supporting free market capitalism, deregulation of markets, minimum social safety nets, and in the fact the higher education is not free (inter alia). The current government is a coalition, reflecting the almost contradictory interests of the formal free market economy at one extreme, and the vast majority of the population whose economy is informal (based on exchange and power relations rather than being based on monetary transactions). This is often referred to as the 'double decker economy' (a first world sector and a third world sector) (Sparks, 2003), and the niche occupied by any individual is closely linked to their education. The legacy of apartheid education still manifests in racial terms despite very specific attempts to address this issue (Ndimande, 2009). A consequence of South Africa's past and idealization of the future is the need to combine social upliftment with economic growth, and it is the role of the SIA practitioner to mediate the disparity that might be exacerbated by a purely hedonistic economic policy. The SIA practitioner in South Africa has emerged as one of the most powerful agents in shaping the trajectory that a development project takes.

SIA evolved as a derivative of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process, and the emphasis has been on defining a 'set of rules' that need to be followed when a new development takes place. Similar processes took place in countries around the world and South African practitioners looked for support from international best practice. Unfortunately the SIA process initially acted as a 'lens', bringing the pre-existing social tensions and policy debates described above into sharp focus. The ascendency of central versus local power relations in South Africa is a good example. The power invested in an EIA process is legally entrenched (central power), and the process works for urban contexts, but engaging with rural communities in South Africa is not possible without the express permission of the 'local chief', who need not feel obliged to comply even with payment of a 'tribute' (which is seen as a cultural norm).

The South African circumstance provides an opportunity to explore the future direction of SIA. This situation affirms that if the upliftment of disadvantaged communities does not coincide with economic growth, the disparity between the rich and the poor, between the developed and the underdeveloped sectors of the society, will be exacerbated and the resulting social context will be less than sustainable. South Africa is an economic leader in Africa despite the skewed distribution of wealth. Political uncertainty and the dysfunctional economies of other African nations lead to a high level of immigration. Xenophobia is an emerging problem where foreign nationals, who have often entered the country illegally, take up many of the limited opportunities in the

informal economy (Sichone, 2008). This situation indicates that social uplift-ment within a country is insufficient if other countries in the region are not similarly uplifted. The disparity between the quality of life in Africa versus other continents potentially will lead to the immigration problem scaling up to a global context. The lessons learned in the South African context are applicable in many developing countries, and they should inform the practices of the developed world as sustainable development can ultimately only be achieved at a global scale.

This chapter assesses the commonly applied SIA framework in the context of South Africa's sustainable development needs and proposes how SIA can become a tool to move beyond impact assessments to social sustainability.

DEFINING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p. 24) defines sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. An ideal balance between future and present needs rests on three pillars – social development, economic development and environmental protection. Defining sustainability in each of these three arenas and how they relate to one another has proved to be challenging (Sinclair et al., 2008; Vanclay, 2004). This is particularly true in the social arena where the concept of sustainable social systems remains vague. In an attempt to draw a consensus picture of social sustainability, McKinley (2004) has conducted a review of different definitions of sustainable development. Common elements centre on the following key concepts:

- activities, lifestyles or life practices – from the individual through to a community and society including the corporate means of production – that do not demand natural resources in excess of the available ecosystem services;
- understanding the connections and relations between economy, society and the environment; and
- equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

With regard to the social aspects of sustainable development, there are a number of important issues. Based on the work of McKinley (2004) and the broader literature, we propose that social sustainability be defined as a multi-dimensional construct that includes the following additional considerations.

- Social sustainability must be regarded as an ongoing *process* (underpinned by a specific set of social conditions and values) rather than as a fixed *outcome* to be achieved within a definite time horizon (McKinley, 2004; Nooteboom, 2007). Where social sustainability is perceived as an outcome, there is an inherent implication of an ideal template that thereafter remains static and will endure. Enduring institutions are not necessarily sustainable: repressive or ossified institutions can also be enduring. The concept of durability therefore needs to be supplemented with the notion of social sustainability as something that nourishes the self-actualization of persons and communities (McKinley, 2004). It must accommodate growth from within and adaptation to changes from without and must make things better for people.
- The notion of making things better for people carries its own inherent tensions. In particular, tension exists between a view of wellbeing as being primarily determined by economic prosperity, and the view that wellbeing comprises several other dimensions (such as, for example, a sense of belonging, contentment, freedom from anxiety) that may not be directly related to economic prosperity (and may in some cases actually be inversely correlated with it).
- Social sustainability can be painted with a different brush depending on one's political and ideological convictions. The equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, for example, begs the question of who decides what is equitable. How much weight should the needs of the few be given when balancing these against the needs of the many?
- The scale of measurement of social sustainability is variable. Not all development interventions are win–win in nature, and it may happen that the costs or negative consequences may be localized while the benefits are felt more broadly.
- Not all cost-benefit analyses can be measured on an interval scale of measurement. A project may increase the overall wellbeing of individual community members, but it could also lead to a loss of regard for traditional customs and values. This raises the question of whether such a loss should be regarded as negative (i.e. adverse to social sustainability), even if it is not experienced as such by the people undergoing the change.
- Social sustainability must balance the needs of the current generation and those of future generations. However, this balance is rendered elusive by the inevitable limits of available knowledge: While the needs of future generations can often be inferred by extrapolating from the present, they may also defy all prediction because of new technological developments or unexpected cataclysms.

LEARNING FROM THE SIA EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although the principles for SIA implementation (Vanclay, 2003) are commonly held, it is only when the implementation produces an unexpected outcome that it is possible to assess the generic suitability of the SIA process. Introspection of this nature takes place at the interface between the theory and practice, and is most beneficial when focused on processes that are perceived to have failed. Where the failure of the SIA process is linked to the context (and not the quality of the implementation of the process) it should be possible to elevate the underlying shortcoming to a higher principle in order to avoid perpetuating the problem. We analyse several South African experiences in order to elevate the causal principles that underlie the problems that arose. The vignettes below are highly condensed but capture the essence of SIA. Although these examples can be substantiated by documents in the public domain, we have used generic descriptions in order to protect the parties involved.

Example A: farm workers

In 1997, the Extension of Security of Tenure Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act were passed in South Africa to protect farm workers against exploitation. Farm workers represent one of the most vulnerable and marginalized sectors of South African society. They typically have low levels of education and are vulnerable to exploitation, but entire communities are often dependent on the income and associated benefits of these workers. In 2003, a minimum wage for agricultural workers was introduced. These actions attempted to secure rapid land reform and to address historical racial injustices. While intrinsically the concept of a minimum wage entrenches dignity into farm work and potentially increases wellbeing, a negative consequence was that the viability of farming was threatened. In response to these changes, farmers began evicting the indirect dependents of farm labourers and reduced the number of workers they employed (Atkinson, 2007). Thus while implemented with the best intentions, there were negative outcomes.

Example B: transformation

Transformation was high on the agenda of South African municipalities after the democratic election in 1994. The desired meter of success was that the demographic composition of the municipal staff reflect the demographic profile of the country overall. The problems associated with apartheid education led to the appointment of many individuals who fulfilled the transformation agenda but were not adequately qualified or experienced to do the job required of

them. Many disheartened incumbents chose to leave the civil service. The result of this policy was a significant loss of skills and institutional memory in many organizations. At the same time, new municipal legislation drastically increased the responsibilities of municipalities, further reducing the ability of new staff to meet the demands of their jobs. The unintended outcome of these actions and policies was a reduction in service delivery, which in turn caused civil and political unrest.

Example C: power lines and mines

An SIA was undertaken for the planned construction of four 400 kV transmission powerlines in the Waterberg area of South Africa. The proposed corridor and adjacent area was utilized for nature conservation, hunting and game farming and consisted of many small farming communities. Since the power lines were linked to plans to build power stations, and the power stations were planned to be coal burning, and since coal mining has many other associated industries (such as the chemical industry), there was reason to believe that the impact assessment should consider the broader industrial development plan. The aim of the powerline EIA team was to keep all infrastructure developments within a 'services corridor', and information regarding any additional developments in the area was sought as part of the SIA (a specialist study in the EIA). Numerous attempts were made during the process to get information from mining companies, industrial role players and other stakeholders. Information was not forthcoming. Instead, vague comments were made about the potential placement of the mine developments. Shortly after the SIA was completed, information regarding the proposed additional mining and industrial developments was made public. Had this critical information been made available earlier, it is likely that different recommendations would have been made in the SIA. In the period following the completion of the SIA, several other SIAs have been commissioned for projects within the area, all related to industrial development including power stations, mines and water pipelines. The result has been significant levels of stakeholder fatigue and low levels of trust in the SIA process.

Example D: gated community economics

In response to the ever present threat of crime, an emerging trend in South Africa has been either to isolate communities by fencing existing suburban perimeters and restricting access (thus creating 'gated communities') or to develop 'security villages' (usually given more flattering names such as 'golf estate' or 'lifestyle estate' or 'eco-estate'). In the Western Cape Province, a developer designed a 'lifestyle estate' that included a commercial zone with

several shops. The nearby town had an existing commercial zone that supported a number of businesses but was of marginal viability. The new commercial zone would likely undermine the existing economic activity. The SIA recommended that the developer consider excluding the new commercial zone from the development and invest the money in the existing commercial zone. The developer declined, stating that such a strategy does not fit in with the sense of place of the new development.

Example E: relocating homes

The electricity department of a large South African metropolitan municipality decided to upgrade the electricity supply by constructing a new powerline. A number of people had unknowingly erected informal dwellings on open land that was reserved for a transmission corridor (or 'powerline servitude' as it is known in southern Africa) and needed to be relocated by the housing department. The housing department did not have any nearby land on which they could build houses, and planned to relocate the affected people to a location far from their existing jobs and social networks. Time was of the essence; the electricity department wanted to start with construction as soon as possible as they had obligations to supply electricity. The informal residents refused to vacate before a reasonable alternative location was presented. The housing department needed time to respond, and the two departments were at loggerheads as to whose need was more urgent. A situation that was detrimental to the community could have been avoided through more integrated planning.

ROAD BLOCKS TO SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The five examples given above demonstrate that SIA does not always make a positive contribution towards social sustainability, even if that is what it is intended to do. There are several underlying causes of the problems that are implicit in the vignettes.

1. Point-in-time assessment

Examples A, B and C (farm workers, transformation, powerlines and mines) illustrate how well-intended processes, if not subject to ongoing review and adaptive management, can go awry. When undertaken as part of EIA procedures, SIA is restricted to a once-off, point-in-time assessment. While the input of an affected community may be captured, negative impacts identified, mitigation suggested, and ultimately authorization given for a project, there may

be negative consequences if the process ends there. As the examples above revealed, unintended consequences may emerge from the implementation of the decisions, or developers may be less than diligent in meeting their obligations, especially over time. While the South African EIA Guidelines (Government Notices No. R. 385, 2006) make provision for the review of implementation to identify consequences arising from the decision-making process, this is not a legal requirement and is seldom implemented in practice.

2. Meeting only the minimum requirements

Example C (powerlines and mines) reflects a project in which all components of the overall project were not subject to an integrated assessment process. The legal requirements permitted the SIA to focus on the powerline in isolation from other related developments that together formed a larger interconnected compendium of projects. The limited involvement of SIA practitioners has further consequences. SIA practitioners are typically required to forecast future impacts and/or future scenarios. The quality of predictions is enhanced by post-impact studies and follow-up, enabling evaluation of the interventions recommended by themselves and other SIA practitioners (Vanclay, 2004). Unfortunately, this is not a requirement. Sector-based learning or institutional memory feeding back to practitioners as well as to curriculum development and the education of the next generation of SIA practitioners rests in the academic domain while the majority of SIA practitioners are independent consultants whose engagement with academics is project-independent. Learning derived from post-project monitoring and from a critical ex-post evaluation of mitigation recommendations may have little relevance to the immediate outcomes, but would inform future decision making (Nooteboom, 2007; Sinclair et al., 2008).

3. The independence of practitioners

Environmental legislation in most countries tends to require (or presume) that the EIA firm and any supporting specialists (e.g. the SIA specialist) are independent of the project proponent. In South Africa, for example, the EIA Regulation (Government Notices No. R. 385, 2006, specifically section 18) stipulates first of all that the environmental assessment practitioner (EAP) must '(a) be independent'. It then goes on to specify that they must have appropriate expertise and 'perform the work relating to the application in an objective manner, even if this results in views and findings that are not favourable to the applicant' – irrespective of the fact that they are retained and paid for by the proponent. It requires compliance with the Environmental Management Act and associated regulations, that certain specified matters be considered,

and that the practitioner must 'disclose ... all material information ... that reasonably has or may have the potential of influencing any decision to be taken ... by the competent authority ... or the objectivity of the report, plan or document prepared by the EAP'. Interestingly, one of the things that must be considered (Section 8(b)(ii)) is 'the impact on the environment of the activity which is subject of the application, whether alone or together with existing operations or activities'.

Examples C and D (power lines and mines, gated community economics) illustrate that the regulations do not adequately protect the practitioners and it is possible that pressure can be exerted, both inadvertently and also with more ominous undertones, to try to influence the impartiality and accuracy of assessments. In example C (power lines and mines), a larger project was partitioned into smaller constituents and thus adopted a divide-and-conquer approach, both in the interaction with the affected communities and in the dealings with the appointed SIA consultants. Similarly in example D (gated community economics), the developer patently attempted to influence the recommendations that did not suit them. Such influence is possible because the EIA practitioners and specialists are paid directly by the project proponent and are tacitly under pressure to paint the project in rosy hues; thus their actual degree of independence can be quite limited.

It might be argued that the requirement of independence, while failing to prevent developers from exerting undue influence over SIA practitioners, has a negative consequence in that it entrenches somewhat of a silo-based approach. Insisting that impact assessment and the subsequent management and monitoring of those impacts be undertaken by different parties, for example, creates a potential disjuncture between these two activities. Both the project proponent and the SIA practitioner are discouraged from treading too far on one another's turf for fear that this might create a (real or perceived) breach of independence.

Since the independence of practitioners can not be ensured in practice (and may be detrimental), some countries have not included the requirement of independence in their environmental legislation. The Swaziland Environmental Authority, for instance, insists that EIA and SIA reports be written in the 'first person' by the project proponent. While the proponent may appoint outside consultants to undertake the necessary studies, all mitigation measures must be phrased as commitments by the proponent rather than recommendations by a third party. By requiring that the proponent takes 'ownership' of mitigation measures, it encourages greater integration between the predictive and ex-post assessments. In Queensland, Australia, for example, the regulatory framework now requires that proponents develop a social impact assessment management plan (see Franks et al., 2009).

01_Part I_001-114.indd 46 05/09/2011 10:23

4. Lack of social monitoring and key performance indicators

Examples A and B (farm workers, transformation) illustrate that some consequences could not be foreseen due to the limited nature of the SIAs that were undertaken. Monitoring, as an ongoing process that derives from and continues after the SIA process, remains a vague concept that is seldom understood by clients and is imperfectly implemented, despite some recent developments focusing on the importance of this aspect (Franks et al., 2009). This is particularly true for social monitoring that often involves qualitative rather than quantitative data. Unfortunately, non-social scientists sometimes find hard to appreciate the value of qualitative data and methods. The view, 'if you can't measure it, you can't manage it', is widely held. Too often, SIA recommendations related to monitoring are not implemented because of a limited capacity to implement them, and the effort expended in compiling the SIA results in a stagnant report on a bookshelf.

5. Lack of continuity

Amongst other things, Example C (power lines and mines) discusses the effect of multiple SIA consultations undertaken in one geographic area over a short period of time: stakeholder burden or fatigue, loss of trust, and apathy. The 'social licence to operate' of the SIA practitioners themselves is diminished because of this loss of trust. Unfortunately, the consequence is to further limit the scope for engagement of a community by the SIA practitioners. In this way relevant issues may not be identified, leaving communities vulnerable to unintended and undesirable consequences of development. Non-government organizations may step in, starting their own process, often 'cleaning up' behind the project and acting as quasi-monitors. Alternatively, government departments may intervene. This means that the mitigation of negative consequences is no longer the responsibility of the developers who, in a legal sense at least, may have fulfilled their obligations when authorization is given for a project.

6. Overlapping of responsibilities

Example E (relocating homes) is a classic example of blurred jurisdictional boundaries that has been observed in many contexts. When the plight of a community falls between the differing jurisdictions of higher authorities, the responsibilities are often pushed around and a situation can be exacerbated. This demonstrates the tension between local, provincial and national government structures (that are separated in South Africa), as well as between different government departments.

GOING BEYOND SIA

In order to progress beyond traditional SIA, it is necessary to consider the contribution of SIA to the broader concept of sustainable development as discussed earlier in this chapter. The international best practice in SIA, such as represented in the *International Principles for Social Impact Assessment* (Vanclay, 2003, 2006), suggests that SIA should mitigate any negative impacts that are identified as well as enhance positive ones. By fulfilling this role, an SIA will necessarily make some contribution towards social sustainability. However, 'some contribution towards' does not necessarily ensure the desired outcome is actually achieved. The gap between SIA practice and social sustainable development often lies not in what is carried out in SIA, but in what is omitted. When aligned with a regulatory process, SIA is not a tool for sustainable development, but only an action initiated when triggered by an economic development (Noble, 2002; Hunsberger et al., 2005). This misalignment can lead to social circumstances that diminish sustainability. All emerging economies have to deal with legacy issues that loom large over the SIA process. In a 'double decker' economy, the localization of SIA processes around development projects means that certain disadvantaged regions or sectors may inadvertently be missed and social disparities exacerbated.

SIA is an addendum to EIA in South Africa, and EIA is undertaken as a response to projects. Accordingly, SIA is a reactive activity with limited scope to affect broader sustainability issues. In order to create an SIA practice that contributes more meaningfully to sustainability, it is necessary to focus on the proactive, objectives-led, holistic concept of social sustainable development (Esteves and Vanclay, 2009; Pope et al., 2004; Hunsberger et al., 2005). The glaring gap between rich and poor individuals within an area, between rich and poor areas, and between rich and poor nations, that is manifest in much of the sustainable development parlance, must be one of the central themes. In order to guide thinking on what can be done differently, we present a broad conceptual model that places each of the three pillars of sustainable development into a two-dimensional space. The first dimension is the degree to which 'rules' are imposed by outside authorities (typically the laws of a country and specifically the regulatory framework relating to EIA). The second dimension is the extent to which a community takes psychological ownership of development processes (referring to ownership that is internalized on a cognitive and emotional level) (see Figure 3.1).

Where rules protecting individual and environmental rights are in place, and all members of the community (both business proponents and the communities they affect) internalize these rules so that compliance is not perceived as a cost, the scene is set for sustainable development (high ownership and high regulatory organization). Where constraining rules do not exist, high

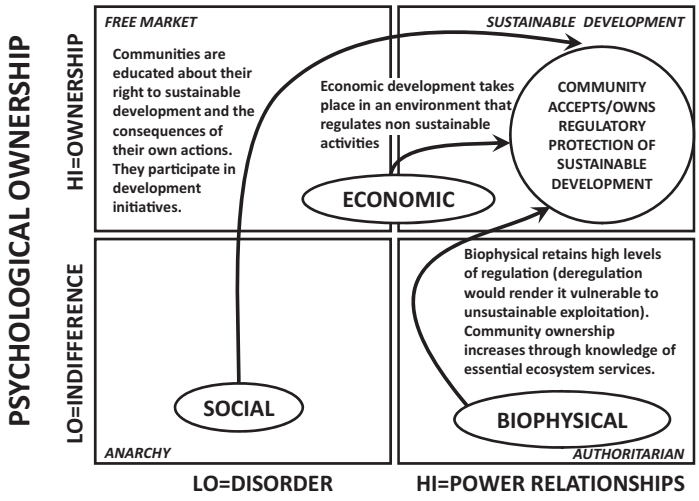

Figure 3.1 Interventions required for moving towards sustainable development

ownership leads to a free-market process in which individual enrichment will lead to resource (both natural and human) exploitation (high ownership and low regulatory organization). Highly regulated environments with no ownership lead to a lack of responsibility by individuals and minimal compliance is prevalent (low ownership and high regulatory organization). This quadrant is typically associated with authoritarian systems that are subject to personal aggrandisement by those in authority and a lack of social regulatory systems. The lack of social consequence and the emerging power relations lead to social stratification that in its worst manifestation leads to oppression. Where psychological ownership of the concept of sustainable development is low and there are no rules in place, the system is anarchic and represents the antithesis of sustainable development (low ownership and low regulatory organization).

The pillars of sustainable development (social, economic and biophysical) are schematically placed into this framework using a qualitative estimate (Hi/Lo) of the extent to which rules govern each pillar, and the extent to which a society owns the concept. Here we make a distinction between the EIA process that is emotionally supported by most whose connection is remote and emotional, versus those who are directly affected by the implementation process. It is the latter that are considered in the analysis. The placement of the pillars is specific to each society, and in Figure 3.1 the estimates of current South African society are given. Economic development is largely the result of

a free market process, but some rules are in place to protect other interests. The biophysical impacts of economic development are protected by EIA legislation, but these are still seen as a burden or tax by some community members and developers who stand to benefit directly and therefore psychological ownership is low. The social pillar has barely any constraints from regulatory authorities, at least in practice, and there are low levels of community empowerment through limited knowledge or participation in development processes. While communities may see SIA as a tool enabling their democratic right to be heard, and through this develop high levels of psychological ownership, the lack of involvement in ongoing management and monitoring of projects leads to disillusionment (and thus a low score).

The interventions required to achieve sustainable development (portrayed with trajectory lines in Figure 3.1) differ for each of the three pillars and in each societal context. Achieving economic sustainable development is more likely if the tensions between those who derive benefits and those who incur costs are reduced. This is not achieved through the imposition of regulatory measures, but rather through recognition that wealth disparities are ultimately unsustainable. Unfortunately there is a perception that communities are always the losers when developments are motivated by profits that will be accrued by a limited number of parties. It is only when communities perceive the benefits that wealth creation has for them that they will take ownership of their role and in this way grant developers a social licence to operate.

The biophysical leg of sustainable development is strongly based in EIA rules, but not everyone believes the rules to be reasonable, equally applied or effective in achieving the desired sustainability. In South Africa the belief in the rules is growing through the green movement and the political activism associated with environmental issues. Tacitly, the interventions around economic and biophysical components are de facto social issues, and social issues are considered to be the least rule-bound of the three systems in this analysis. SIA is not a mandatory part of the EIA process and even when SIA is undertaken, the latitude in the way in which it is implemented suggests that there are few constraints. In order to ensure that the outcomes of SIA become more sustainable, a change in SIA practice is needed, but more importantly, a change in the practice and mindsets of project proponents and regulators will be required.

We classify the required changes in terms of temporal and horizontal integration (see Figure 3.2). Temporal integration denotes the degree to which an SIA is integrated with the project activities that precede it (e.g. project design, screening, scoping), and the activities that come after (e.g. construction, operation and monitoring and evaluation). Horizontal integration denotes the extent to which an SIA is integrated with other activities forming part of the EIA (e.g. other specialist studies and the public participation process), as well as the

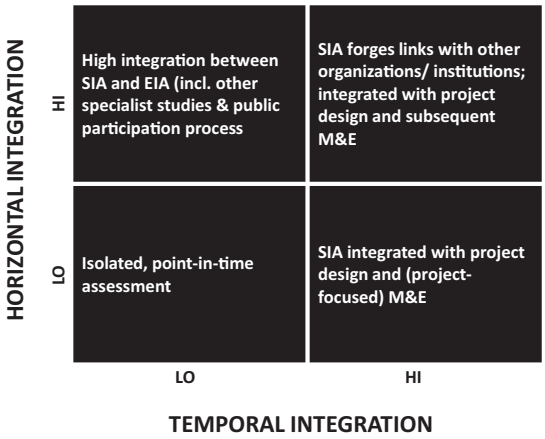

Figure 3.2 Levels of integration required to ensure SIA contributes to social sustainability

degree to which the SIA looks beyond project-specific impacts and forges links with other institutions and organizations.

SIAs undertaken as a point-in-time exercise tend to focus only on project-specific impacts and thus achieve minimal integration with other project-related activities. They therefore occupy the bottom-left-hand corner of Figure 3.2. An SIA that retains a project-specific focus, but has high temporal integration (e.g. by incorporating social considerations into project design and by effective monitoring and evaluation of social impacts) would be situated in the bottom-right-hand quadrant. It is possible for an SIA to have high horizontal integration but low temporal integration. Such an SIA would be characterized by a circumscribed time horizon, but would involve close coordination with other concurrent, assessment-related activities (such as other specialist studies and the public participation process). An SIA high on the horizontal integration dimension would also take into account other current or planned activities within the proposed project's sphere of social influence, and would include an assessment of potential cumulative impacts and synergies related to project benefits. The contribution of an SIA to social sustainability is maximized if it scores high on both horizontal integration and temporal integration.

The most effective way of achieving this aim of social sustainability is by building links or bridges between SIA and other processes as well as other institutions (such as non-governmental and civil society organizations, and government departments). SIA should have a longer-term involvement aimed at connecting and linking organizations as well as identifying sustainable outcomes (Hunsberger et al., 2005; Pope et al., 2004; Vanclay, 2003, 2004,

2006). The process should allow unintended consequences and inaccurate predictions to be identified and addressed at the cost of the agent responsible for the impacts. The approach should be such that:

- links with enduring institutions such as governmental departments with social development agendas are created;
- SIA goes beyond absolute minimum requirements to obtain funding or a social licence to operate – the SIA practitioner is regarded and respected as a messenger for the community, and the social context is considered as part of the economic context;
- sustainable partnerships between civil society and developers are encouraged and developed as part of the SIA (Doelle and Sinclair, 2006; Fraser et al., 2006);
- negative commentaries raised by a community are considered in the decision-making process, and in the larger context (Fraser et al., 2006);
- SIA specialists are involved in the planning of a project. They are involved in the implementation and monitoring of the mitigation measures that they have suggested (Doelle and Sinclair, 2006; Vanclay, 2004).

Ensuring that the outcomes of an SIA are sustainable requires that certain changes happen not only in the practice of SIA, but also in the conduct of industry and regulators. The project development process should include the following.

- Involve the SIA consultant from the concept phase of the project and in the planning and design of projects –this is especially important considering that social impacts, unlike environmental impacts, can occur as soon as there are changes in the social conditions, such as might occur as soon as there is speculation about a rumoured project (Vanclay, 2002). Early integration of social concepts and understanding of the social environment could add tremendous value and result in cost and time saving in projects, but more importantly in minimizing the social impact on civil society and enhancing positive impacts. This argument is mirrored in the IFC's Guidance Note 1: *Social and Environmental Assessment and Management Systems*: 'For projects with issues that may pose significant adverse impacts and risks, clients should consider retaining external experts to assist in the conduct of all or part of the [Environmental and Social] Assessment ... They should be engaged early in the project's development phase and, as necessary, in the various stages of project design, construction, and commissioning' (IFC, 2007, p. 6).

- Involve the SIA consultant in the design of a management and monitoring plan and in its implementation (see Franks et al., 2009).
- Implement a citizen-based monitoring system (Hunsberger et al., 2005) that is linked to a process of social learning (Sinclair et al., 2008). The monitoring should focus on both the social fabric as well as the biophysical context. Specifying a predefined monitoring timescale after implementation would help to ensure that the mitigation and monitoring plan is implemented correctly.

An ongoing process such as that envisaged above shifts the emphasis from a reactive process to an objective-led process, but it requires continuous interventions (Vanclay, 2006). The SIA practitioner should tap into available resources within civil society and encourage them to be independent, and in this way forge towards ownership of the entire process. The objective must be the empowerment of civil society and individuals. Ideally, the public participation component of the EIA process should be closely aligned with the SIA process – it should be both laterally and temporally integrated. At the same time, it is acknowledged that lateral and temporal integration does not necessarily imply coherence in which all parties harmoniously agree with one another, and it is important to recognize that consensus between all parties is not a required outcome (Doelle and Sinclair, 2006). This is particularly true when the costs and the benefits of a project are experienced at the same geographic location.

One of the ongoing tasks of the SIA practitioner should be to bring people together and act as a liaison between civil society, different government departments and industry. The SIA consultant is an important link between different specialist studies, between the proponent and the community, and between the community and the EIA consultants. Sometimes the SIA consultant is an activist; other times they are a mediator or interpreter. A social impact specialist is, in reality, a change agent. They should be able to move gracefully between different social arenas to assist civil society, decision makers and developers with dealing with the inevitable changes that the proposed projects will bring along. To ensure independence and objectivity, the SIA consultant should not align with a specific group, but should attempt to bring all the viewpoints to the fore to ensure that an objective, informed decision could be made.

ROADMAP TO MORE SUSTAINABLE SIA

A roadmap outlining the changes required to take SIA closer to the goal of sustainable development has two components. The first is a list of interventions that supplement current best practice. The second focuses on addenda to the current best practice that might be become the 'new best practice'. These

interventions are derived from the temporal and horizontal integration concepts previously and include the following.

- Planning context:
  - SIA practitioners get involved early in the process;
  - SIA practitioners get involved in writing social specifications for contractors;
  - SIA practitioners to write and implement social management plans and conduct social monitoring during construction and operation.
- Creation of links:
  - SIA practitioners to identify links between different specialist studies and ensure that it is incorporated in the EIA study. This means an increase in communication between different parties involved in the EIA process;
  - SIA practitioners to create sustainable links between proponent and community based organizations;
  - SIA practitioners to create links between government departments;
  - SIA practitioners to create links between the proponent and communities.
- Desired outcomes:
  - SIA consultant to set KPIs (key preformance indicators) for monitoring purposes;
  - wellbeing of community is not based on economic aspects alone but social aspects are also considered. According to the New Economics Foundation (2009, online), wellbeing is 'most usefully thought of as the dynamic process that gives people a sense of how their lives are going, through the interaction between their circumstances, activities and psychological resources or "mental capital"'.
- SIA process:
  - mitigation should be sustainable – whilst some social impacts can be mitigated by a one-off action, most mitigation will require longer term involvement, with the associated resources to ensure that it is implemented;
  - the SIA process should be iterative – it is not a one-off exercise, but should be repeated and adjusted as it goes along in a process of adaptive management;
  - SIA practitioners should be involved in the long term, as SIA is a process rather than an outcome (Vanclay, 2004).
- Community participation in the project:
  - sustainable procurement (procurement should take place within the affected community to develop their economic base) (Franks et al., 2009);

    - skills development of the affected community, with transferable skills.
- Institutional home for SIA:
    - professional registration with associated standards and quality assurance should be required of all SIA practitioners;
    - continual professional development should be encouraged.
- Regulatory frameworks:
    - SIA should be regulated in one way or another; if it is not via legal processes, it should be done via best practice professional standards;
    - inter-departmental reviewing panels should be encouraged, especially if the proposed project involves more than one government department.

In order to achieve the objective of sustainable social development, future interventions need to be transformational, rather than mere evolutions of the project-based or economically initiated methodology. As previously noted, the problem with SIA practice lies not in what is done, but rather in what is omitted. A final example from the South African context illustrates the second component to the roadmap that goes beyond traditional SIA.

In the South African Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act 2002 (MPRDA), the submission of a social and labour plan (SLP) is a prerequisite for the granting of mining or production rights by the Department of Minerals. Stringent guidelines exist regarding the required content of an SLP, and these are strictly applied by the departmental official evaluating the plans. According to the guidelines, an SLP must contain the following (summarized).

- Human resources development programmes, stipulating how the company intends to promote employment and the advancement of the social and economic welfare of its workers. In this regard, strong emphasis is placed on redressing the inequities of the old apartheid systems, which imposed inferior education on non-whites and thus effectively barred them from promotion to higher management levels in a company.
- A local economic development programme describing how the company will contribute to the socioeconomic upliftment of the area within which it operates and the area from where it sources its workforce. The programme must include sustainable projects that the company will initiate, implement and support financially or otherwise. This programme needs to focus on what the mine or production operation leaves behind once it discontinues operations rather than being a sponsorship and donations programme (Esteves, 2008).
- A plan outlining the processes and systems the company will put in place to manage downscaling or retrenchments.

Under the MPRDA, not only are companies required to divulge the financial resources they will set aside for each of these programmes; they are also required to report on a regular basis with regard to their implementation and outcomes. While a mining company in South Africa may hire an outside consultant to compile an SLP, it is the responsibility of the project proponent to commit to the commitments contained therein and to submit the plan to the Department of Minerals for approval. Departmental officials frown upon proponents who distance themselves from the SLP's development (as they might do for an SIA), and may summarily dismiss an application if they discover that the proponent is not thoroughly conversant with its contents.

Social and labour plans may not always live up to their lofty aspirations (partly because capacity constraints within the South African Department of Minerals prevent effective follow-up on their implementation), but in concept they are far ahead of SIA in terms of overcoming a myopic and fragmented approach to the identification and management of social impacts. SLPs are an example of a social engagement that looks at a more holistic concept of social sustainable development. Unfortunately the requirement is limited to the mining sector in South Africa, but the concept should be expanded so that all economic activities are required to develop an SLP with degrees of detail and magnitude that are commensurate with the social footprint of their activity. This should be applied not only to new developments, but also to existing enterprises. In Australia, the government of Queensland introduced a Sustainable Resource Community policy in 2008 to attempt to address the management of social impacts, to improve collaboration and participation between different stakeholders, and to address issues on different scales (Franks et al., 2009). Internationally there seems to be a greater awareness of the importance of moving beyond old-fashioned SIA (Vanclay, 2006). Such an approach, linked with SIA practice, would ensure that a smaller proportion of the global population falls outside of the focus on the ultimate objective, sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

Impact assessment on its own will not ensure sustainable outcomes. More emphasis should be put on the managing and monitoring of impacts, as the emerging trends indicate. The involvement of the SIA practitioner should go beyond the impact prediction phase. To ensure socially sustainable outcomes, it is imperative that the SIA practitioner become actively involved in the entire project life cycle. The role of SIA practitioner as change agent needs to be accentuated to ensure change in the mindsets of clients, communities and the impact assessment profession to guarantee that a sustainable way of thinking

becomes ingrained in project development. Moving beyond traditional SIA to social sustainability is achievable and should be the goal of each SIA.

REFERENCES

Atkinson, D. (2007), *Going for Broke: The Fate of Farm Workers in Arid South Africa*, Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council Press.

Doelle, M. and Sinclair, A. (2006), 'Time for a new approach to public participation in EA: Promoting cooperation and consensus for sustainability', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, **26** (2), 185–205.

Esteves, A.M. (2008), 'Mining and social development: refocusing community investment using multi-criteria decision analysis', *Resources Policy*, **33** (1), 39–47.

Esteves, A.M. and Vanclay, F. (2009), 'Social development needs analysis: adapting SIA methods to guide corporate-community investment in the minerals industry', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, **29** (2), 137–45.

Franks, D., Fidler, C., Brereton, D., Vanclay, F. and Clark, P. (2009). *Leading Practice Strategies for Addressing the Social Impacts of Resource Developments*. Briefing paper for the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, Queensland Government. Brisbane: Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, Sustainable Minerals Institute, The University of Queensland.

Fraser, E., Dougill, A., Mabee, W., Reed, M. and McAlpine, P. (2006), 'Bottom up and top down: Analysis of participatory processes for sustainability indicator identification as a pathway to community empowerment and sustainable environmental management', *Journal of Environmental Management*, **78** (2), 114–27.

Hunsberger, C., Gibson, R. and Wismer, S. (2005), 'Citizen involvement in sustainability-centred environmental assessment follow-up', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, **25** (6), 609–27.

IFC (2007), *Guidance Note 1: Social and Environmental Assessment and Management Systems*, Washington, DC: International Finance Corporation.

McKinley, I. (2004), 'Social Work and Sustainable Development: An Exploratory Study', PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria.

Ndimande, B. (2009), '"It is a Catch 22-situation": the challenge of race in post-apartheid South African desegregated schools', *International Critical Childhood Studies*, **2** (1), 123–39.

New Economics Foundation (2009), *What is Well-being?*, available at http://www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org/learn/what-is-well-being.html (accessed 15 August 2010).

Noble, B. (2002), 'The Canadian experience with SEA and sustainability', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, **22** (1), 3–16.

Nooteboom, S. (2007), 'Impact assessment procedures for sustainable development: A complexity theory perspective', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, **27** (2), 645–65.

Pope, J., Annandale, D. and Morrison-Saunders, A. (2004), 'Conceptualising sustainability assessment', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, **24** (6), 595–616.

Sichone, O. (2008), 'Xenophobia', in Sheperd, N. and Robins, S. (eds) *New South African Keywords*, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, pp. 255–63.

Sinclair, A., Diduck, A. and Fitzpatrick, P. (2008), 'Conceptualizing learning for sustainability through environmental assessment: Critical reflections on 15 years of research', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, **28** (7), 415–28.

Sparks, A. (2003), *Beyond the Miracle: Inside the New South Africa*, London: Profile Books.
Van Aardt, C. and Coetzee, M. (2010), *Personal Income Patterns and Profiles for South Africa, 2009*, Bureau of Market Research Report 387, University of South Africa.
Vanclay, F. (2002), 'Conceptualising social impacts', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, **22** (3), 183–211.
Vanclay, F. (2003), 'International Principles for Social Impact Assessment', *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, **21** (1), 5–11.
Vanclay, F. (2004), 'The triple bottom line and impact assessment: How do TBL, EIA, SIA, SEA and EMS relate to each other?', *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management*, **6** (3), 265–88.
Vanclay, F. (2006), 'Principles for social impact assessment: a critical comparison between the international and US documents', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, **26** (1), 3–14.
World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), 'Our common future', United Nations General Assembly A/42/427, available at http://worldinbalance.net/intagreements/1987-brundtland.php (accessed 19 September 2010).