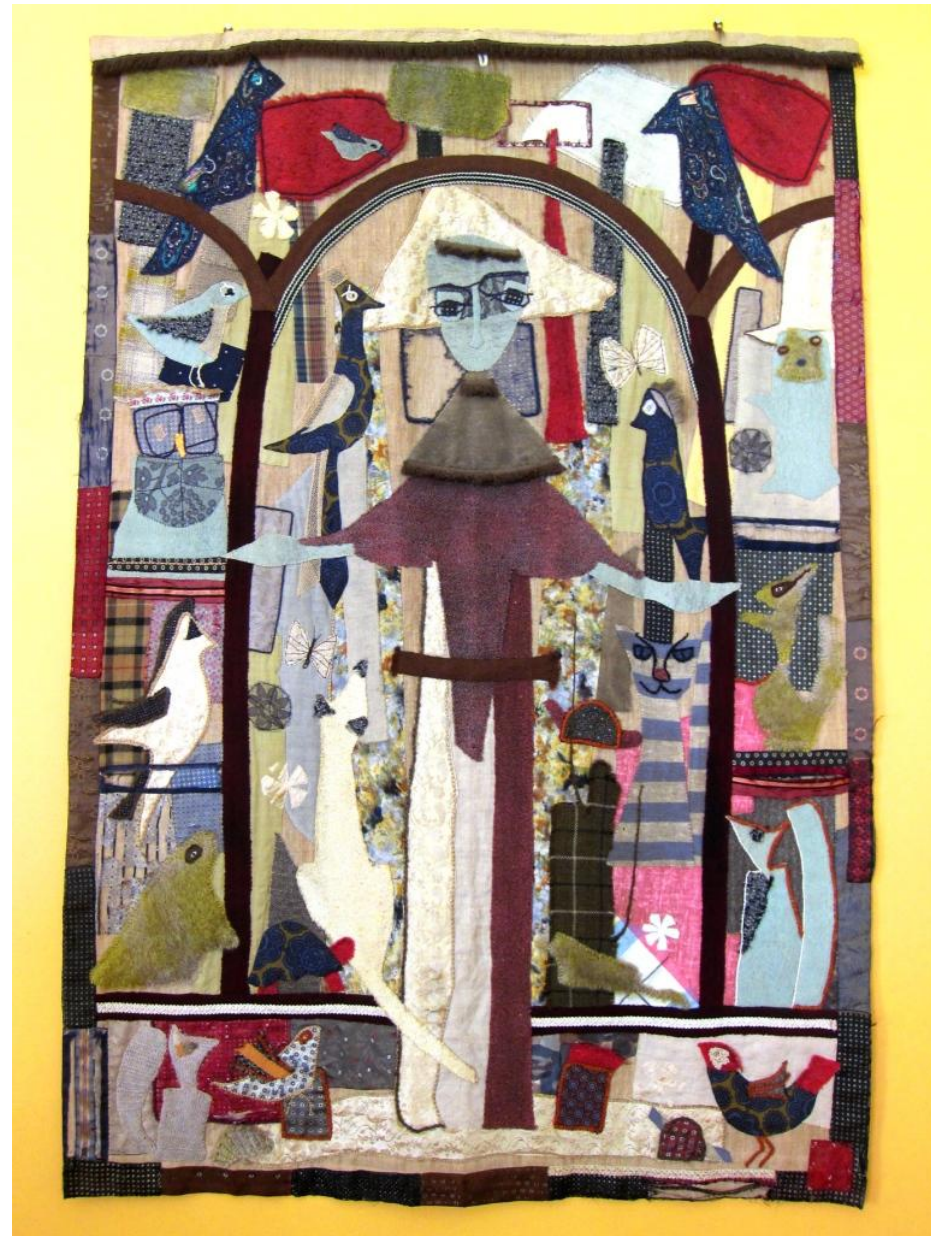


No Net Loss
Conference
2014

Session 12: Challenges
for Impact Assessment
Practitioners (IAPs)

Susie Brownlie



Integrating offsets with the IA process

- Mitigation hierarchy may be required in law but seldom applied. Only if big risks/ costs involved in NOT looking at options.
- Time, money, and lack of adequate data often a big constraint. Problems of confidentiality: veil of 'won't be financially viable if...'
- Mitigation myth: often no reality check often on promises of actions to 'restore', thus on residual negative impacts.
- IAP may not know about offsets or biodiversity. Biodiversity specialist not an expert in EA. Separate offset specialist may be best until IAPs more familiar with offset work. ToR for other specialists, to ensure integration and coordination not often found in typical EIA work (water, social, biodiversity, health, heritage specialists; legal and financial specialists to support offset design and implementation planning)
- Quality of specialists work, consistency between different specialists in the same field (!).
- Important to design the EIA around key decision points (e.g. whether or not impacts may be offsetable, due consideration of alternatives, whether or not offsets are necessary and need for reliable quantification of residual impacts, etc.) Workshops at key junctures are important.

Tools, standards, guidance and training

- Are tools and guidance one can use – e.g. BBOP handbooks, IFC guidance notes. BBOP standard and IFC PS6 used as a benchmark.
- Training not readily available unless one can attend an international event and/ or can afford to attend an often costly course
- Theory often unattainable in practice. Need guidance on prioritising to reach a ‘good enough’ outcome in light of time and money constraints typical of IA
- Also need more help wrt implementation and financial provision and management...land tenure, Catch-22s wrt approaching landowners (etc)
- The issue of equity and environmental justice needs more attention.

What's needed?

- Quality assurance in offset practice: certification/ professional registration for people who validate/ verify offsets.
- Train the trainers approaches to get courses going locally where they're needed. Important for spectrum of people to be have access to training. Specific training on the role of the mitigation hierarchy. *Need people who give training to be certified too! Else no quality control...*
- Guidance on the key decision points in a typical IA process w.r.t. mitigation hierarchy and offsets – when to foreclose some options and push exploration of others (what decisions, when, needing what information)
- Need 'what to do when' type of practical advice, drawing on actual case studies of examples; so many different situations with different challenges, that a wide array of real-life studies would be invaluable!

"...prior knowledge of the nature and timing of the decisions that have to be made in the planning and design of a project is the fundamental starting point for an efficient and effective EA" (Brown & Hill 1995)

Enabling factors for IAPs to work effectively on offsets

- Clear policy
- Explicit limits, non-offsetables
- Spatial biodiversity plans
- Up to date, reliable biodiversity data/information
- Outcomes to be achieved by what stage of IA process