

Evaluating Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as a Community Participation Tool

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HIA has recently emerged in the U.S. as a promising potentially democratizing process that increases social and environmental justice through addressing health equity issues within planning processes.

Public health professionals, concerned that current approaches such as Environmental Impact Assessment insufficiently incorporate human health impacts and equity issues and ignore the precautionary principle, have begun using a process long utilized in Europe and in the developing world.

This process, HIA, to systematically analyze potential plans and projects for human health impacts. HIA has been put forward as a way to adequately addresses social justice issues that cut across planning and public health practice in a preventative and multi-disciplinary manner.



HIA is.... A Way to Influence Public Decisions?

Is HIA influencing? How?

Who is doing the influencing?

- Public Health professionals?
- Communities' priorities and needs?

How can we know if community (health) interests are included and/or influential?

“overall tendency of public participation cases to resolve conflict by leaving out participants or ignoring issues” (Beierle & Cayford, 2003)





3 Cases

- **Clark County (WA) Bicycle Pedestrian Plan**
 - Active Living HIA for Active Living Plan
 - Small, narrow plan, suburban
 - Health Dept HIA, within plan
- **Lake Merritt (Oakland, CA) BART Station Area Plan**
 - TOD in Oakland's Chinatown
 - Large plan, large city
 - Outside consultant HIA, external to plan
- **I710 Long Beach Fwy Expansion**
 - Expand to 12 lanes through minority communities
 - Enormous plan/project, Council of Governments,
 - Outside consultant HIA to be integrated into EIA

Methods Overview

Process and Impact Evaluation with 3 Phases

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Purpose	Background & Initial Pass at Participants and Interests	Refine Participants, Interests, Information	Look for Influence
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HIA Documents• Media• Previous Plan	Semi-Structured Interviews	HIA Report & Plan/EIS
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hand/Open Coded Content Analysis• Data Display	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Content Analysis (ATLAS.ti)• Refine Data Display	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Content Analysis (ATLAS.ti)• Trace Interests in Final Text