

This PDF includes a chapter from the following book:

The Resistance Dilemma

Place-Based Movements and the Climate Crisis

© 2021 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

License Terms:

Made available under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Public
License

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

OA Funding Provided By:

MIT Libraries

The title-level DOI for this work is:

[doi:10.7551/mitpress/13668.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/13668.001.0001)

11 Overcoming Place-Based Resistance to Renewable Energy Infrastructure

While the climate movement benefits from stymied fossil fuel projects, addressing the climate crisis also requires the rapid deployment of a significant amount of renewable energy infrastructure. Yet our energy infrastructure decision-making process struggles to gain social legitimacy. Conflicts over energy facility siting, whether for fossil fuels or renewables, have proven to be so challenging in large part because of the tensions between place-based interests and the preferences of broader political collectives. This chapter addresses the book's third question: is there hope in more innovative processes of energy infrastructure decision-making that can promote social acceptance of the rapid transition to a clean energy system but avoid the confrontational politics that have characterized fossil fuel resistance?

This question will be addressed by exploring processes that have explicitly sought to overcome place-based resistance. The first section examines the theory and arguments behind proposals to move beyond site-specific decision-making to more promising strategic approaches and reviews the lessons learned from processes that have been used in the specific domain of energy planning and facility siting. The chapter will also explore innovative processes that have been applied in related areas such as environmental assessment and land-use planning to address competing demands on the same land base.

Criteria for Evaluating Energy Infrastructure Decision-Making Processes

Research on and practice with designing assessment and review processes contains significant insights into the kinds of processes that foster legitimacy and social acceptance.¹ There are four strands of the "good process" literature: (1) public participation and stakeholder engagement, (2) strategic and cumulative environmental assessment, (3) social acceptance of renewable

energy, and (4) business-government relations. These literature strands form distinct but overlapping approaches to promoting good processes, quality decisions, and sustainable outcomes. The different strands of literature outline a variety of practices that can be considered criteria for a “good process.”

Evaluating a process involves consideration of the process itself as well as the outcomes associated with it. Process-oriented criteria focus on the procedural aspects of decision-making that are associated with common features of democratic governance, such as transparency, accountability, fairness, and representation (Cleland et al. 2016; Kasperson 2006; Peterson St-Laurent et al. 2020; see also “acceptance criteria” in Rowe and Frewer 2000). Process-oriented criteria also focus on the types of communication and interactions that should occur between participants in decision-making processes (Renn 2006; Gregory 2017; Noble, Skwaruk, and Patrick 2014). This involves the inclusion of diverse perspectives and types of knowledge, respectful communication aimed at facilitating a shared understanding of information and values, and systematic, transparent characterization and evaluation of alternatives and trade-offs.

Outcome criteria focus on the quality of the decision itself and secondary outcomes associated with how the process affects participants and society apart from the implementation of the decision at hand. Overall, the literature on consideration of outcomes shows more variation, in part because the outcomes desired vary so much by context. Examples of outcome criteria include whether the decision increases joint gains, whether the process approaches the issue from a more holistic and integrated manner, whether the process is responsive and competent in the eyes of the public, and whether the decision is robust, sustainable, and fair (Sheppard 2005; Jami and Walsh 2016; Renn 2006). Secondary outcomes of good processes include enhanced participatory skills and social, cognitive, and normative learning outcomes. Trust in and satisfaction with the process are also desirable outcomes (Kasperson 2006; Peterson St-Laurent et al. 2020; Jami and Walsh 2016; Chess and Purcell 1999).

Public Participation and Engagement

There is broad consensus in all the literature that public participation in decision-making is desirable, but there are significant differences in views about who should be engaged and how. The literature on public participation

and engagement in technically complex domains, including energy and climate policy, contains a variety of well-developed typologies for evaluative criteria. A long history of democratic, political, and, more broadly, social theory provides normative justification for public participation in democratic societies. More recently, participation in the form of deliberative dialogue has been considered by some the “essence of democracy” (Dryzek 2002; Abelson et al. 2003). The particular focus on deliberation in participative processes derives from Habermas’s theory of communicative action (Habermas 1984) and how theory and discourse can shape practice (Taylor 1985).

Other scholars emphasize the instrumental benefits of public participation in addition to the normative ones (Cleland et al. 2016; Stirling 2008). Beierle (2002) conducted a comprehensive review of literature on stakeholder engagement and demonstrated that, contrary to the fears of many skeptics, “the majority of cases contain evidence of stakeholders improving decisions over the status quo; adding new information, ideas, and analysis; and having adequate access to technical and scientific resources” (Beierle 2002, 739).

Renn, Webler, and Wiedemann (1995) made a significant contribution to the establishment of evaluative criteria for deliberative public participation processes. They built on Habermas’s work, proposing a framework that consists of competency and fairness. Competence refers to the content of discussion and the quality of input contributed by participants. Fairness refers to the reduction of power imbalances and equal opportunity to contribute to the process by all involved.

Subsequent conceptualizations of evaluative criteria involved a similar focus on both content and process. Petts (2001) proposed 10 effectiveness criteria that revolve around getting the “right science” and the “right participation” (Stern and Fineberg 1996) and combing the principles of publicity and accountability (Gutman and Thompson 1996) and fairness and competence. Rowe and Frewer (2000) assessed a variety of public participation methods and forums along two lines of criteria that they drew from the literature: acceptance criteria and process criteria. Acceptance criteria consisted of representativeness, independence, early involvement, influence on outcome, and transparency. Process criteria included resource accessibility, definition of purpose, presence of structured decision-making methods, and cost-effectiveness.

Abelson et al. (2003) draw on these works and the seminal work of others, including Beierle (2002), to suggest four categories for representing valued components of such processes: representation, procedural rules, the information that is used, and outcomes or decisions. Peterson St-Laurent et al. (2020) adopted a similar model but with an emphasis on analytic methods in integrating science and values, saying, "Recurrent insights point to the need for assessments of analytic-deliberative processes that reflect on the relationship between technical and scientific knowledge (analytic) as well as the interactions between participants (deliberative)." Their four-part framework includes representation, deliberation, knowledge and analysis, and outcome. They draw from seven evaluative works: Abelson et al. (2003); Papadopoulos and Warin (2007); Renn (2004); Stern and Fineberg (1996); Rauschmayer and Wittmer (2006); Chilvers (2007); and Sheppard (2005).

Analytic-deliberative processes, first introduced by the National Research Council (Stern and Fineberg 1996), hold considerable promise in bridging the knowledge gap between experts and lay members of the public through early engagement and partnerships between decision-makers, domain experts, stakeholders, and other members of the public (Chilvers 2007).

Integration with Policies and Higher-Level Plans

The public participation and engagement literature strongly demonstrates the importance of developing appropriate approaches to participation and deliberation, including getting the right kind of knowledge, information, and analysis in order for the process to be well informed. However, this literature tends to focus on only one scale of decision-making. The strategic environmental and cumulative effects assessment literature provides more emphasis on cross-scale linkages. In particular, it is concerned with how the goals of the project review process are situated in relation to higher-level policies and plans that establish the context for project decision-making (Pidgeon et al. 2014; Wilsdon and Willis 2004). Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is defined as "a strategic framework instrument that helps to create a development context toward sustainability, by integrating environment and sustainability issues in decision-making, assessing strategic development options and issuing guidelines to assist implementation" (Partidário 2012). The promise and challenges of strategic/cumulative assessment will be discussed further.

Social Acceptance of Renewable Energy: The Importance of the Local

Widespread resistance has spawned a substantial amount of literature on the social acceptance of renewable energy (e.g., Cleland et al. 2016; Batel et al. 2013; Devine-Wright 2009; Fast 2013; Wustenhagen et al. 2007), discussed in chapter 10. Some of the literature resonates with the themes of the public engagement and strategic/cumulative assessment literature. For example, the social acceptance literature shares an emphasis with the public engagement literature on engaging host communities early and meaningfully in the process and on demonstrating how community input influences project design (Devine-Wright, Devine-Wright, and Cowell 2016; Fast et al. 2016). Like the strategic/cumulative assessment literature, the social acceptance literature stresses the importance of integration and coordination between different levels of government (Mulvilhill, Winfield, and Etcheverry 2013; Pidgeon et al. 2014; Devine-Wright, Devine-Wright, and Cowell 2016).

The distinctive element introduced by the social acceptance literature is the importance of local values. It emphasizes respecting the attachment of people to place and providing economic benefits to those impacted by the project, and the meaningful involvement of local communities (Devine-Wright, Devine-Wright, and Cowell 2016; Fast et al. 2016; Sovacool and Ratan 2012; Hyland and Bertsch 2018). One systematic review of the literature concludes that “local communities may be more willing to accept projects if developers site and design them in ways that work with, rather than against, local identities and people’s attachment to specific places” (Devine-Wright, Devine-Wright, and Cowell 2016, 5). Some studies emphasize the importance of community ownership or shared ownership in fostering public acceptance (Cleland et al. 2016; Devine-Wright, Devine-Wright, and Cowell 2016). Others find that local economic benefits are more important than actual ownership (Hyland and Bertsch 2018). Regardless, there is a general consensus that some form of substantial community benefit is essential.

The Business Lens and Process Efficiency

The final strand of criteria comes not from the academic literature but from business group submissions related to improving energy infrastructure decision-making. In general, business groups are concerned with certainty, timeliness, and process costs. These issues are well illustrated by the

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) in its submission to the review of environmental assessment processes in Canada: “To achieve certainty and consistency, the EA process needs to have predictable costs, timelines and a well-defined scope. Proponents need to have a very active role in assessment preparations so they can leverage the full benefit of assessment as a planning tool and adjust their designs and execution plans as new information becomes available. In addition, the EA decision making process must be transparent and timely. Without these elements, investment in Canada’s resources will continue to diminish” (Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers 2017).

The Canadian Energy Pipeline Association’s (CEPA) submission to the same review demonstrated overlapping concerns: “In particular CEPA recommended that processes should avoid duplication, outline clear accountabilities, be based on transparent rules and processes, ensure procedural certainty for project proponents, allow meaningful participation and balance the need for timeliness and inclusiveness” (CEPA 2017).

These process efficiency concerns of timeliness, certainty, and cost receive surprisingly little attention in the scholarly literature on public engagement and strategic environmental assessment. In fact, given the number of different typologies of process criteria, it is striking that none of them specifically address these concerns. Some might be tempted to dismiss these process efficiency concerns as self-interested lobbying by profit-oriented proponents, but they are important for three reasons. First, governments frequently share their concerns. The Canadian government’s environmental assessment reforms of 2012 reflected these values: “What is needed is a system that provides predictable, certain and timely reviews, reduced duplication, strengthened environmental protection and enhanced Aboriginal consultations” (Government of Canada 2012). Third, even if the government is less business oriented, the power of business in a market-oriented democracy means they need to be taken seriously. Finally, given the urgency of the decarbonization imperative, timeliness takes on a new importance even among those who are less likely to share the values of the business community.

Criteria for Sustainable Energy Policy Decision-Making

Based on these four strands of literature, processes for energy infrastructure decision-making can be evaluated with the following nine criteria:

1. *Representative* is about “getting the right participation” (Stern and Feinberg 1996): ensuring the appropriate affected interests are involved and that the selection process is fair and legitimate (Abelson et al. 2003).
2. *Deliberative* is about “getting the participation right”: legitimate and responsive procedures, including participant engagement in the design of procedures, respectful and inclusive dialogue, and effective facilitation (Peterson St-Laurent et al. 2020).
3. *Transparent, impartial, and accountable* ensures that the process is well understood and respected by direct participants and others with an interest in the decision, and that the ultimate decision is demonstrably influenced by the process.
4. *Well informed* is about “getting the right knowledge, and getting the knowledge right” (Stern and Feinberg 1996): the information presented and developed through the process is accessible, readable, digestible, and reflects a diversity of expertise and knowledge sources (Abelson et al. 2003).
5. *Integrated* means across levels of plans and policies, to ensure consistency between project-level outcomes and broader social and political goals.
6. *Efficient* ensures the process is affordable, feasible, and timely.
7. *Legitimate* means the outcome is socially acceptable to politically relevant constituencies.
8. *Equitable* ensures that benefits and risks of the project are seen as fairly distributed, particularly to host communities.
9. *Sustainable* refers to protecting environmental values and in this context ensuring that project decisions contribute to decarbonization.

The first six criteria address the review process. The remaining three address attributes of the outcome of the decision-making process.

Tensions among Criteria

Like any multicriteria exercise, conflicts among criteria will inevitably arise. Some of the most challenging tensions involve the efficiency criteria and a number of the other process criteria. Getting the desirable level of informed

interaction between experts and process participants can be a time-consuming process, and advocates of deliberative processes rarely favor the types of strict process deadlines that industry proponents frequently feel are essential.

The public engagement literature also highlights a more surprising tension between representative on the one hand and deliberative and well informed on the other. This tension is particularly acute when processes are designed to be broadly inclusive and open to mass participation, which has become more commonplace over the past several decades—the recent Keystone XL hearing process, for example (Gregory 2017; Rossi 1997). This trade-off emerges because of a lack of government capacity or motivation to facilitate mass deliberation as well as a concurrent desire to enhance legitimacy in democratic societies through inclusivity. The result is that governments request public input without creating the forum or capacity for responsiveness, dialogue, and learning that is often required and desired by citizens in decision-making. Gregory recommends shifting the emphasis away from inclusivity as a guiding criterion and more carefully identifying a smaller group of the most appropriate representative participants. This could free up scarce time and resources, which could be dedicated to more engaged, deliberative processes. This type of process could be more successful in clarifying stakeholder priorities and incorporating quality information and as a result wield greater influence over decision-making (Gregory 2017, 161).

The Promise of More Strategic Assessments and Plans

There will probably always be a place for project-based assessments and reviews, but experience has demonstrated that if they proceed in the absence of coherent higher-level policies and plans, they are much more likely to attract strong opposition. The reviews of Canadian oil sands pipelines are a case in point. Some of the opposition to the pipelines was focused specifically on environmental concerns about pipeline or tanker spills, but the reviews also became venues where opponents sought to express grievances about climate policies or the role of Indigenous groups in decision-making, issues that the review panels had no jurisdiction to address (Ministerial Panel 2016).

Because of the inherent limits in how effectively project-based reviews can address the cumulative effects of multiple projects that affect the same values, these types of conflicts are not unusual. Cumulative effects can be described as “progressive nibbling—the accumulation of effects that occurs

through many, often small-scale activities” (Noble, Skwaruk, and Patrick 2014, 317). For example, greenhouse gas emissions come from a variety of sources in any jurisdiction. Assessing the significance of one proposed facility is not meaningful in the absence of both a jurisdictional target for emissions and an understanding of existing and potential future sources of emissions. Similarly, several wind turbines may not fundamentally alter an agricultural region’s sense of place, but a large number of turbines easily could.

These shortcomings of project-based reviews can be addressed by adopting more strategic processes. Two notable related models are strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) and collaborative land-use planning.

Strategic Environment and Cumulative Impact Assessment

After the early development of project-focused environmental impact assessment, concerns emerged about unnecessary conflict and uncertainty resulting from the lack of coherent policies or plans. One of the most stubborn challenges for impact assessment has been the consideration of cumulative effects. Cumulative effects of a development project consist of the consideration of its additional impacts in conjunction with projects that already exist, that are under consideration, or that could occur in the future (Seitz et al. 2011). This evaluation is typically carried out through cumulative effects assessment, a particular type of strategic environmental assessment.

In recent years, SEAs have drawn a lot of attention from academics, practitioners, and governments. Notable attempts at implementing SEAs have been observed worldwide, with recent examples in Australia (Coffey et al. 2011), Canada (Acharibasam and Noble 2014), and Europe (Polido, João, and Ramos 2016; Partidário 2012; SEPA 2011). However, notwithstanding the widespread attention directed at SEAs, theoreticians and practitioners alike do not concur on their interpretation of SEAs, and there is still no agreed understanding of what SEAs should look like (Baresi, Vella, and Sipe 2017; Noble and Nwanekezie 2016). For instance, Noble and Nwanekezie (2016) identify two main categories of SEAs. SEAs based on impact assessment are similar to traditional environmental impact assessment in that they aim to assess potential projects and their impacts. However, they focus their assessment on broader policies and plans instead of projects. In contrast, strategy-based SEAs go beyond traditional impact assessment to focus on the strategic directions a particular region’s development should take (i.e., the design of policies and plans and/or of future alternatives).

A good SEA should be fully integrated into policies and plans at an early stage, be based on appropriate scientific information, engage the public well, engage in fulsome generation and evaluation of strategic directions, reflect ongoing evolution, communicate the SEA results in a timely and effective manner, deal with uncertainty and adverse effects, be coordinated by a lead agency, and be sufficiently resourced (SEPA 2011; Noble, Skwaruk, and Patrick 2014).

SEAs, when well implemented, provide numerous advantages over other approaches to cumulative effects assessment (SEPA 2011; Partidário 2012). For instance, they can provide an understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainability, which can then be incorporated early in the decision-making process. SEAs can also facilitate the identification of development options and alternatives, inform planners and decision-makers on the sustainability (or lack thereof) of different development options, ensure a democratic decision process by allowing the participation of different stakeholders, thereby increasing the credibility of policy decisions, and potentially change political mentalities by encouraging principles of strategic decision-making.

However, while these principles are attractive in theory, many initiatives have failed to live up to expectations over the years (Seitz et al. 2011; Noble, Skwaruk, and Patrick 2014; Acharibasam and Noble 2014). In Ontario, SEAs were used for several prominent assessments in the 1980s and then were abandoned in favor of project-level environmental impact assessments (Mulvihill, Winfield, and Etcheverry 2013). Various barriers to the successful implementation of SEAs have been identified in the literature. For instance, some authors draw attention to institutional issues in terms of capacity and available resources as well as a shared lack of vision about what an SEA should look like (which is also related to the lack of a clear definition) (Acharibasam and Noble 2014). Others note challenges associated with data availability (particularly baseline data about existing conditions) and long-term monitoring (Cronmiller and Noble 2018; Noble, Skwaruk, and Patrick 2014). However, most importantly, the literature identifies an uncoupling between theories and conceptual methodologies and actual implementation by practitioners (Lobos and Partidário 2014; Partidário 2015; Baresi et al. 2017; Noble and Nwanekezie 2016). In other words, there is a great deal of knowledge about how SEAs should be implemented but very little institutional capacity to carry them out successfully.

Strategic Land-Use Planning in British Columbia

Strategic environmental assessments can be applied to policies or a technology like nuclear power, but it can also be applied to a defined geographical region to establish land-use plans. One successful strategic land-use planning initiative occurred in British Columbia. The initiative arose in the early 1990s through a combination of political and legal events. In the 1980s, conflicts erupted over forestry in the province, especially the practice of clear-cutting old growth forests. Indigenous groups were also beginning to have success at using the courts to block road building and timber harvesting in areas of importance to them. In fall 1991, the New Democratic Party of Mike Harcourt was elected, and his social democratic party replaced a conservative party that had dominated provincial politics for decades. The Harcourt government had a strong environmental agenda, much of it focused on improving the protection of environmental values in the forests (Pralle 2006a; Shaw 2004).

Shortly after coming into office, the new government decided to address the “valley-by-valley” conflicts that continued to erupt with a strategic land-use planning process. It started in four of the most divisive regions in the province and had expanded to include virtually the entire provincial land base by the time their government was defeated in 2001 (Cashore et al. 2001). Thomas Gunton calls it “the most comprehensive application of collaborative planning to date” (Gunton 2017). Each of the regions had a planning table consisting of a range of stakeholders in the forest and resource sectors, including forest and mining companies, labor, environmentalists, community groups, and Indigenous groups. After a year or two of negotiations with the help of professional facilitation and government technical experts, they agreed to a list of consensus recommendations on zoning the forested land base for different uses. Those reports were then submitted to the government for formal decision-making.

When the New Democratic Party was swept out of office in 2001, it was replaced by leader Gordon Campbell’s BC Liberals, a more conservative, business-oriented party. They were not keen on continuing strategic land-use planning, but they were committed to completing the intensely controversial land-use planning process in the north and central coast regions, which environmentalists had reframed as the “Great Bear Rainforest.” Completion of this process was given priority by the Campbell government. The multistakeholder consultation process was completed with

an agreement in 2004. The government then engaged in unprecedented government-to-government negotiations with First Nations in the area, culminating in the 2006 agreement. The agreement set aside one-third of the region as protected areas, and the remaining two-thirds would be subject to new ecosystem-based management principles (Cullen et al. 2011).

By 2008, land-use plans had been completed for 86% of the province. When the process was launched in 1992, the government committed to doubling protected areas in the province from 6% to 12%, but the province exceeded that objective. The new protected areas in the Great Bear Rainforest, along with other areas of the province, increased the amount of protected areas in the province to 14% of the land area, a significant accomplishment. It also contributed to a dramatic decline in conflict over forestry operations (Hoberg 2017).

While the BC Liberal government did succeed in completing the Great Bear Rainforest plan, the strategic land-use process was terminated in 2006. Any new planning would be undertaken only under a specific set of conditions: new legislation, accommodating First Nations interests, or a major environmental change. Despite the havoc wrought on the forestland base by the mountain pine beetle epidemic, the government has not yet reopened any of the existing land-use plans. The innovative collaborative planning model introduced by the New Democrats in the 1990s would also be abandoned (Hoberg 2017).

The reluctance to continue strategic planning, despite its demonstrable success at reducing conflict, undermined the BC Liberals' own energy agenda in the new millennium's first decade. Its 2002 Energy Plan moved the province away from relying on the government-owned utility, BC Hydro, to generate new power to meet growing demand. As a result, a number of private "independent power producers" proposed new renewable energy projects. While some wind projects were developed, the most common new projects were run-of-the-river hydro projects. For a variety of reasons, many of these projects were strongly opposed by local and provincial environmental groups, resulting in a number of project delays and cancellations. The established regional land-use plans focused mostly on forest resources and did not address siting energy facilities. As a result, there was no agreement on which areas of the province were appropriate for energy development and which were not. Despite pressure from a variety of interests to do more strategic planning around energy, the government declined to do so (Jaccard, Melton, and Nyboer 2011; Shaw 2011; Hoberg 2010).

Strategic Land-Use Planning in the Lower Athabasca Region

Next to British Columbia's land-use planning processes, the most prominent Canadian initiative in strategic land-use planning has been for the oil sands region in northern Alberta. Relatively early in the oil sands development process, there was a growing awareness of the need to move beyond facility-by-facility assessment and regulation to consider the regionwide cumulative effects of oil sands development. In 2000, the Cumulative Environmental Management Association (CEMA) was created as a voluntary stakeholder partnership among government, industry, environmentalists, and others. CEMA was slow to deliver, even as oil sands development was accelerating. Concerned by the pace of development in the absence of regional habitat protection plans, in 2008 the CEMA group working on habitat protection recommended a moratorium on new oil sands leases, but the government refused. The group then recommended the protection of up to 40% of the region (Hoberg and Phillips 2011). Rather than adopting that recommendation, the government of Alberta introduced a new land-use framework in 2008, creating a new planning process. Priority was given to the region where oil sands development had been the most intense, the Lower Athabasca region in the northeastern part of the province.

The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) was completed in 2012. It provided regional standards for surface water quality and air quality, and most importantly created new conservation areas that increased protected areas from 6% to 22% of the region. It also committed to establishing specific targets for other regional ecosystem values (Government of Alberta 2012). The plan's commitment to address cumulative effects and its establishment of more protected areas were welcome improvements. However, the plan only covers part of the area of oil sands development, and highly valued species, such as boreal caribou, remain at serious risk. As a panel struck to review the plan's implementation concluded, "Despite the LARP's new conservation areas, the cumulative impacts on wildlife have exceeded or are reaching thresholds in significant adverse effects on biodiversity, some of which are likely permanent" (Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Review Panel 2015).

Conclusion

If humanity has any hope of limiting climate change to manageable levels, a massive and rapid transformation of energy system infrastructure is

required. Governments need to have processes with sufficient legitimacy to comprehensively transform the energy system away from carbon-emitting sources. Because there is an inevitable difference in the intensity of preferences regarding impacts to local place values, it is no surprise that energy infrastructure siting processes are challenging. No process can guarantee that local opposition can be prevented, but the hope is that more engaged processes can both ensure meaningful local input and benefit and help local opponents see the collective benefits of the project.

Deeper engagement processes have been so uncommon not because they are ineffective or impractical but because they are perceived to run afoul of the ideology of some governments in power. Experience with strategic environmental assessment, from British Columbia's and Alberta's land-use planning, suggests that innovative processes with deeper engagement can improve decision quality and reduce conflict. But in some areas the practice of SEA has never been tried, or where it has, as in Ontario, was abandoned as the values of governing parties changed. British Columbia's process was terminated because the new business-oriented government associated it too much with the ideology and culture of the social democratic party that created it (Hoberg 2017). In Alberta, it was persistent resistance from powerful resource interests that prevented this process from achieving clearer success.

Despite the promise of deeper engagement processes to improve public acceptance of new energy projects, policymakers (particularly in North America) have shown great reluctance to engage in the sorts of processes that reflect best practices. As chapter 12 shows, this is because such processes are perceived to conflict with policymakers' core incentives to control process costs, duration, and outcomes.