

# Reimagining IA as a boundary object: Implications for resource governance



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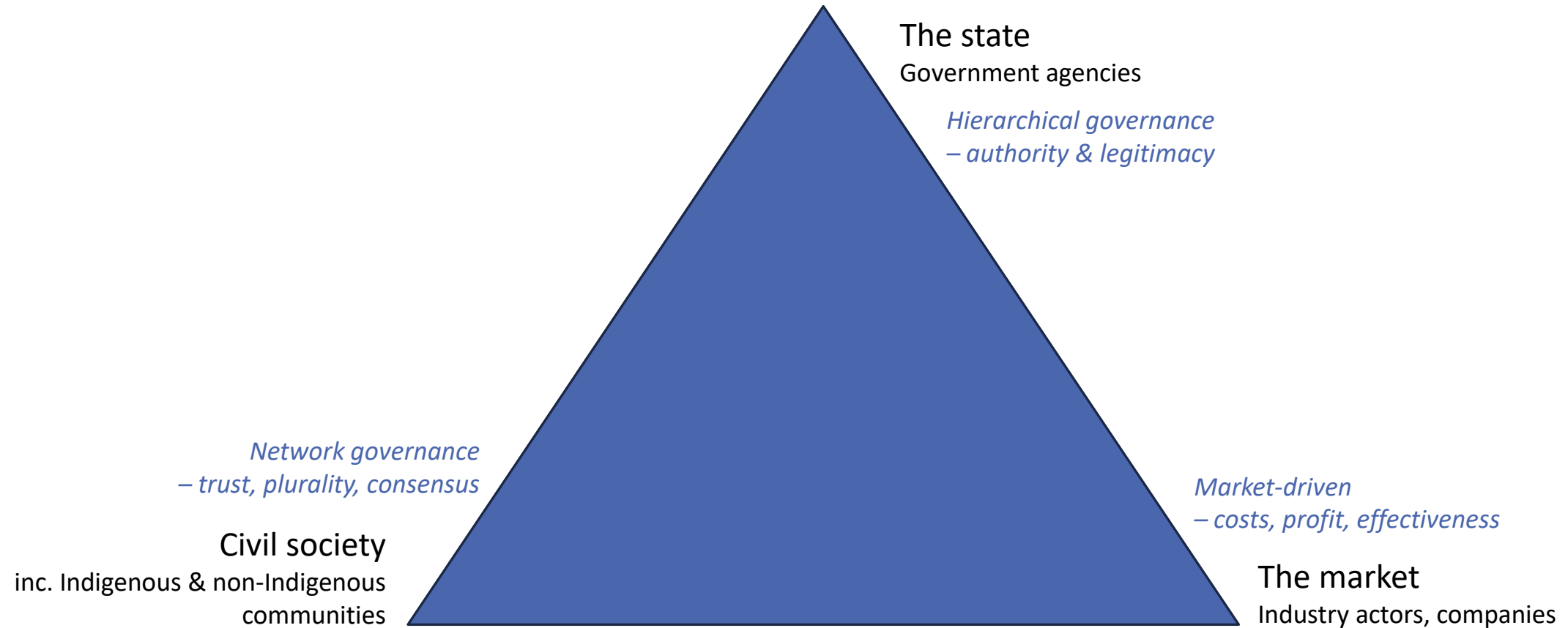
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# Resource governance

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# ILIAs

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- “a modern expression of title, rights, and governance and enable [Indigenous communities] to apply traditional decision-making in a manner that may parallel Crown assessment and decision-making processes” (BC FNEMC, 2019, p. 11).
- “the principle of walking on two legs” – Stk'emlupsemc te Secwépemec Nation (SSN)(BC FNEMC, 2019, p. 6).
- attempt to realign political structures and the “rules of the game” by recognising the legitimacy and power of Indigenous knowledge and the authority to manage resources that affect their livelihoods (O’Faircheallaigh, 2017; Papillon and Rodon, 2019, O’Faircheallaigh, 1999, p. 65).



## ILIAs & FPIC

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- Operational space for FPIC
- Social, cultural, environmental, cumulative and spiritual impacts
- Uncertainty and risk discussed
- Alternatives – including no project – are examined.

# What is a boundary object?

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- Shared reference point
- Helps people coordinate across boundaries or different social worlds while being interpreted and used somewhat differently by each actor
- Structure is robust enough to maintain coherence, yet flexible enough to be locally meaningful
- Actors ‘tack’ back and forth between “the ill-structured and more tailored uses” of the boundary object
- A shared space is created between social worlds through deliberation and negotiation between different worldviews.





# Could IA be considered a boundary object?

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## Why would this matter?

- Mainstream approaches the “**ill-structured**” versions that Indigenous peoples **tailored** to meet their own needs, perspectives and aspirations.
- Highlights the collision between the different worlds of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
- The importance of ILIAs in providing coherence in relation to the impacts of industrial development.

# Could IA be considered a boundary object?

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- The Simisjaur Njarg Sami reindeer herding community's community-based impact assessment (CBIA) in relation to the Laver open pit copper project in Norrbotten County, Sweden (2014-2015)
- The Squamish Nation's assessment of the Woodfibre LNG Project and the FortisBC Eagle Mountain Pipeline Project in British Columbia, Canada, using the Squamish Process (2014-2015)
- The Kimberley Land Council's (KLC's) Aboriginal Social Impact Assessment (ASIA) in relation to the proposed Browse LNG Precinct in Western Australia (2009-2010).

# Desktop study: Interpretive flexibility

## PURPOSE

- Assert Indigenous rights and to be a means of political resistance
- Enable the Squamish Nation to assert itself as a de facto third-party regulator
- Challenge Boliden's statutorily required EIA
- Give impacted people a strong voice in the assessment process
- Collect sufficient data to inform negotiations for a regional land use agreement and other agreements.



Photo source: <https://www.campervansweden.com/blog/travel-information/norrbotten-sweden>



# Desktop study: Interpretive flexibility

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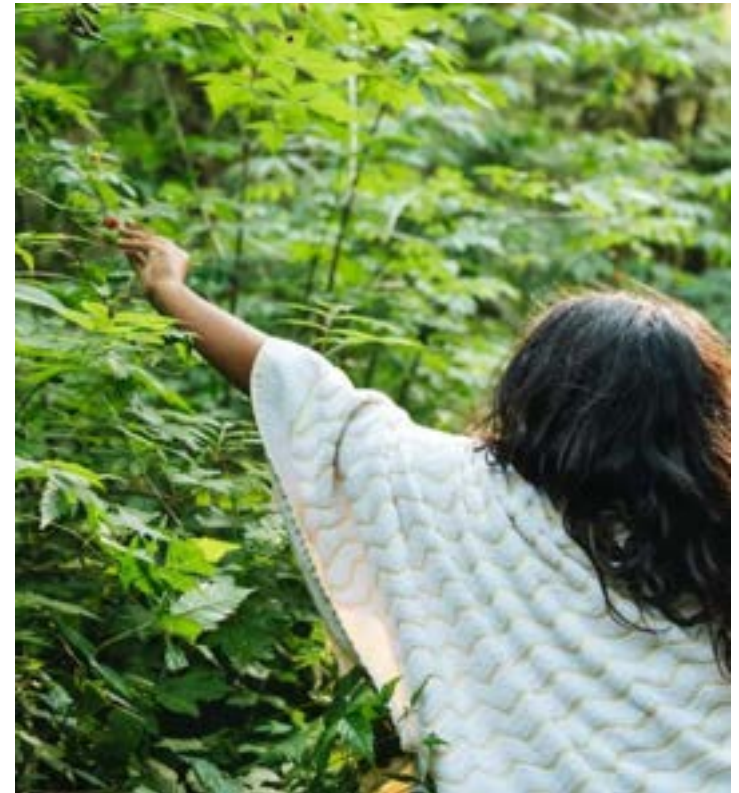
## SCOPE

- Considering the cumulative impacts from multiple industrial activities
- Choosing to avoid micro- and single-scale analysis that would 'confine' the Indigenous interests (Lawrence & Larsen, 2017)
- Extending ontological framing through broader questions and focus
- Considering Squamish laws, values, worldviews
- Sharing culture and history
- Growing and revitalising the Squamish language
- Fostering the health of the Howe Sound
- Identifying whether the level of impacts to Aboriginal rights and title were tolerable
- Considering existing (historical) social, economic and cultural context from the perspective of impacted people as well as project impacts.

# Desktop study: Interpretive flexibility

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- Ethnographic approaches with extensive first-hand accounts from impacted people across multiple generations, including key decision-makers
- “Subjective” rather than “objective” approaches
- Multiple consultation and action research methodologies
- Holistic – recognising the interconnectedness of environmental elements and local use of the whole territory
- Supporting consultation with diverse communication collateral
- Explicit consideration of the consultation team configuration, including a mix of consultants and KLC staff and a gender balance.



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# Desktop study: Structure

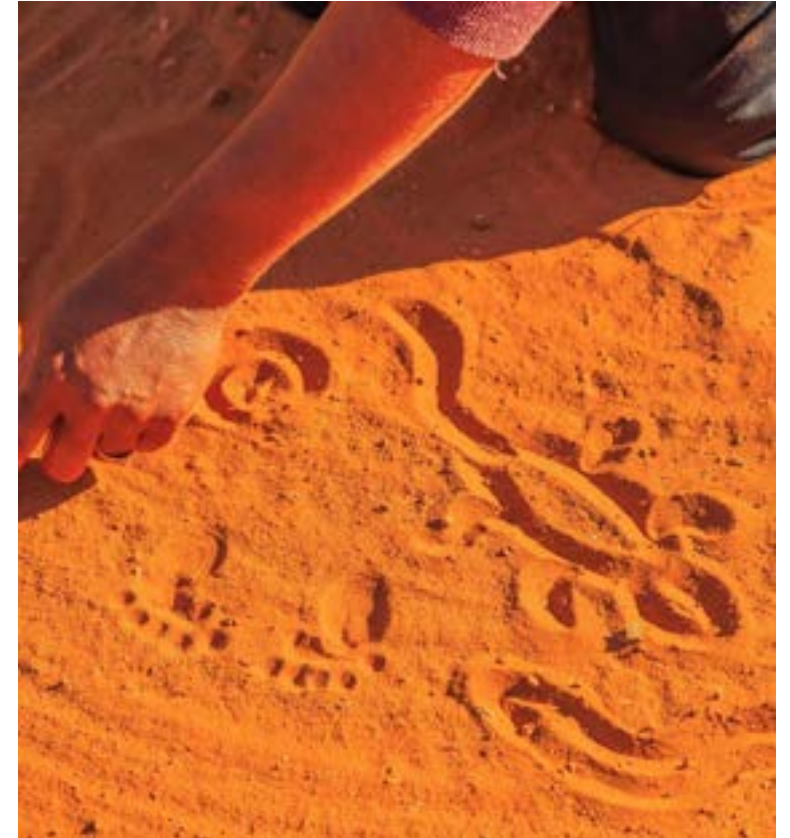
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- Countermapping, showing encroachment on reindeer grazing lands
- Prospective analysis, based on 2 scenarios
- A matrix of impacts, risks and recommendations
- Evaluation of how to minimise Indigenous impacts and maximise Indigenous benefits from the Browse LNG project
- Baseline studies
- 25 consent conditions (Squamish Nation)
- Almost 100 recommendations (KLC)
- No mitigation measures as the community believes impacts could not be mitigated (Sami).

# Desktop study: Lack of consensus

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- For the Sami, there was conflict over their rights, the extent and scale of impacts, the acceptability and sustainability of Boliden's recommendations, the degree of consensus between Boliden and reindeer herders and a “knowledge controversy”.
- The Squamish had endured a long history of contamination from industrial activities on their land, activities that occurred without their consent and with no benefits delivered to them. This history left them with a mistrust of government and industry.
- For the KLC and TOs, the Browse site was selected without consulting them and without their consent, the WA government threatened compulsory land acquisition if they did not negotiate a binding heads-of-agreement and consent to the project.



# Implications for theory and practice

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- Help IA function as a shared reference point among planners, regulators, proponents, communities, scientists and Indigenous groups
- Designed to support multiple ways of knowing (technical, local, experiential, cultural)
- Make space for contested values, uncertainty and differing risk perceptions, and shift focus from “proving objectivity” to facilitating transparent negotiation
- Justify adaptive management, scenario-building and precautionary approaches without these approaches
- Elevate the role of local, Indigenous, and experiential knowledge without abandoning Western science
- *How* assessments shape decisions, not just *what* they predict
- Encourage reflexivity about power, framing and institutional assumptions.

# Implications for resource governance

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- Shifting governance thinking away from purely procedural compliance towards coordination, learning and negotiation across social worlds
- Positioned as a governance tool rather than just a regulatory requirement
- Would acknowledge that knowledge is situated, partial and socially mediated
- Disagreement considered a normal condition rather than a governance failure
- Foreground relationships and interactions



# Conclusion

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- Mainstream IAs fail to conceptualise impacts and benefits from the perspectives of Indigenous peoples (Jolly & Thompson-Fawcett, 2021); they are ill-structured for these purposes
- Governance actors have different values and views on what is “usable knowledge” for decision-making (Meuleman, 2008, p. 9)
- ILIAs extend concepts of usable knowledge and provide the epistemic translation required for FPIC
- Western science assumes epistemic primacy over Indigenous knowledges
- Matunga’s (2018) call for Indigenous space to be carved out rather than grafted onto mainstream IAs
- ILIAs can push governance systems into becoming shared spaces that would enable deliberation and negotiation between different worldviews, where multiple rationalities could coexist, and tensions and power dynamics between governance actors were acknowledged (after Dunkley et al., 2018).
- Much remains to be done.



# Let's continue the conversation!

Message me your questions or comments in the IAIA26 app.

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