



## **Foundation stones for a real socio-environmental integration in projects' impact assessments**

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In the last twenty years, both the increase in academic production and the expansion of professional involvement in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Social Impact Assessment (SIA), have evidenced growing scientific and business interest in risk and impact analysis. However, this growth has not brought with it a parallel progress in addressing their main shortcomings: insufficient integration of environmental and social features into development project analyses and, in cases where the social aspects are considered, technical-methodological failings in their diagnosis and assessment. It is clear that these weaknesses carry with them substantial threats to the sustainability (social, environmental and economic) of schemes which impact on the environment, and in consequence, to the local contexts where they are carried out and to the delicate balance of the global ecosystem. This paper argue that, in a sociological context of growing complexity, four foundation-stones are required to underpin research methodologies (for both diagnosis and assessment) in the socio-environmental risks of development projects: a theoretical foundation in actor-network theory; an ethical grounding in values which are internationally recognized though not always carried through into practice; a (new) epistemological-scientific base; and a methodological foundation in social participation.