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THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: METHODS FOR ASSESSMENT

F. LARRY LEISTRITZ & STEVEN H. MURDOCK

Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Social Assessment Series, No. 6, 1981.

Pp. 286. \$23.75.

This book is the sixth publication in the Social Impact Assessment Series with C. P. Wolf, a research professor of social sciences, as General Editor. This well-organized book fills a gap in the literature by providing a single and convenient source that examines the techniques and methodologies used in assessing the impact of resource development.

The first portion of the book is devoted to economic, demographic, public service, fiscal, and social issues related to impact assessment. The last three chapters, which are followed by the summary and conclusions, present specialized topics dealing with techniques for integrating assessment methods, computerized socioeconomic impact models, and the utilization of impact assessments in policy development and planning. The authors approach these topics systematically by dividing most chapters into three sections covering (1) an examination and review of the conceptual bases and methodological alternatives for impact assessment; (2) the main impact and policy decisions which are especially important in determining the effects of resource development; and (3) the typical techniques and applications currently utilized in impact assessments.

Certainly one of the major contributions of this book is the discussion on the assessment of social impacts (Chapter 6). The authors properly point out that social assessments, which may be critical to the success of resource development projects, are often neglected, ill-defined, and labeled "nonquantitative" or "unmeasurable." Five frequently used methods of social projection are analyzed, followed by a call for further development of the "conceptual and methodological challenges in the social assessment process" (p. 184). Other useful insights offered by the authors include a very creditable job of indicating the major strengths and weaknesses of various impact models. Beginning students, and unfortunately some who are not beginners, should heed the authors' advice that "there is no single ideal model for local area economic impact analysis" (p. 42); substantial data constraints have hampered the development of regional econometric models and, quoting Glickman (1977), "led to model structures which are usually quite simple, relatively static, and lacking in spatial disaggregation" (p. 40).

The book's 25 page bibliography provides the reader with a very good and up to date source of materials, but noticeably absent is K. Finsterbusch and C. P. Wolf's book entitled "Methodology of Social Impact Assessment" published by Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross, Inc. in 1977.

Unfortunately, much of the appreciation that this book deserves will be lost to all but the most serious student. Repetitive wording and long sentences and phrases seriously detract from the readability of the text. Two brief and readily quantifiable examples of repetitive wording that could easily have been avoided are found at the top of page 2, where the word "during" is used four times in one sentence and two sentences later "during" is used three times; and at the bottom of page 71, where "use" is included three times and "used" once in the same sentence. Examples of long sentences and long phrases which are too long to be printed in this not long review of a long book are left to be found by the reader who is long on time.

In total, this book represents a very usable, although often ponderous, "how to do it manual" that will certainly be appreciated by those individuals involved with assessing socioeconomic impacts resulting from resource development.

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