

Challenges for social acceptance:

Why do people oppose development decisions and what can be done?

6th St. Gallen Forum for Management of Renewable
Energies

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Aims

- To show why many development decisions are not accepted at the local level
- To show why fairness and justice are important in increasing social acceptance

Two important questions for decision-makers:

- How can we achieve social acceptance of projects when we know that not everyone will agree with the decision?
 - For example, do we argue for the greater good?
- How can we understand the ways a project will affect a community?
 - Through good consultation processes?

Understanding social acceptance

- A central question: how does this project affect me, my family and my community?
- Three areas to consider: personal, social and material (tangible and intangible):
 - Fears: real and imagined
 - Visual change to the landscape and character
 - Noise, pollution: impact on health
 - Community dynamics and cohesion: in favour, neutral, oppose
 - Material impact: positive and negative such as jobs, property values, winners and losers

These are *real* fears – not NIMBYism!

- **Not-in-My-Backyard** is widely discredited as an explanation for local opposition
- Yet it persists!
- If we really want to make decisions that people accept, then we need to change our mindset about the nature of local opposition
- Local opposition is complex!

A fairness and justice perspective on resource sharing

- **Fairness:**
 - Treating others the way we would like to be treated ourselves
- **Justice:**
 - Deciding how to distribute benefits and burdens: i.e. *who gets what and why*
- **Injustice:**
 - Perceived harm caused by someone's action



Social Justice

Organizational Justice

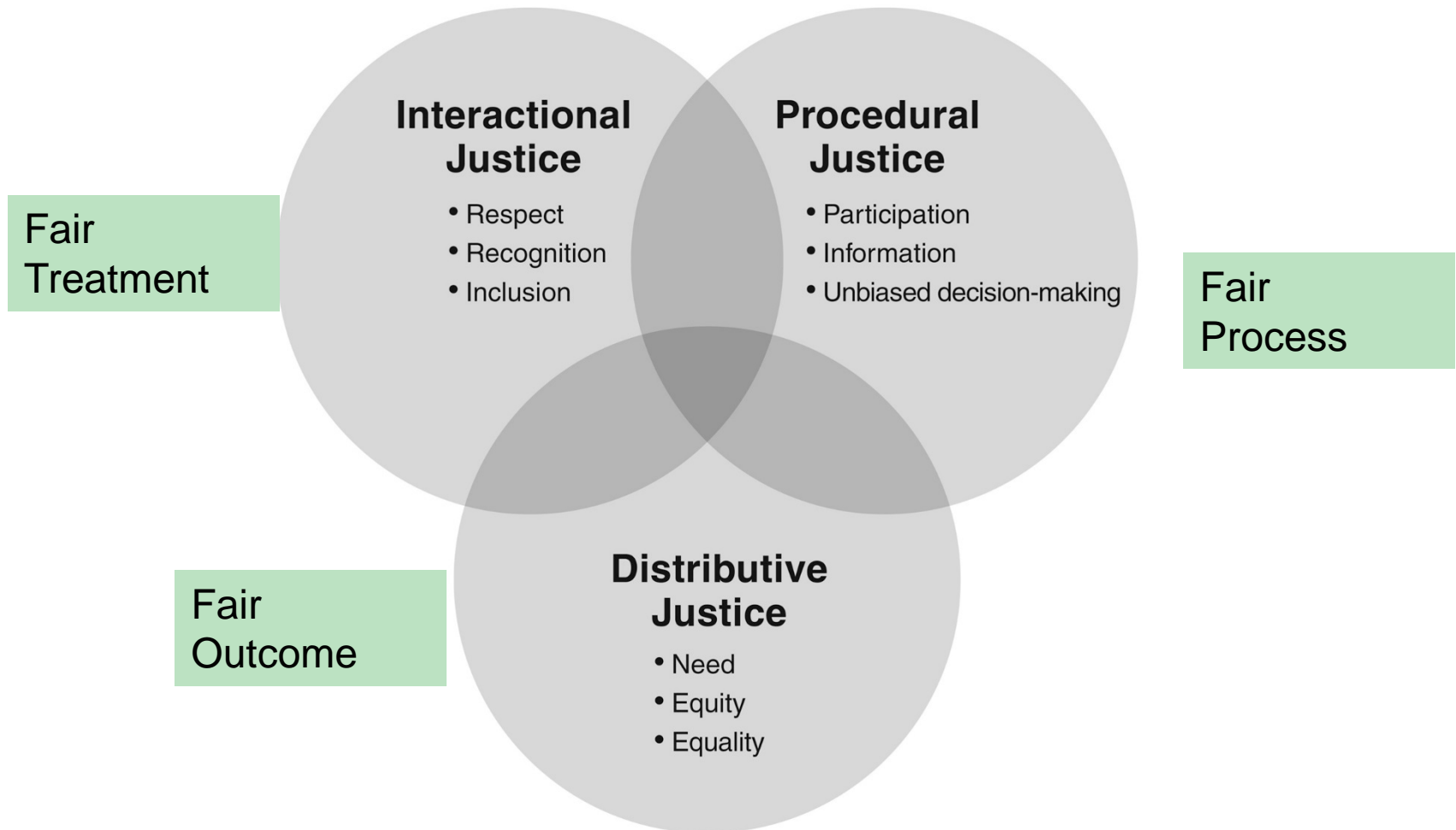
Legal Justice

Climate Justice

Environmental Justice

The Just Ordering of Society

Three Constructs of Justice





Taralga wind farm
study 2005

<http://www.youraustraliaguide.com/images/map.jpg>

Taralga wind farm study - 2005





Taralga: A Pioneers Landscape



The proposed wind farm



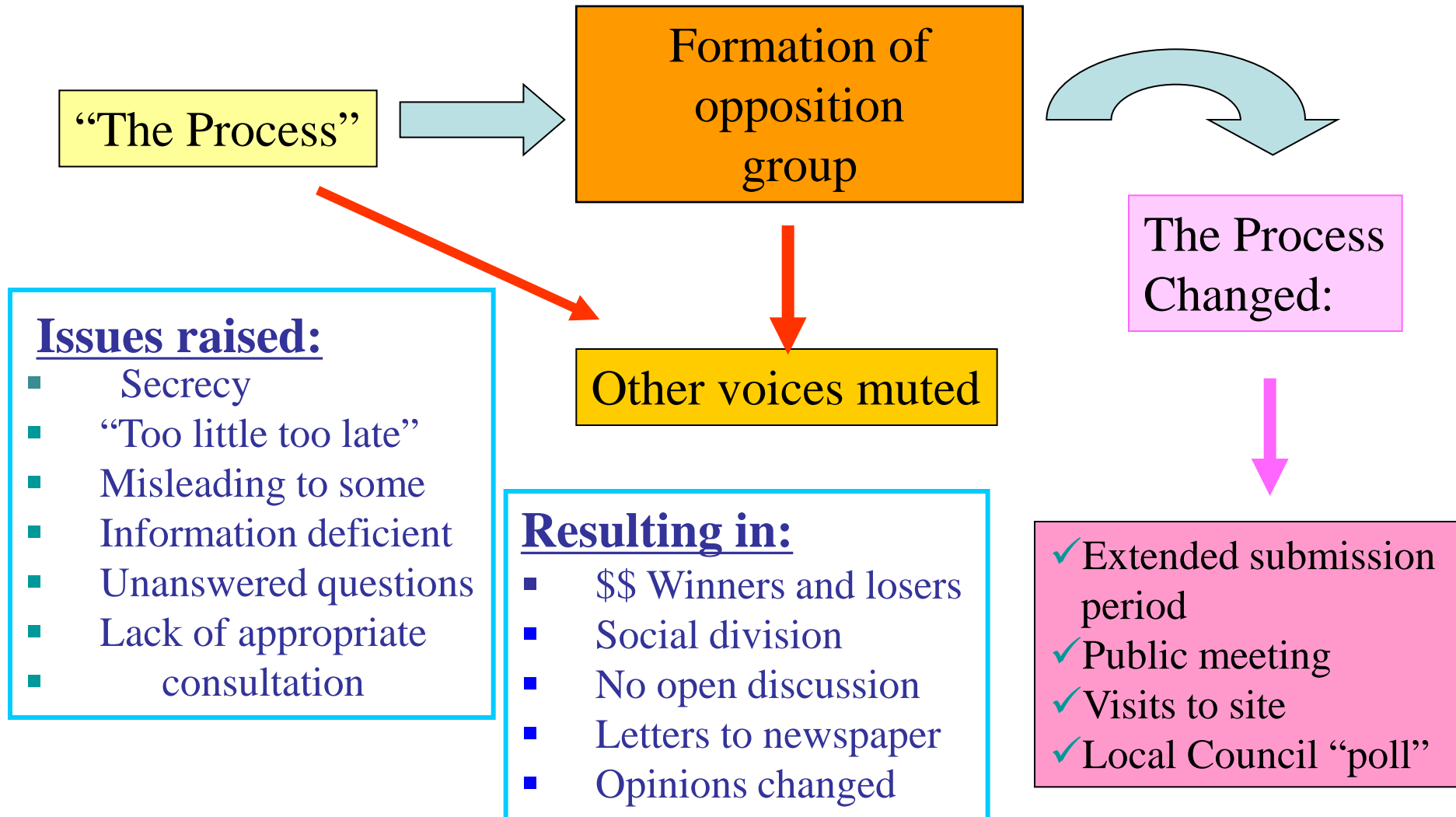
Source: Taralga Windfarm EIS, RES Southern Cross Pty Ltd

Case Study: A Divided Community

- The Taralga wind farm proposal: 69 turbines on ridge with many visible from the town
- Community division and high tensions
- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and submission period (155 objections, 30 in support)
- NSW State called in the Development Application – “of State significance”



So what happened in Taralga?



Groups within Communities:

- ‘Winners’ and those who support them
- ‘Losers’ and those who support them
- Those marginally or indirectly affected
- Onlookers who feel sympathetic
- Onlookers who don’t understand the issues
- The whole community which needs social cohesion for well-being

Case study social group analysis for primary fairness perception influence

Group affected	Fairness perception influenced by	Primary reason
"Winners"		
"Losers"		
Rest of community who do not stand to gain or lose		
Whole community		

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Whole community		

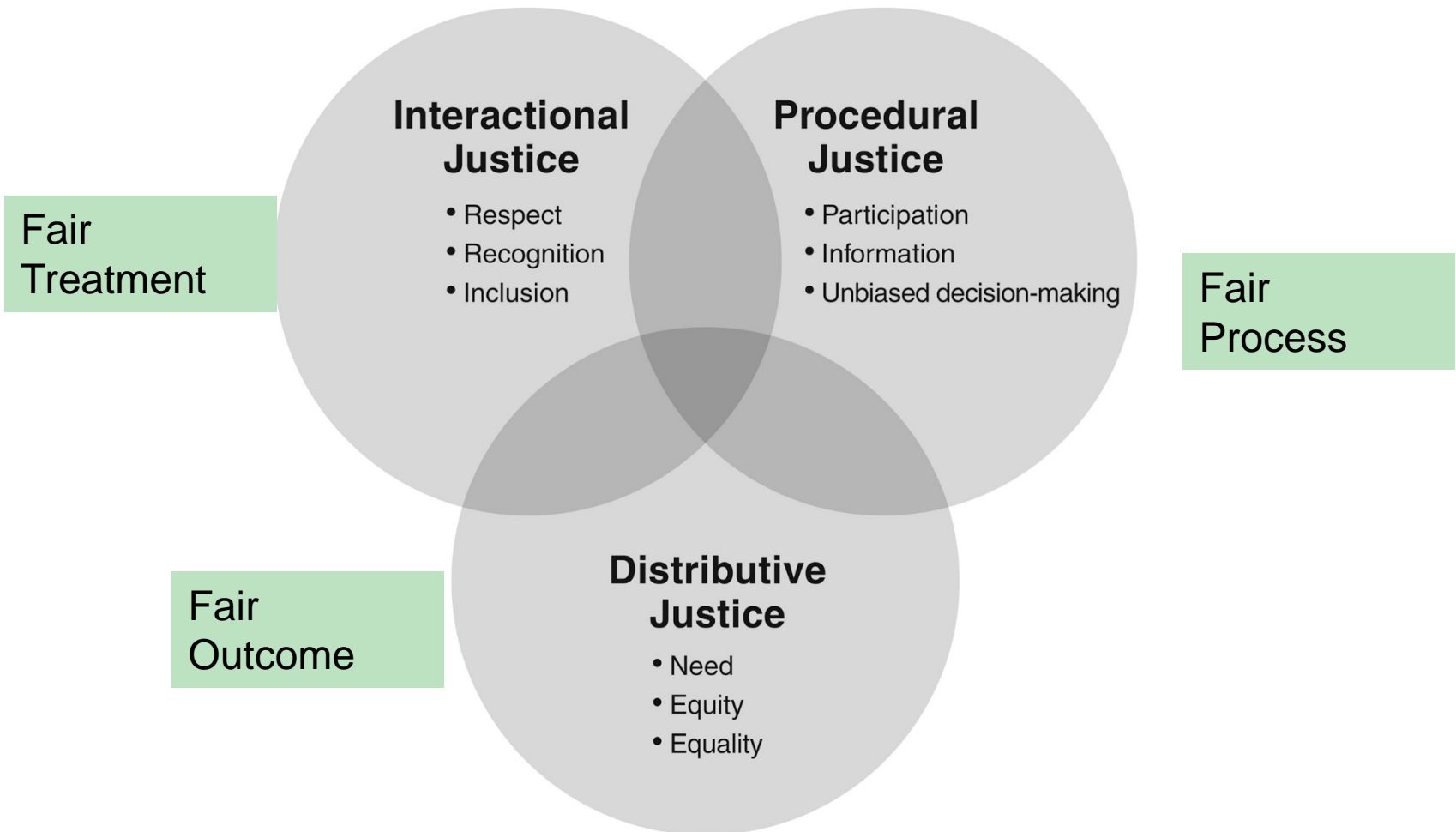
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Rest of community who do not stand to gain or lose	Outcome fairness (distributive justice)	Prefer outcome to be fair for everyone in community in order to maintain social well-being
Whole community	Process fairness (procedural justice)	A fair process is more likely to result in a fair outcome

What is important here?

- People do not like seeing their friends and colleagues badly treated – they won't support decisions that badly affect their communities
- In a fair process issues are discussed and debated, questions answered, and people can come to their own conclusions about the pros and cons of the project – they are more likely to agree with and accept the decision even if there are some negative aspects

Three Constructs of Justice



The importance of fair treatment:

- **Government and business must:**
 - Be honest, inclusive and respectful
 - Conduct fair decision-making processes
- **Community groups must be fair to other groups:**
 - Protest groups can be polarising within a community “you’ re with us or you’ re against us”
 - People who take a strong stand can deny others what they need: time, information, discussion
 - Voices can become muted because other voices are louder

Lessons learned in Australia? 1



King Island
Wind Farm
2013

<http://www.youraustraliaguide.com/images/map.jpg>

The King Island Wind Farm 2013

“It has brought out the absolute worst in the community”

“Regrettably the ‘us versus them’ in the community will mean that it is going to be very difficult (or impossible) to undertake the serious negotiations around the range of community concerns for the Island.

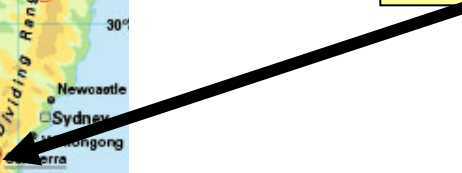
This is very, very concerning”

E-mail from a resident, July 5, 2013

Lessons learned in Australia? 2



Uriarra
Solar Farm
2013



<http://www.youraustraliaguide.com/images/map.jpg>

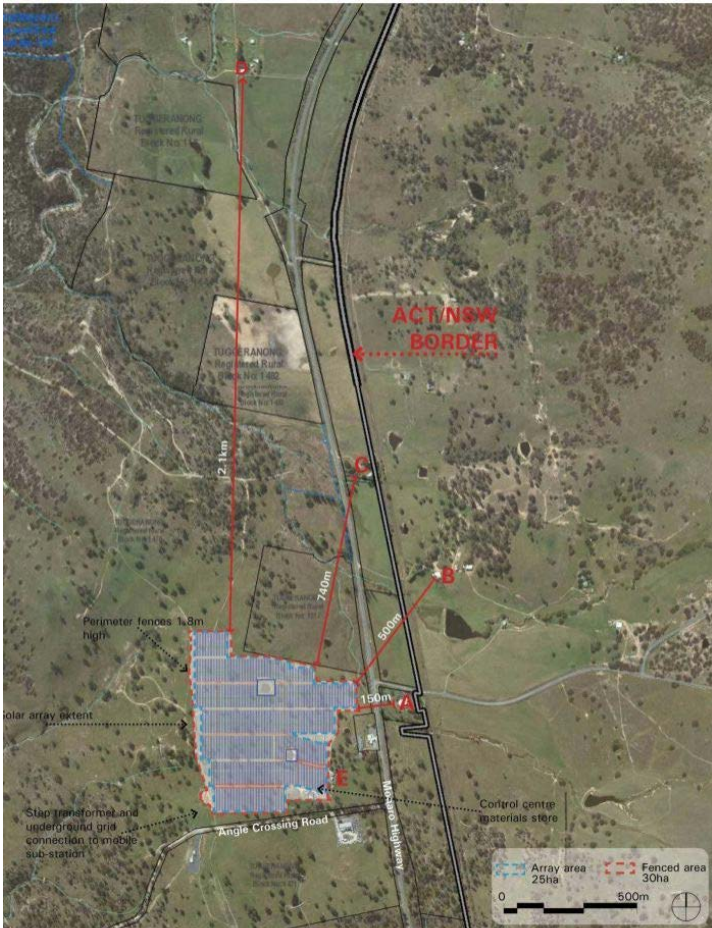
Uriarra solar farm : Protest from 2013



“The residents of Uriarra Village are deeply disappointed with the process to approve the location of the Uriarra solar farm 90m from the village without any consultation with the 100 families that live here and the lack of procedural fairness”.

<https://www.facebook.com/uriarrasolarfarm/info>

2015: The ACT Government response? To move the solar farm further south... but....



“New Williamsdale solar farm proposal draws anger from residents in Canberra's far south”

ABC News
25 Mar 2015

“Not all the residents in the Williamsdale area are happy about a second solar farm being built in Canberra's far south.

Royalla Landcare chair Maryke Booth said residents would have appreciated some advance consultation”

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-25/new-williamsdale-solar-farm-proposal-draws-anger-from-residents/6345950>

Why consider fairness and justice?

Use of a justice decision-making framework gives a better understanding of:

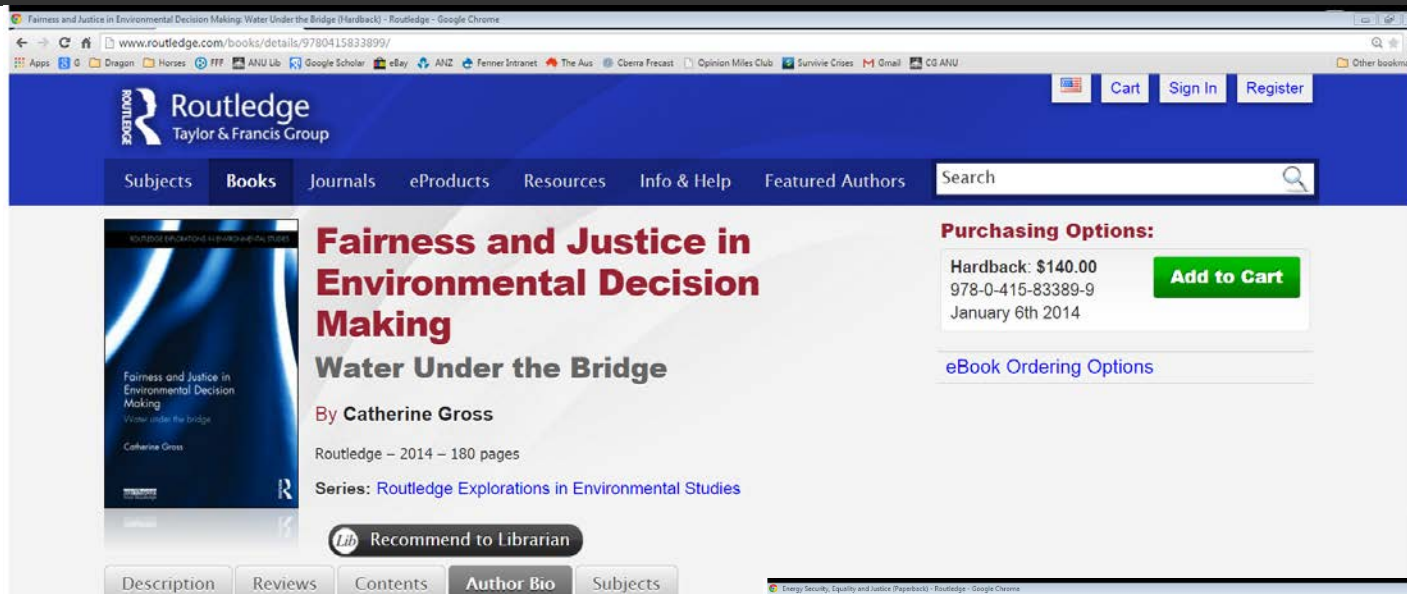
- Different interests and perspectives
- Who needs what and why
- Issues within a conflict
- How to prevent conflict
- How to gain social acceptance

Towards social acceptance

- Recognition that there are different social groups within communities, with different perspectives, often in conflict
- Creating fair decision-making processes encourages the participation of those who are neutral who make up the broader social fabric of a community
- Broader acceptance of decisions follows fair decision-making processes and reduces support for people and groups who have strong and unyielding opinions (the louder voices)
- People are more likely to accept a decision if they have been treated well, even if they disagree with the outcome

References

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- Gross, C., 2014. Calling people NIMBYs won't stop development arguments, The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/calling-people-nimbys-wont-stop-development-arguments-25715>
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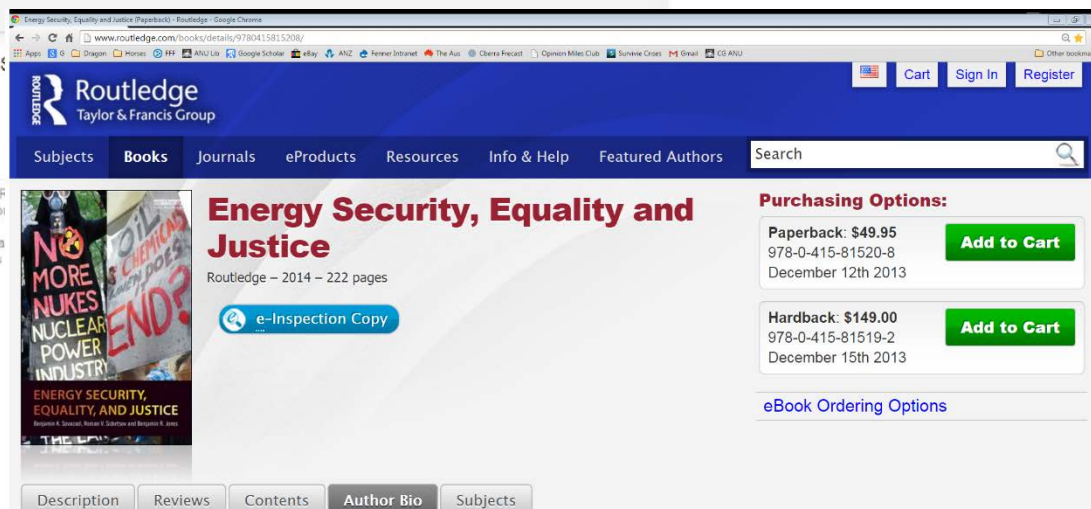
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Thank you!

Please contact me if you would like further information, a reading list, or to discuss any of these ideas and perspectives

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