



Silent Spring to Woeful Winter

Urmila Jha-Thakur

To cite this article: Urmila Jha-Thakur (2026) Silent Spring to Woeful Winter, Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal, 44:1, 1-1, DOI: [10.1080/14615517.2026.2629047](https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2026.2629047)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2026.2629047>



Published online: 17 Feb 2026.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 226



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Silent Spring to Woeful Winter

Dear Readers,

In 1962 Rachel Carson's landmark book 'Silent Spring' is said to have been influential in paving the way for the modern environmental movement. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established soon after, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was introduced in 1969 which ushered in a new era for impact assessments (IA) and evidence-led decision-making. Yet ironically, after more than 50 years since then, the same nation's leadership is stirring a backlash against the environmental movement calling climate change a 'scam'. This January as US faced severe winter storms, the question was raised as to why are there severe winters when global warming is happening? Evidence is suggesting that this may be owing to the disruptions to the stratospheric polar vortex, which seems to be linked to the warming of the Arctic due to climate change (Barlow and Cohen 2026). When Silent Spring was published, the then US President had the issues raised by the book examined by the President's Science Advisory Committee and eventually the pesticide DDT was banned (NRDC 2015). In contrast, today's reality compels us to question as to whether propaganda is overruling evidence?

IA's role is to support decision-making and in doing so it is essentially evidence led. When decision-makers choose to disregard such evidence, the failure lies not with IA itself, but with the political processes that ignore it. However, political winds shift, and the current wave of scepticism is not an end point. While there may be fluctuations in policy directions, the need for rigorous, transparent assessment does not diminish, rather, it becomes even more critical during periods when evidence is most contested. With the need for IAs to deliver through these uncertainties, it is my pleasure to present to you the first IAPA issue of this year! Hope 2026 is a good year for IA in steering decisions towards genuinely sustainable outcomes.


This issue has seven items consisting of five research articles, one letter and one book review, written by a total of 31 authors. In the first article, the author re-visits the concept of 'social licence' and explores its origin and the role it plays in social

impact assessment (SIA) and project management. The topic of SIA continues in the second article but this time within the context of mining. In this paper, the authors establish the influence of commercial and structural arrangements on SIA and accordingly develop recommendations. The third article is from Brazil where the authors evaluate the contribution of landscape metrics for monitoring forest biodiversity. In doing so, the study uses a case study of a bauxite mine in Brazilian Amazon. The fourth paper of this issue looks at the quality of significance determination in Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for offshore wind projects and reviews EISs from England, Scotland, the United States and Brazil. In the next paper, the authors using a best practice benchmark for integrating biodiversity considerations analyses Environmental Assessment practices in Denmark, Germany, Spain and Portugal. The next item of this issue is a letter which contributes to the discussion on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on IA and focuses on natural language processing (NLP) applications. Finally, the last item of this issue is a book review for the title *Regulating a Thousand Cuts: Global Law and Policy Solutions to Cumulative Environmental Problems*.

Enjoy reading!

References

- Barlow M, Cohen J. 2026 Jan 24. How the polar vortex and warm ocean intensified a major US winter storm. [accessed 2026 Jan 24]. <https://theconversation.com/how-the-polar-vortex-and-warm-ocean-intensified-a-major-us-winter-storm-274243>
- NRDC. 2015. The story of silent spring: how a courageous woman took on the chemical industry and raised important questions about humankind's impact on nature. [accessed 2026 Jan 31]. <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/story-silent-spring>

Urmila Jha-Thakur
Department of Geography and Planning,
Environmental Assessment and Management
Centre, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK
 Urmila.thakur@liverpool.ac.uk