

## **Master's Thesis Assessment**

**AUTHOR:**

Anna Flegler

**TITLE OF THE THESIS:**

The Precautionary Principle and Risk Management in Environmental Decision-Making: A Case Study of the proposed Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay, Alaska

**ASSESSED BY:**

Pavel Prikryl, IPS FSV

**ASSESSMENT TYPE:**

Opponent

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### **1. ASSESSMENT OF THE THESIS CONTENT**

	Grade
Relevancy of the topic in relation to the current scientific knowledge	1
Originality of the thesis, contribution to the science subject field	1
Integrity and scale of sources and literature relevant to the subject study	1-2
Ability for critical appraisal of the sources	1-2
Standards of working with sources	1-2
Methodology and its relevancy to the subject study and thesis goals	1-2
Logic of the thesis structure	1
Ability to argue, cohesion and coherence of the argument	2
Terminology in the relevant field	1
Adhesion to the citation norm	1
Language and stylistic standard of the thesis	1

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

**COMMENTARY:**

The thesis of Anna Flegler is a well-written introduction into different concepts of environmental decision-making process based on the case study of proposed mine project in Bristol Bay, Alaska. In general, I consider the thesis to be of a high standard. It deals with an original topic, it draws from a wide range of sources and it is clearly written.

The author starts with an informative and fact-based chapter, which presents an important background into the strong connections between the economy, environment and society in Bristol Bay (and Alaska in general) and thus brings the relevancy of the study into the light.

In the following two chapters she describes the Pebble project and the various actors involved in (or influencing) the decision-making process. Although these sections are well researched, it would help to go deeper into the explanation of the actual process (especially explain the composition and inner-workings of the Large Mine Permitting Team) and describing more clearly on what different levels and with what success are the opposition groups able to influence the process under the current conditions.

The following chapter focuses on the possible impacts of the proposed mine. The author is focusing mostly on negative environmental impacts, but also includes some socio-economic issues. The section is brief, but well-informed and balanced.

The final chapter is devoted to the two „competing“ decision-making process concepts: the „risk management“ and „precautionary principle“. However, while the author explains rather clearly the difference between the two concepts on the *background* of the Pebble project, she falls short, in my opinion, of actually *applying* the two concepts on the process in the reality. Therefore, even though she obviously favors usage of the precautionary principles in the Pebble project decision-making, the argument remains unclear and unconvincing. What would the usage of the precautionary principles mean in practice? What benefits and risks would it entail?

Also, the conclusion of the thesis seems to prove this criticism to be correct. While it again clearly indicates the importance of the decision-making process in the particular issue and region, it doesn't really convince the reader what, how and why the precautionary measures would work in reality.

## 2. QUESTIONS FOR THE DEFENSE

Explain what would be the benefits of using the precautionary concept in real decision making process and how would you see the real implementation.
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How could the precautionary principle be applied to the international decision-making process/debate about the climate change?
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## 3. SUGGESTED MARK

While I put forward few critical points to some results of the author's work, I consider the thesis to be original research of a generally high standard. Therefore, I suggest to mark the thesis, based on the result of the defense, either **excellent** (výborne) or **very well** (velmi dobre).

Datum: 30/1/10

Signature:

