

# **Public participation and planning**

Ólafur Ögmundarson

MSc in Environment and natural  
resources from the University of  
Iceland

Ísafjörður 3. September 2009

# Overview of the lecture

1. Environmental impact assessment (EIA):  
Public participation
  - Methodology
  - Research questions
  - Public participation in the EIA process in Iceland
2. Results and conclusions

# Environmental impact assessment

Public participation

# Methodology

- Qualitative research.
  - Interviews.
- The case: The EIA for Alcoas aluminum smelter in Reyðarfjörður east Iceland.
  - Public
  - Specialists

# Research questions

- What is the perception of the persons interviewed about the EIA process with regards to public participation, its meaningfulness, influence, purpose and democracy in the process?

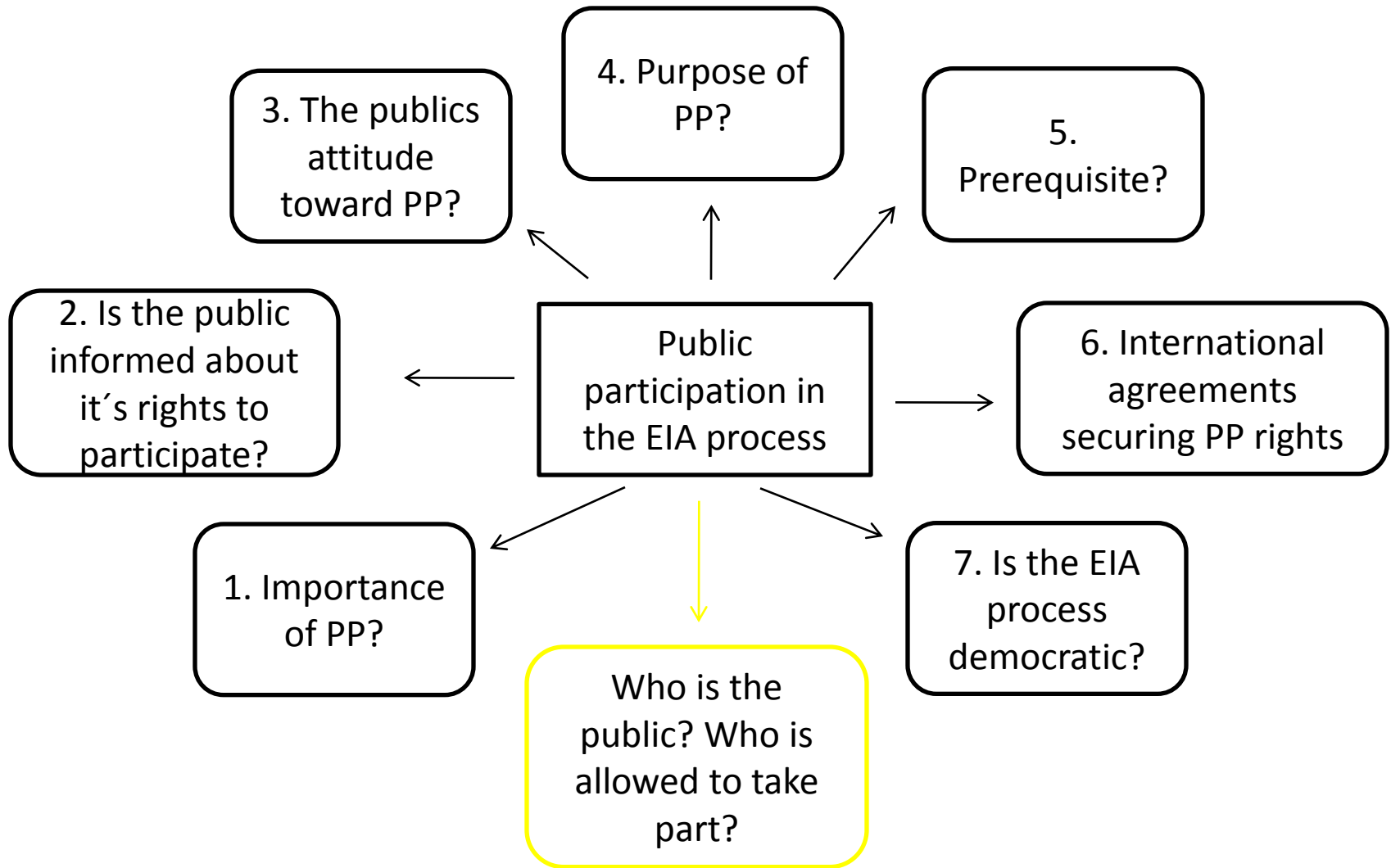
# The law on EIA in Iceland

- The objectives are clear. That is to introduce environmental impact of projects to the public which go through the process. Developers do that in cooperation with the Planning agency, the governmental body every construction has to go through if it is subject to an EIA.
- The term “public” is not defined in the law or in the regulation.

# Public participation in the EIA process

- Public participation is assured on three stages of the environmental impact assessment process.
- Written comments can be handed in on these stages within a certain time frame.

# 3. Conclusion





# Discussions I

- PP is vital in planning, otherwise the public can for example work against planned activities.
- The public has to know what to expect from its participation, what it can achieve. The planner has therefore to define the purpose of the PP.

# Discussions II

- The public's attitude is a lot controlled by disappointment and the prerequisite, why it took part.
- Is democracy the goal or top down planning?
- Who is the public? Who is allowed to take part?