



RESOURCE

Evaluating the success of public participation in integrated catchment management

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Description / Abstract

Recognition of the need to manage the water environment in more holistic ways has resulted in the global growth of Integrated Catchment Management (ICM). ICM is characterised by horizontal integration, encouraging interdisciplinary working between traditionally disparate management sectors, alongside vertical integration, characterised by the engagement of communities; central is the promotion of participatory governance and management decision-making. ICM has been translated into policy through, for example, the EU Water Framework Directive and at a national level by policies such as the Catchment Based Approach in England. Research exploring the implementation of these policies has reported success at a catchment level, but further research is required to explore practices of management at local level within catchments. This paper presents the findings of participatory research undertaken with a catchment partnership in the northeast of England to explore the integration of top-down policy translation with how local communities interact with management agencies at sub-catchment scale (a bottom-up perspective). The research found that supra-catchment scale drivers dominate the vertical interplay between management systems at more local levels. These drivers embed traditional practices of management, which establishes public participation as a barrier to delivery of top-down management objectives, resulting in practices that exclude communities and participatory movements at the local level. Although collaboration between agencies at the partnership scale offers a potential solution to overcoming these obstacles, the paper recommends changes to supra-catchment governance structures to encourage flexibility in developing local participatory movements as assets. Further research is necessary to develop new practices of management to integrate local people more effectively into the management process.

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