



Environmental partnerships: accumulating or resisting environmental bureaucracy?



**Kerry Waylen, Kirsty Blackstock,
Alba Juárez-Bourke, Keith Marshall**



The James
Hutton
Institute


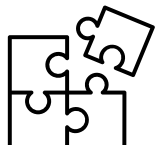
POLLEN Biennial Conference, September 2020

P036-F0: Expanding the political ecology of bureaucracy



The James
Hutton
Institute

Background - partnerships

- Collaborative approaches such as partnership working often seen as a 'good thing'
 - Literature on governance (Sabatier et al 2005) 
 - Various expectations for efficiency/ effectiveness/ efficacy/equity (Blackstock, 2009)
- If and how do partnerships go beyond existing bureaucracies?
 - Bureaucracy as organisations and associated institutions that codify and stabilise certain framings and ways of working (Toye, 2006) 



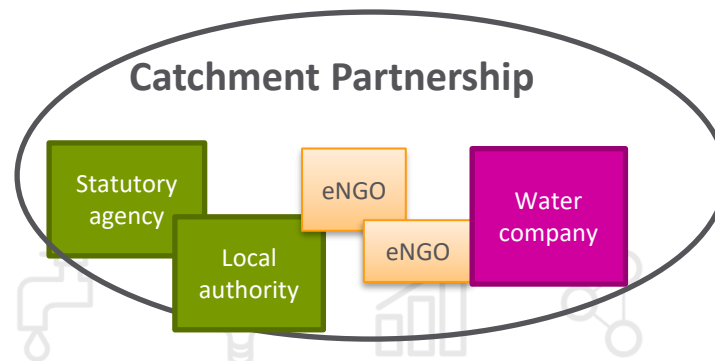
Background – freshwater bureaucracy

- Substantial pre-existing bureaucracy shaping water
 - Long history of regulation and policy
 - Focus on reducing pollution and safeguarding drinking water
 - Current drivers: EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) & Floods Directive. Influential WFD (2010) seen as innovative in requiring required joined up thinking, systems approach to management, entails some participation
 - Pervasive technocratic ‘command & control’ culture (Teisman et al. 2013)
 - Responsibility of environmental statutory agencies e.g. EA, also involve other agencies & orgs e.g. Local Authorities
- Recognition of need for change and new initiatives
 - Problems such as diffuse pollution have proved intractable: so need engagement & support of others
 - Increasing emphasis on collaboration (Benson et al 2013) & positive expectations of partnerships (Waylen et al 2019)



Background – catchment partnerships

- Catchment partnerships
 - Not found in every UK catchment (watershed) but currently encouraged e.g. by CaBA
 - Non-statutory, voluntary
 - Involve actors from a range of sectors
 - Some formality e.g. periodic minuted meetings, make plans, partnership may be legally codified...
...but not normally organisations in their own right



Our study

- If and how do catchment partnerships improve delivery of policy goals?
 - Especial focus on integration: see POLLEN P037-S2, Kirsty Blackstock, 22nd Sep
- 2019-20: Experiences of 4 UK partnerships
 - Analysis of progress, challenges & expectations by partners; based on analysis of catchment plans and documentation, 21 partner interviews
 - Qualitative interpretive analysis in Nvivo
Informed by Environmental Policy Integration, collaborative governance, partnership working (Jordan & Lenschow, 2010; Marshall et al, 2010; Benson et al, 2013)




Findings: Experiences of partnerships

- Interviewees feel that partnerships are worthwhile
 - Benefits knowledge-sharing, particularly of other people and processes, also data, places and measures
 - Helps with wider engagement (e.g. farmers)
 - Builds shared vision & plan for 'difficult' actions
 - Coordinators valued for supporting collaboration & communication & coordinating action
- Partnerships transcend pre-existing bureaucracies?
 - Add some transaction costs for partners
 - But generally valued – wish to continue



Findings: Experiences of partnerships

- Partnerships transcend limitations of pre-existing bureaucracies?
 - Add transaction costs for partners
 - But generally valued – wish to continue



Coordinator discussing agencies in her partnership

“Yeah **they’re so constrained by their regulatory framework and if there’s things that they really want to get done but its not a priority under River Basin Management Planning** or whatever then they may well come to us and say look you know can you do this? We can't do it through our mechanisms.... but we would really like to see this happen. So... I think one of our strengths is that we're not bound by any set of regulations really. **We can pick and choose a bit what we do and where we do it and how we do it.** Whereas [they] .. are much more restricted by their own strategies and by regulatory and statutory frameworks....”

- Bureaucracy seeks partnerships as recognises its own limitations



Findings: Experiences of partnerships

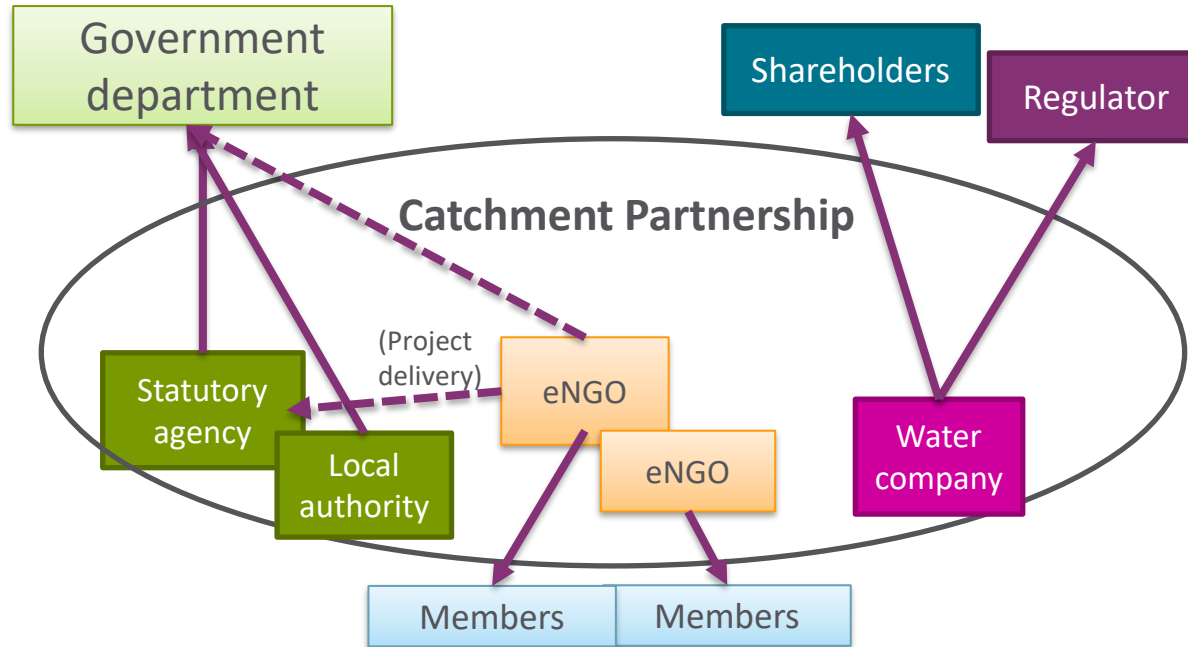
However....

- Partnerships are shaped by pre-existing bureaucracy
 - Policy delivery agencies are often funders of partnerships' 'core costs' and activities
 - If partnerships' plans align with policy priorities then resources of bureaucracy can enable – if not, they can constrain
 - Particularly challenging to find funding for core costs – yet coordinators identified as key to achieving collaboration and 'joined up' working
- Furthermore, statutory agencies are often key partners in partnerships
- Language of bureaucracy is pervasive 'good ecological status', 'measures' etc.



Findings: Partnerships + accountability

Consider accountabilities (Lindberg, 2009; Jepson, 2005)



Note only selected accountabilities shown here: internal-organisation & individual accountabilities not shown

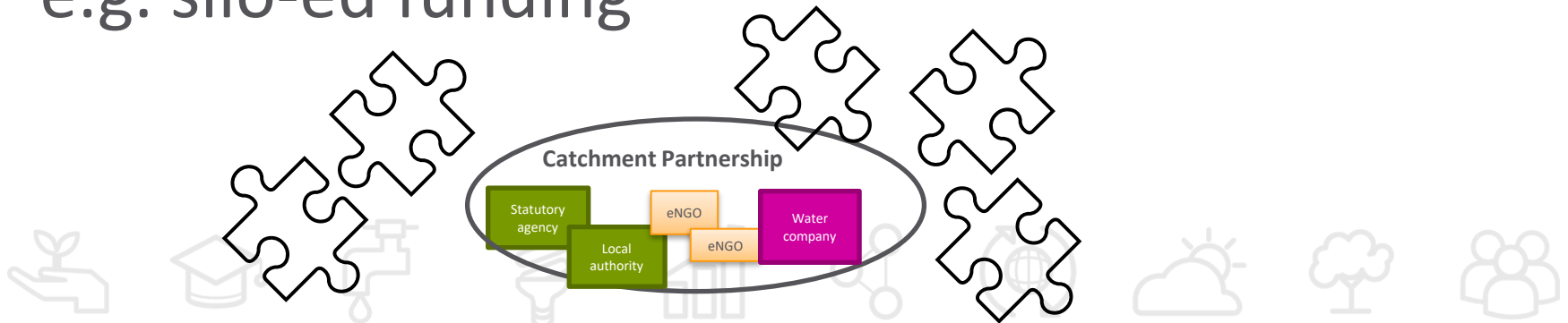
Multiple accountabilities for each partner: varied ways to earn & demo legitimacy
 Additional accountabilities when partnership accept agency funding, for projects
 Drive to access this funding tends to encourage conformity with bureaucracy
 and even to add to bureaucracy, as partnership formalised itself

Tend to constrain partnership flexibility



Summary: Partnerships + bureaucracy

- Partnerships shaped by and part of bureaucracies
 - Key actors in bureaucracy are part of partnerships ...also key funders of partnership activities
 - Multiple accountabilities may be a useful way to explore constraints that arise (Christiansen, 1997)
 - Partnerships may even add to bureaucracy as they seek to conform with and access resources
- To what end? Perhaps tends to reinforce technocracy and pre-existing limitations e.g. silo-ed funding



Summary: Partnerships + bureaucracy

- Partnerships are valued for going above & beyond
 - Can transcend pre-existing bureaucracy can do in terms of goals of partners, and by policy
- Despite or because of entanglement with pre-existing bureaucracies?



- Positive appraisals relate to individuals' efforts and practices supporting collaboration & communication





Discussion

- Priorities for practice
 - Valuing emotional labour and potential discomfort of individuals supporting partnerships
 - Enable flexibility to support adaptive management – e.g. reconsider funding opportunities & reporting requirements
- Priorities for research
 - Identify specific practices and institutional arrangements to limit or overcome pervasive influence of pre-existing bureaucracies
 - Connect political ecology with literatures on networked governance (Gregorio et al 2019) and street level/interface bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010; Funder, 2019)



Conclusion



The James
Hutton
Institute

- Useful to see partnerships as shaped by pre-existing bureaucracies – sometimes enabled by it, sometimes constrained by it - but not overwhelmed
- Work to enable partnerships must not just focus on partnerships themselves: must recognise intersecting roles of individuals and institutions in bureaucracy





References

- Benson, D., Jordan, A., Cook, H. and Smith, L. (2013). Collaborative environmental governance: Are watershed partnerships swimming or are they sinking?, *Land Use Policy*, 30(1), 748-757.
- Blackstock, K. (2009). Between a rock and a hard place: incompatible objectives at the heart of river basin planning?, *Water Science & Technology*, 59(3), 425-431.
- Christiansen, T. (1997). Tensions of European governance: politicized bureaucracy and multiple accountability in the European Commission, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4(1), 73-90.
- Funder, M. (2019). The state as a person: the role of interface bureaucrats in everyday natural resource governance. In (Ed, F. Nunan) *Governing Renewable Natural Resources: Theories and Frameworks*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, pp. 163.
- Di Gregorio, M., Fatorelli, L., Paavola, J., Locatelli, B., Pramova, E., Nurrochmat, D. R., May, P. H., Brockhaus, M., Sari, I. M. and Kusumadewi, S. D. (2019). Multi-level governance and power in climate change policy networks, *Global Environmental Change*, 54, 64-77.
- Jepson, P. (2005). Governance and accountability of environmental NGOs, *Environmental Science & Policy*, 8(5), 515-524
- Jordan, A. and Lenschow, A. (2010). Environmental policy integration: a state of the art review, *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 20(3), 147-158.
- Lindberg, I. (2009). Accountability: the core concept and its subtypes. ODI report
- Lipsky, M. (2010). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public service*, Russell Sage Foundation.
- Marshall, K., Blackstock, K. L. and Dunglinson, J. (2010). A contextual framework for understanding good practice in integrated catchment management, *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 53(1), 63-89.
- Sabatier, P. A., Focht, W., Lubell, M., Trachtenberg, Z., Vedlitz, A. and Matlock, M. (2005). *Swimming upstream: Collaborative approaches to watershed management*, MIT Press Cambridge, MA.
- Teisman, G., van Buuren, A., Edelenbos, J. and Warner, J. (2013). Water governance: Facing the limits of managerialism, determinism, water-centricity, and technocratic problem-solving, *International Journal of Water Governance*, 1, 1-11.
- Toye, J. (2006). *Modern bureaucracy*, WIDER Research Paper (No. 2006/52).
- Waylen, K. A., Blackstock, K. L., Tindale, S. J. and Juárez-Bourke, A. (2019). *Governing Integration: Insights from Integrating Implementation of European Water Policies*, *Water*, 11(3), 598.
- Waylen, K.A.; Marshall, K.; Juarez-Bourke, A.; Blackstock, K.L. (2020) Exploring the delivery of multiple benefits by catchment partnerships in the UK: Interim results., Report by the James Hutton Institute.





The James
Hutton
Institute

Thanks to participants in policy departments, statutory agencies and partnerships who have kindly shared their time, ideas, experiences and materials. This research is funded by the Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme 2016-2021, RD 1.2.4 & 1.4.2.

www.hutton.ac.uk/research/projects/water-integration

 Kerry.Waylen@Hutton.ac.uk

 @KerryWaylen #POLLEN20 @SEFARIScot

