

Report as of FY2006 for 2004CA110G: "Institutional Re-arrangements: forging smart use water policy coalitions at the intersection of geo-technical engineering with urban open space "

Publications

- Other Publications:
 - Law, J. (1999). After ANT: Complexity, Naming and Topology. Actor Network Theory: And After. J. Law. Oxford, UK, Blackwell.
- Articles in Refereed Scientific Journals:
 - Callon, M. (1986). Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay. Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge. J. Law. London, Routledge: 196-233.
 - Latour, B. (1986). The powers of association. Power, Action, and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge? J. Law. London, Routledge: 264-280.
 - Latour, B. (2005). Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press.
 - Law, J. (1992). "Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity." Systems Practice 5(4): 379-393.
- unclassified:
 - No reports or articles were published during this period.

Report Follows

RESEARCH PROGRAM:

1. Include Problem and Research Objectives, Methodology and Principal Findings and Significance for your project.

Problem and Research Objectives:

The problem is an operational gulf between the best available water management technology, and the political intransigence of existing patterns of urban land use and development planning. The research question was framed in the following way: *How are new waterfront urban spaces that combine non-structural flood control, economic development, neighborhood improvement, and recreational amenities planned, funded and implemented?*

The research objectives include identifying successful modes of urban collaborative governance, which integrate water management with land use planning; characterizing the constraints, opportunities, and management strategies involved; and making appropriate recommendations for future practice and research.

Methodology and Principal Findings:

Four western cities with strong “watershed park” coalitions were identified: Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; Phoenix, Arizona; and San Jose, California. The planning and construction of their riverfront/watershed management parks were studied using an in-depth, interpretive, qualitative case research method.

During an exploratory research project in 2003, the completed parks in Denver, Phoenix, and San Jose were presented and continually referenced by public officials seeking to build support for new waterfront open spaces along the Los Angeles River in Los Angeles, California. This research program was designed to capitalize on and learn from this historic perspective: how were these projects (Denver, Phoenix, and San Jose) accomplished? What did their leaders, managers, and advocates have to say about how they were promoted, negotiated, and implemented? How is this information being used in the early-stage construction of the Los Angeles projects? What are the challenges and opportunities being faced by the watershed park planners in Los Angeles?

Data collection in each city relied on both primary and secondary sources. To begin with, thorough media surveys were conducted on the parks, rivers, and history of watershed management in each region, as well as a review of the pertinent organizational literature and project documentation (plans, meeting minutes, website information, brochures, press releases, public review materials, etc.) From these sources, interview subjects were identified. These interviewees were the policy actors who comprised the “watershed park” coalitions in each

city. In Los Angeles, because the park projects are still in the stage of being planned and negotiated, it was also possible to conduct fieldwork as a participant observer at river walks, planning meetings, public participation events, and so on. This ethnographic work was undertaken continually between 2004 and 2006, and Los Angeles field notes were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Interviews were scheduled and conducted on-site in each city, and followed a standardized format approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, Irvine. The standard interview questionnaire included twelve open-ended questions, designed to pursue specific theoretical directions with respect to urban policy change and management innovation. Interviewees were provided with a Study Information Sheet before the interview began, and permission to tape record the interview was requested. Interviews lasted, on average, sixty minutes. The interview sample in each city relied on a technique known as “snowballing,” where each interviewee is asked to identify additional actors who were involved, and in this way subsequent interviews are arranged and conducted. The taped conversations were transcribed and analyzed using atlas.ti qualitative research software.

During the last reporting period, data analysis was conducted and completed. Our findings emphasize three important aspects of successful watershed park coalitions. First, they are not comprised of organizational actors with discrete and unchanging belief systems and operational imperatives (for instance, community activists – flood control engineers – restoration ecologists). Rather, they are very dynamic networks of citizens, government officials, and other governance actors who consistently demonstrate a capacity for organizational learning, over time. This is an important characteristic of collaboration, and it is difficult to trace adequately without a historic and practice-based perspective such as the one permitted by this research design.

Second, we find that innovations in land use programs are not driven primarily by the state of the art in engineering, urban design, or environmental management technology. This was a hypothetical premise of the study, and it has been verified through our research. What we have found instead is that the adoption of new, multi-objective land use development initiatives depends most crucially on a working knowledge of the existing governance arrangements which operate within a particular region, in order for the successful transformation of those arrangements to be possible. We have chosen to understand these governance arrangements as an actor-network (Callon 1986; Latour 1986; Law 1992; Law 1999; Latour 2005), for two insights this concept provides – that the institutional landscape is comprised not only of people, but of documents, discourses, policy tools, plant and animal species, and above all else, rivers; and that these institutional arrangements are held together not by some over-arching structural power, but by the repetitive actions and tacit understandings of the actors involved.

Finally, we build on this to arrive at our third finding, which has to do with the nature and performance of sustainable leadership in urban governance settings. We find that lasting institutional change, which, when accomplished, results in new kinds of land use projects and new inter-organizational relationships, is the product of a very specific kind of collaborative political leadership. It is tied less to the traditional notion of a highly visible, charismatic leader, than to the existence of less-visible, embedded, strategic leader-managers, who both understand their own realm of the region's existing institutional arrangements, as well as how their realm might be broadened, leveraged, or otherwise transformed in order to link into others. These leader-managers are able to act deliberately and repeatedly within their actor-network, with a more idealistic vision in mind - to shape new expectations, forge new relationships, and transform governance institutions into arrangements where the state of the art in environmental restoration or water management technology (for instance) *can* be adopted and implemented.

Significance:

The significance of these research findings speaks to the most important ongoing focus of urban water policy in the twenty-first century. While it is true that we need the best available science, and we need well-funded government agencies and active, well-supported citizen groups in order to pursue meaningful advances in urban water policy and environmental management, we also need a more inclusive, less linear institutional landscape to facilitate the uptake of relevant information and the sharing of implementation responsibilities across sectors. This study argues that in the realm of urban water policy and land use management, what we need above all else are more adaptive institutions of urban governance.

2. Provide publication citations associated with the research project.

Publications are still pending. We are drafting three journal papers, based on this research, that build on current theoretical work in each of the following fields: policy studies, water resource management, and urban planning.

3. You have the option of providing introductory text regarding your overall research program.

(not necessary)

INFORMATION TRANSFER PROGRAM: Information transfer activities supported with section 104 and required matching funds during the reporting period.

1. Provide a brief description of the information transfer activity for your project.

Project staff Anne Taufen Wessells gave a public teaching lecture based on this research at the University of California, Irvine in the Department of Environmental Analysis and Design; May 2, 2006.

Ms. Wessells also made presentations based on this research at the *Greening XVI* conference (environmental policy scholars), April 21, 2007 at the Claremont Colleges, Claremont, CA; and at the *Theorizing Ways of Knowing: Beyond Interest* conference (public policy scholars), May 18, 2007 at the Virginia Polytechnic University, National Capital Region, Alexandria, VA.

Anne Taufen Wessells will also be presenting portions of this research at three upcoming national conferences: the *Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA)* annual conference, August 15-19, 2007, State College, PA; the *American Political Science Association (APSA)* annual conference, August 30-Sept 2, 2007, Chicago, IL; and the *Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP)* annual conference, October 18-21, 2007, Milwaukee, WI.