



Participatory Justice and Water Governance

Integrative Local Watershed Governance in
the Canadian Prairies: Responding to
Climate Change

World Water Congress XV

International Water Resources Association (IWRA)

Edinburgh, Scotland

May 25, 2015



Outline

The problem/hypothesis

The methodology

The findings

Recommendations





The problem

Water resources are increasingly strained as a result of climate change and development

Globally and locally the water 'crisis,' although accentuated by climate change, is increasingly recognized as a crisis of water governance

Bottom up, participatory models of local governance meets the challenge of wicked problems



Methodology

1. Review of secondary sources including institutions, organizations, laws, policies, and practices of water governance in each province
2. Fifty semi-structured interviews were conducted with people participating in Local Watershed Councils (LWCs) exploring the operation and function of the groups, their challenges, their role, and their response to climate change and extreme events of flood and drought
3. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed by themes.

Study Areas





Alberta

LWCs are viewed as a potential avenue for climate change planning to occur

It is up to the LWC to self-determine climate change as a regional issue within their plans (no direction from federal or provincial government).

Lack of research and resources available

Resources are lacking to tackle the wicked problem of climate change

Confusion regarding mandate and role (in relation to the provincial government) in tackling climate change results in lack of action

Extreme weather



Shaunavon, SK



Saskatchewan

Planning is centralized in one government agency, Saskatchewan's Water Security Agency and its 25 Year Water Security Plan. This allows for greater access to resources.

Most of the local watershed committees include climate change considerations in their source water protection planning

Resources are constrained however support is provided to LWCs in their planning

Until soil erosion in southern Saskatchewan was brought under control, farmhouses and barns appeared to be strangely adrift on a sea of sand and dirt.





Manitoba

IWRM planning emphasises climate change planning through bottom up strategies. Public participation seems to lead to greater influence in decision making.

Lack of resources not perceived as a problem as substantial support from larger institutions

Two of the four local watershed committees responded that climate change was not included in their planning. There apparently is a disconnect between the provincial promotion of climate change within the integrated watershed management process and its inclusion in plans.



Recommendations

Reduce confusion regarding the role of various institutional actors including the local watershed groups

Communicate more among institutions and with the public with greater emphasis on making the public active participants using different communication modalities

Evaluate the level of influence the public has when engaged in planning with attention to how the public can assist with implementation of the plan




Recommendations

Institutional planners should have a more comprehensive understanding of the interconnectivity of extreme weather events, climate change, droughts, floods, etc.

Cultural values appear to be the main barrier to success. Attention should be paid to this and their linkage to market based incentives.

Timing is crucial. Opportunity after an event of flood or drought must be seized upon



Funding for this research
was provided by Social Sciences and
Humanities Research Council
of Canada (SSHRC)



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada