

Implementing national climate goals in a local context: the responses of local actors in the South West of England.

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Outline

- Aims and Methods
- Analysing implementation
- Findings
- Conclusion



Aims and Methods



- Aim: to investigate climate change priorities and implementation of associated goals amongst governmental and non-governmental actors in the South West of England.
- Opportunities for drawing wider lessons for the UK's implementation of its national Climate Change Act (HMG 2008)

Aims and Methods

- 29 semi structured interviews conducted in 2010, shortly after the so-called 'climate gate incident' :
 - local government officers (at the county, district and National Park levels – n=16)
 - Officials working locally for central government agencies (n=4).
 - bodies charged with policy delivery (n=5)
 - trade/representative groups (n=2)
 - locally-oriented third sector organisations (n=2)

Implementation

- Top down vs bottom up
- Top down implementation is broadly about ensure compliance with centrally set goals – Hierarchy
- Bottom-up models of implementation: “lay great stress on the fact that ‘street-level’ implementers have discretion in how they apply policy” (Parsons 1996: 469).
- Street level implementers = state and non state actors

Findings

Many interviewees noted that their work as it is guided by policy not media debates on climate change.

“We have to respond to government policy and their environmental criteria. There are standards there that we have to pass.” (ID11 –LA).

By contrast, implementers learn and use their experience to respond to ‘street-level’ contexts and concerns.

“there are opportunities there in how we implement our organisation’s policies. We have to be inventive and work with the private sector to be able to gain financially and jobs. We have to overcome the cynicism by showing by example, the flood risks and looking at this in advance” (ID19 –LA)

Findings

Climate scepticism was seen by many interviewees to make the job of implementing policy more difficult.

“There is a bit of resistance. All we can do is work harder at promoting the evidence and try to do the monitoring and open up the analysis....”

UEA email leak changed the way they communication with client groups.

Some of our interviewees engaged client groups in terms of the economic opportunities and benefits “Of late, because of the recession, we have started to send out the message of energy saving for financial reasons as opposed to climate change reasons, but we do put the climate change message in there. The main thrust is saving money. It is difficult to get people to change their ways” (ID13-LA).

Findings

Interviewees said that they framed their communication with client groups around the related topic of energy savings.

“People do express scepticism - sometimes to extremes. I tend not to steer it to save energy, save money we have to do that anyway- I'm not a climate scientist so try not to get into that with people” (ID13 –LA).

Interviewees engaged with climate change debates to help better inform their client groups

“Climate change has a big impact on how we communicate to the public. Using climate change more as a reason to do recycling” (ID9 – LA)

Conclusions

- Implementers' perceptions of client views and resultant changes in policy implementation priorities is context specific
- Different perceptions and responses to delivering climate policy goals amongst interviewees suggests they positively use discretion to enhance policy implementation.
- Successful implementation depends on allowing context-specific discretion among 'street-level' actors to occur.
- But central government policy and more locally set policies were key drivers of their action.
- Some interviewees wanted a stronger suite of policies to provide more authority to their implementation work..