



RESOURCE

Participants or customers in water governance? Community-public partnerships for peri-urban water supply.

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Description / Abstract

This paper examines the performance of water user associations (WUAs) and the role of actors, power relations, socio-institutional dynamics, and context in supplying water to poor urban and peri-urban neighborhoods of Malawi's two major cities. Using a preliminary survey, key-informant interviews, focus groups, secondary data, and insights from the community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) literature and common-pool resources (CPR) theory, it argues that while a business-based WUA model can enhance water supply and access, the urban/peri-urban and historical context alters the nature of water and social actors and power relations involved, causing tradeoffs between water-supply and social goals of ownership, participation, and empowerment. The ensuing tradeoffs demonstrate that water supply to the urban/peri-urban landscape through community-based initiatives require flexibility in CBNRM expectations.

Publication year

2015

Country

Malawi

Region

Africa

Publisher

Geoforum

Keywords

Water User Associations Decentralisation Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) peri-urban

Thematic Tagging

Urban Water services

Language English
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B2.03

Source URL: <https://iwrmaactionhub.org/resource/participants-or-customers-water-governance-community-public-partnerships-peri-urban-water>