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Finding new points of influence: Rethinking how we understand policy

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Session: Research to Policy

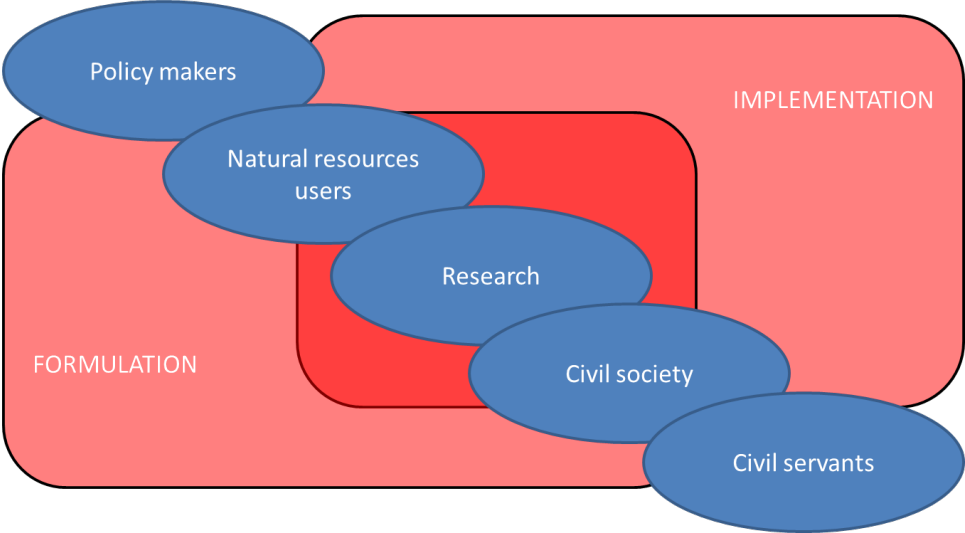
Key Message

Normative or prescriptive standpoints on policy frameworks assume a linear relationship between policy formulation and implementation. Interests are negotiated into a plan of action during the former, and enacted during the latter. In this way, policy implementation is cast as an instrumental activity. We propose an alternative, descriptive lens suggesting that actors draw upon their perceptions and priorities in interpreting and carrying out policy intentions. As a consequence, new opportunities for research policy influence are unveiled.

Summary

This study brings together 4 of the 5 Volta BDC projects, namely V2, V3, V4 and V5. It investigates the processes through which policy models and priorities have emerged, persisted and sometimes changed. Specifically, we investigate the field of rainwater management and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the context of decentralization. We argue that any severance between the formulation and implementation of policy is artificial. Rather, they constitute elements of a single policy process. Policy formulation is not a sequential process but a 'disputed space' in which continuous negotiations among multiple actors takes place. The novelty of the project is its focus on processes (the "how") rather than on outcomes of specific interventions and or policies (the "what").

Understanding this disputed space is central to identifying opportunities to trigger change and ultimately enhance livelihood dynamics.



POLICY PROCESS IS A CONTINUUM WHERE MULTIPLE ACTORS ASSUME DIFFERENT HATS