

Institution: University of Greenwich
Unit of Assessment: (UoA 30) - History
Title of case study: Running the River Thames: Benefits to the Stakeholders
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The research has raised awareness amongst stakeholders of how governance of the river Thames has changed since 1960, the impact on the environment and on public participation. It has benefited key current stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum of London Docklands, by publicising its archives and providing administrative histories; • Port of London Authority, by providing expert witness evidence; • Environment Agency (EA), by contributing to the 'Challenges and Choices' consultation and extending its reach within academia; • environmental activists and community organisations, by stimulating debate and providing platforms for discussion; • the general public, by actively promoting awareness of issues surrounding the river Thames and its management.
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Dr Vanessa Taylor, Research Fellow, and Sarah Palmer, Emeritus Professor and Principal Investigator, carried out the research at the University of Greenwich (UoG) through three related projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Policy, Stakeholders and the River: The Governance of the Thames – Port and Waterway – from 1900 to the Present</i> (11/2009-07/2010) UoG-funded. • <i>Thames Governance: Oral Histories 1960-2010</i> (08/2010-07/2011) UoG-funded. • <i>Running the River Thames: London, Stakeholders and the Environmental Governance of the Thames, 1960-2010</i> (08/2011-07/2013) ESRC-funded. <p>The river Thames is an important public resource with many functions which often conflict, eg commerce v natural habitat or housing v leisure. It is therefore in the public interest that the governance framework enables diverse interests to be expressed and mediated, and the public to participate effectively. This research examined how conflicting interests have been managed, the impact of governance changes on opportunities for public participation in policy-making, and London's shifting relationship to the river from 1900 to today, with emphasis on the less explored area of environmental governance since 1960.</p> <p>Key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in the lead organisations for different policy areas have affected public engagement significantly. 'Representative' public corporations like the Port of London Authority (PLA) have been replaced by public and private bodies charged with 'stakeholder engagement'. Although affected bodies resisted the elimination of their statutory representation, there is no simple correlation between statutory representation on river governance bodies and effective guardianship of the river. The same 'representative' regimes oversaw both the river's post-war degradation and its improvement in the 1960s.

During that period, the influence of community groups through local authority representatives was slight.

- Control of environmental functions was a source of political status for London-based institutions like the GLC and PLA. In 1974, pollution control, water supply and sewerage were transferred to Thames Water Authority to make natural resource management more joined-up and regional. This increased London's water supply but reduced its political status.
- The key driver for environmental improvement has been the expanding regulatory framework for rivers, accelerated by the creation of economic and environmental regulators with water privatisation in 1989 and by EU directives. This period saw river authorities respond to legislation by employing in-house environmental expertise, thereby internalising environmentalist agendas.
- Political debate and public pressure – especially through civil society organisations – have been crucial to expanding regulation.
- Despite some public cynicism, recent focus on stakeholder engagement allows for more extensive dialogue with communities and interest groups than the 'representative' closed shops of the 1960s and '70s. But the dominant economic functions of the river and riverside still shape the priority afforded to different stakeholders. The rise of the recreational river in London in this period was only made possible by the port's move downstream. Riverside property development remains a major source of contestation.
- Governance agencies still struggle to find mechanisms for addressing local concerns. The localised 'catchment-based approach' promoted by Defra and the EA attempts to address tensions between river-basin (regional) planning and community engagement obligations enshrined in the Water Framework Directive (2000).

3. References to the research

- 3.1 **Taylor, V.** (2013). Watershed democracy or ecological hinterland? London and the Thames river basin, 1960-89. Forthcoming in refereed edited volume following 'Rivers, Cities, Historical Interactions' Conference, Rachel Carson Center, Munich (Feb 2013). (This output has been assessed as 3* by the external referee appointed for the REF selection process.)

Details of Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research grant supporting this work:

Professor Sarah Palmer (Grant Holder) and Dr Vanessa Taylor (Co-Investigator)

RES-062-23-3137 *Running the River Thames: London, Stakeholders and the Environmental Governance of the Thames, 1960-2010*. 1 August 2011 – 31 July 2013. Value of Grant: £181,314.

ESRC Page for Running the River Thames: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-062-23-3173/read>

4. Details of the impact

The research has raised awareness amongst stakeholders of how governance has changed in recent decades, what the levers of influence are and how public participation has been affected. This shared understanding, and platform for discussion, has been developed by engaging stakeholders from the beginning. During the pilot project (2009-10), Taylor contacted 60+ stakeholder organisations, whose input was also crucial to the success of the oral history project

(2010-11). The research has at all stages depended on co-operation with stakeholders, in particular the institutions concerned with river governance, including the EA and PLA, and the many community organisations – some very long established – that have an interest in promoting the Thames and riverside environment.

Three key organisations have benefited directly:

1 The Museum of London Docklands (MoLD) holds the PLA archives, a vast collection only partially catalogued. **Taylor** produced (2011-12) administrative histories for some key organisations from the twentieth-century collection, to assist MoLD in cataloguing. Promoting access to the archive, much used by family and local historians, facilitates public engagement in the history of the Thames and its port.

Taylor and Palmer gave a presentation alongside MoLD archivist Claire Frankland to promote MoLD's river-related collections ('Beating Heart of London's Business' Conference, Archives and Artefacts Study Network AASN, MoLD, 03/2013). The oral testimony collected by **Taylor** has been accepted in principle by the Museum of London.

2 Port of London Authority: Taylor's Thames research led to her appointment by the PLA as historical Expert Witness in the case of Port of London Authority v Tower Bridge Yacht and Boat Company (High Court of Justice, Chancery Division, 2012-13). Her expertise was crucial to the historical aspect of this case, which focused on a claim to rights to moorings near Tower Bridge. The role involved assessing historical evidence and expert reports, producing an Expert Witness Report and Joint Witness Statement, and appearing for cross-examination.

3 Environment Agency: EA staff have taken a keen interest in the research, attending events in 2010, 11/2012 and 07/2013. Their Principal Officer for River Basin Planning (SE Region) considered the project conference, 'One of the best ... I have attended'. **Taylor** has been an observer on the EA's Thames River Basin Liaison Panel since 2010, commenting in this capacity on the Thames section of the EA's draft 'Challenges and Choices' consultation document (03/2013). As the EA are seeking academic input into the consultation, she created a database of academics interested in river management and publicised the consultation by email (07/2013). This publicity collaboration is ongoing. **Taylor** has been invited to join a steering group for an EA workshop for river management students to share best practice and research insights. The project will therefore contribute to professional development in this field.

Providing platforms for communication

Fora for stakeholders to exchange views:

- Symposium: *The River Thames, Stakeholders and Environmental Governance: Past, Present and Future* (04/2010) attracted 70 participants, including those from: PLA; Thames Water; City Cruises plc; British Waterways; RSPB; Borough of Hounslow; Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP). http://www.gre.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/476844/Symposium-Report_Thames-Governance-2010-pdf.pdf
- Conference: *Running the River: How the Past Informs the Present* (07/2013) was attended by 50 participants including 25 from stakeholder organisations. Report available at: <http://www2.gre.ac.uk/about/schools/gmi/research/case-studies/running-the-river-thames>
- A workshop (11/2011) explored the experiences of environmental stakeholders (eg Friends of the River Crane Environment, Quaggy Waterways Action Group) (http://www2.gre.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/687016/GMI-Stakeholder-Workshop-Report-v6.pdf).

- A workshop (11/2012) was attended by representatives of Consumer Council for Water, EA, Greater London Authority, Borough of Southwark and PLA (http://www2.gre.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/824572/Workshop-2-Report.pdf).

Taylor and Palmer participated in events organised by the PLA, TEP, Thames Water and Demos think-tank.

Interaction between stakeholders and researchers has been facilitated by a dedicated email address (runningtheriverthames@gre.ac.uk), used primarily to disseminate project newsletters and reports (also publicly available online). The Twitter account <https://twitter.com/ThamesGov> had 286 followers in 07/2013.

Raising public awareness

This research meets a public demand for more information on Thames management. A major project output is a web-based River Thames Research Guide to the river's changing governance (1960-2013), research sources and stakeholders. Available at: www.gre.ac.uk/riverthamesguide.

Following a request from Demos, **Taylor** provided a 'Thames Governance Guide' to aid the preparation of their 'Making More of the Thames' seminars (Centre for London: 2011). A guide was also requested by the pressure group Thamesbank (07/2013) for a meeting with Richard Benyon MP (DEFRA).

Taylor and Palmer have spoken about their Thames research to local history and community groups, including: Docklands History Group (11/2012); AASN (03/2013). **Taylor** presented posters on the Thames project for a local campaign gathering, 'The Hothouse: River Thames: Jobs & Climate' (at 'Made in Greenwich', 07/2012).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Beneficiary contacts:

1. Principal Officer - River Basin Planning - Environment Agency, South East Region.

The Officer has commented on Taylor's role in expanding academic interest in the 'Challenges and Choices' consultation: "[t]here is a direct link from your work to the EA and River Basin Planning via the Thames ... Panel and your kind offer to support academic partnerships resulting in greater benefits to people and wildlife on the ground".

2. Archivist, Port and River Archives (who may refer to the Head of History Collections) - Museum of London Docklands.
3. Solicitor and Legal Adviser - The Port of London Authority.
See also: Judgement available at <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Ch/2013/3084.html> (Expert Witnesses: Section 17).
4. Director - Thamesbank.