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## Competing Paradigms of Flood Management in the Scottish/English Borderlands

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Review

## Competing Paradigms of Flood Management in the Scottish/English Borderlands

### Introduction

Technical flood management (TFM) is predicated on the physical control of rivers and their catchments. TFM is the dominant form of flood management in much of the world, though alternatives are emerging, with more sustainable options often the aim. Recently, Scotland has emerged as a focal point for innovative alternatives to TFM (Werritty, 2006; Holstead et al., 2015; Rouillard et al., 2015). Currently missing from this discourse are the opinions of expert decision makers, which we contribute through analysis of expert knowledge-practices. We use the idea of ‘framing’ (Donaldson et al., 2013) as a way of analysing the co-production of knowledge-practices (Jasanoff, 2004), which reinforce a particular form of flood management to the exclusion of what sits outside that framing. Framing enables analysis of the underlying values, assumptions, arguments, and ideas relative to the practices of flood management, as perceived by decision makers. We use tension between sustainable flood management (SFM) and TFM as an entry point (Werritty, 2006), with the effectiveness of natural flood management (NFM) a debate that links these two framings. We situate our analysis amongst recent debate over the sometimes rapid evolution of flood management (Johnson and Penning-Rowse, 2010; Johnson et al., 2005; Lane et al., 2013; Penning-Rowse et al., 2014), demonstrating how a dominant framing co-opts an emerging alternative. We conclude that the fundamental change of a sustainable approach (SFM), which is implicit in the use of natural features for flood management (NFM), is made to conform through practices and expectations associated with pre-existing technical management (TFM).

A predisposition towards technical ‘fixes’ within the flood management community has been exposed and attacked: in policy (DEFRA, 2004; Environment Agency, 2009; Scottish Executive, 2009; Scottish Government, 2011; Pitt, 2008; DEFRA, 2008), amongst non-governmental analyses and reports (Institution of Civil Engineers, 2001; WWF, 2007a; WWF, 2007b; Cook et al., 2013a), within academic research (Dawson et al., 2011; Lane et al., 2011a; Pardoe et al., 2011; Werritty, 2006; Johnson and Priest,

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3 2008; Landstroem et al., 2011; O'Connell et al., 2007; Rouillard et al., 2013; Holstead et  
4 al., 2015; Rouillard et al., 2015), and through direct experience (Glasgow 2002, English  
5 Midlands 2007, Cockermouth 2009, Somerset levels and southern England October 2013  
6 to February 2014). Broadly, this amounts to questioning the prevailing interpretation of  
7 what flood management should be, how it should be assessed, and, therefore, how it  
8 should be practiced. This discourse implies, and in some cases explicitly calls for, a re-  
9 framing or re-imagining of flood management (Lane et al., 2011a). Werritty (2006), early  
10 to recognise this trend, argued that a 'seismic shift' is taking place in which the "well-  
11 established reliance on structural defences [i.e., technical flood management] is being  
12 questioned and cheaper and more sustainable alternatives are being sought". Ten years  
13 following Werritty's analysis, we contribute to this debate through engagement with a  
14 small number of influential experts tasked with reconciling evolving demands with pre-  
15 existing knowledge-practices, using the Scottish Borderlands as a case.

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28 Over the last seven years Scottish flood management has evolved rapidly.  
29 Philosophically, the Scottish government has endorsed a sustainable approach, in which  
30 schemes "must be developed with consideration of catchment processes and  
31 characteristics, making all reasonable and practical efforts to enhance the (urban and  
32 rural) landscapes' natural ability to slow and store flood water" (Scottish Executive,  
33 2009). Scotland's move toward more sustainable alternatives maps directly on to  
34 Werritty's (2006) conclusion: "a weak form of SFM is emerging in England and Wales,  
35 but grafted onto an existing paradigm in which structural [i.e., technical] solutions are  
36 still privileged". It is this grafting that concerns us, as it implies that the pre-existing root  
37 structure remains unchanged (what we refer to as its framing). This accumulation and  
38 mixing of potentially incompatible framings (TFM vs./+ SFM), presents an opportunity  
39 to explore how flood management is framed and, more broadly, to consider how  
40 practitioners reconcile an emerging, critical alternative with pre-existing practices.

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53 Our analysis opens with a definition and discussion of technical, sustainable, and natural  
54 flood management (i.e., TFM, SFM, and NFM; see Box 1). We then present findings

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3 from interviews with practitioners responsible for flood management in the Scottish-  
4 English Borderlands region. We show that efforts to adapt flood management are  
5 encumbered not through open opposition to SFM, but through self-discipline rooted in  
6 norms and values associated with TFM knowledge-practices. Even in instances where  
7 flood managers are explicitly seeking innovative alternatives, we see TFM reasserted via  
8 an underlying framing, in ways that are often implicit or positioned as non-negotiable  
9 tenets of 'good flood management'. Complementing recent analyses of Scottish farmer  
10 and landholder perceptions (Rouillard et al., 2013; Holstead et al., 2015; Rouillard et al.,  
11 2015; Kenyon and Langan, 2011) our analysis helps to explain the persistence of  
12 technical flood management. We show that while arguments in favour of sustainability  
13 are persuasive, numerous factors belie the ease with which such fundamental change  
14 occurs.  
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26 **[insert Box 1 here]**  
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### 30 **The co-production of different forms of flood management**

#### 31 *The co-production of knowledge-practice*

32 Despite widespread acceptance that floods are *socio*-ecological hazards, management  
33 remains biased towards the physical nature of rivers and floodplains (Lane et al., 2011a;  
34 Wescoat and White, 2003; White, 1945; Purseglove, 2015). Whether labelled as  
35 technical, scientific, normal, linear, objective, dominant, or as an accounting calculus,  
36 floods and their management tend to be interpreted in a specific way that, in turn, shapes  
37 what counts and what does not count. This relationship is elsewhere described as the co-  
38 production of knowledge-practice (Jasanoff, 2004; Landstroem et al., 2011), in which the  
39 range of imaginable alternatives is constrained. Co-production helps to make explicit the  
40 mutually-constituted nature of a framing, which combines assumptions, aims,  
41 expectations, studies, and knowledge production with the practices that result from that  
42 framing (i.e., dams, embankments, canalisation, but also education campaigns, newspaper  
43 editorials, and political activities).  
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4 The interplay between competing forms of flood management is complex, requiring  
5 analysis of the knowledge claims that persist (Whatmore, 2002; Cook et al., 2013b).  
6 Persistence is important given the normalisation of ‘knowledge-practice’ (Foucault,  
7 1977) in which: “power is most effective and most insidious where it is ‘normalised’;  
8 where self-expectation, self-regulation, and self-discipline generate compliant subjects  
9 who by their own thought, words, and deeds actively reproduce hegemonic assemblages  
10 without being ‘forced’ to do so” (Kesby, 2005). It is the normalisation of TFM, the  
11 tensions that arise with SFM, and the materialisation of this tension through attempts to  
12 implement NFM that is central to this analysis.  
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### 20 21 *The establishment of technical flood management*

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23 As a dominant framing, technical flood management originated with the US Army Corps  
24 of Engineers’ adoption and export of large-scale technical infrastructures (Wescoat and  
25 White, 2003; White, 1945). While technical practices predate this era, for instance in the  
26 Netherlands and lowland UK (Purseglove, 2015), TFM became dominant in the 20<sup>th</sup>  
27 century as governments and publics became accustomed to the benefits associated with  
28 the physical control of catchments, particularly the profits enabled. Technical flood  
29 management can be said to have become dominant, not simply due to its practices, but  
30 because of the framing, what is elsewhere termed an ‘imagining’ (Lane et al., 2011a) or  
31 ‘logic’ (Barry et al., 2008).  
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41 A paradigm arose, with associated disciplines, disciplining, and disciples (Kuhn, 1962;  
42 Barry et al., 2008), which affirmed and reaffirmed the practices, policies, and existing  
43 knowledge of TFM. This deflected critiques by shaping what to count, consider, and  
44 admit into the discourse. During this period, earlier efforts to adjust human behaviour to  
45 accommodate environmental variability (Wescoat and White, 2003; White, 1945) were  
46 replaced with faith in the control of the natural environment (e.g., dams and  
47 embankments). Flood management was re-framed as the ‘control of rivers’ through  
48 technical interventions. This marked a fundamental transformation. Success allowed  
49 TFM to proliferate, becoming similarly dominant in the UK (Johnson and Priest, 2008;  
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3 Parker, 1995; Purseglove, 2015). With control of rivers as the central objective *and*  
4 approach to flood management, the experts in charge were the engineers and hydrologists  
5 able to model and predict river behaviour in response to human interventions (e.g., dams,  
6 embankments, pumping, river straightening, canalisation).  
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### 10 11 12 *The emergence of sustainable flood management*

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14 In the US, TFM first came into question around the mid-point of the Twentieth Century  
15 (White, 1945) with criticisms taking four main forms: 1) technical management locks  
16 governments into perpetual support because the public becomes accustomed to protection  
17 from flooding (Tobin, 1995); 2) technical interventions are ‘contagious’ because up and  
18 downstream communities seek similar protection from floods (Smith and Ward, 1998); 3)  
19 the ecological harm done by disconnecting rivers from floodplains outweighs the benefits  
20 (Acreman et al., 2007); and 4) technical control transfers responsibility from individuals  
21 to the state, leading to the subsidy (i.e., through construction of protection measures and  
22 the provision of disaster relief) of high-risk private investments by the taxpaying public  
23 (Parker, 1995).  
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33 If, as White (1945) so presciently argued, “floods are ‘acts of God’, flood losses are  
34 largely acts of [hu]man[s]”, then Scottish and UK flood management has historically  
35 prioritised *flood management* rather than *flood loss/risk management*. Flood managers  
36 have sought technical solutions to socio-ecological problems (Weinberg, 1967) and, in  
37 the short term, been successful. But recent floods have prompted researchers,  
38 practitioners, and publics to re-frame flood management, advocating socio-environmental  
39 sustainability (Dawson et al., 2011; Johnson and Penning-Rowsell, 2010; Johnson and  
40 Priest, 2008; Kenyon, 2007; Lane et al., 2011b; Pardoe et al., 2011; Werritty, 2006;  
41 Johnson et al., 2007; Kenyon and Langan, 2011).  
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### 51 *Natural flood management (NFM)*

52 SFM fundamentally differs from TFM in its aims and in how effectiveness is measured,  
53 rather than in terms of the specific interventions employed. To be clear, embankments  
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3 and dams will undoubtedly be part of a SFM strategy, but are included only when  
4 necessary and not by default. Instead, SFM prioritises risk reduction (Howgate and  
5 Kenyon, 2009; Werritty, 2006) rather than affecting the physical flow, height, and extent  
6 of floodwaters. This is a subtle distinction, as TFM practitioners would also claim to  
7 prioritise risk reduction, but in practice TFM uses the control of river behaviour as a  
8 proxy for risk reduction. Entwined within this debate over ‘sustainability’ is the use of  
9 natural features such as wetlands, river meanders, ponds, debris, and woodlands to more  
10 naturally, and ideally sustainably, conduct flood management: a group of techniques  
11 referred to as Natural Flood Management (NFM) (Pescott and Wentworth, 2011;  
12 Howgate and Kenyon, 2009; Pattison and Lane, 2011; Holstead et al., 2015; Rouillard et  
13 al., 2015; Pyle and Wentworth, 2014).

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25 NFM is connected to wider efforts to make space for water (DEFRA, 2004; DEFRA,  
26 2008; Pyle and Wentworth, 2014) or to live with flooding (Institution of Civil Engineers,  
27 2001; Pescott and Wentworth, 2011), emphasising land-use as a means of influencing  
28 flooding. It is accomplished “through measures such as [the] restoration of upland  
29 wetlands, rehabilitation of river channels, and re-forestation” (Howgate and Kenyon,  
30 2009), with the aim of extending flood management into catchments in order to re-shape  
31 water pathways (Rouillard et al., 2015). In England, NFM is defined as “the alteration,  
32 restoration, or use of landscape features” for the purposes of reducing flood risk (Pescott  
33 and Wentworth, 2011), and is increasingly seen as part of a catchment-wide approach  
34 (Pyle and Wentworth, 2014). NFM can be divided into four categories: 1) storing water,  
35 using ponds, ditches, and reservoirs to intercept water flowing into rivers; 2) increasing  
36 infiltration, using forests and other plants to increase soil saturation and  
37 evapotranspiration; 3) slowing water, using debris, woodlands, or shrubs to inhibit flow;  
38 and 4) reducing hydrological connectivity, using buffer strips and wetlands to disrupt  
39 source-pathway water corridors (Pescott and Wentworth, 2011).

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53 NFM is incorporated directly into Scottish policy (Scottish Executive, 2009; Werritty and  
54 Chatterton, 2004), and the Scottish, UK, and Welsh Governments have each begun



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3 emphasising NFM as a part of more ecologically and economically sustainable flood  
4 management (Pyle and Wentworth, 2014). In the UK, perhaps the most influential  
5 comment on NFM was DEFRA's 'Making Space for Water':  
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9 "The results of the strategy will be seen on the ground in the form of more  
10 flood and coastal erosion solutions working with natural processes. This will  
11 be achieved by making more space for water in the environment through,  
12 for example, appropriate use of realignment to widen river corridors and  
13 areas of inter-tidal habitat, and of multi-functional wetlands that provide  
14 wildlife and recreational resource and reduce coastal squeeze on habitats  
15 like saltmarsh" (DEFRA, 2004).  
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21 A premise reiterated in the influential Pitt Review (2008):  
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23 "One flood defence measure which has proved to be increasingly successful  
24 is use of natural processes such as using farmland to hold water and creating  
25 washlands and wetlands. Keeping water away from urban areas and slowing  
26 its progress to minimize runoff proved successful in the summer".  
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31 In the Scottish context, NFM is incorporated into legislation, which aims to adopt flood  
32 management that incorporates:  
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34 "features and characteristics which can assist in the retention of flood water,  
35 whether on a permanent or temporary basis, (such as flood plains,  
36 woodlands and wetlands) or in slowing the flow of such water (such as  
37 woodlands and other vegetation), those which contribute to the transporting  
38 and depositing of sediment, and the shape of rivers and coastal areas"  
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44 (Scottish Executive, 2009).  
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46 Non-governmental organisations are also effusive concerning NFM and the wider  
47 adoption of SFM (Institution of Civil Engineers, 2001; WWF, 2007a; WWF, 2007b). In  
48 this context, NFM interventions tend to be interpreted as part of a wider agenda to restore  
49 wetland biodiversity and to realise multiple benefits from more holistic forms of  
50 environmental governance. However, the pervasiveness of *control of water* dominates  
51 how NFM is framed. As we will show in the findings below, NFM appears to have  
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3 become incorporated into the arsenal of TFM rather than as a transition towards a more  
4 sustainable form of flood management.  
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### 9 **Natural flood management in development and in practice**

10 *Methodology: Scottish expert decision makers grappling with change*

11 The research on which this analysis is based was funded by the UK government's Rural  
12 Economy and Land Use (RELU) initiative and received additional funding from the  
13 Scottish Government. We analysed existing policy and conducted interviews with eight  
14 expert decision makers involved in shaping and delivering flood risk management in the  
15 Borderlands region. By expert, we mean that these individuals are responsible for  
16 decision-making, funding, studying, and assessing flood risk management in the region;  
17 they are members of an extremely small group of experts with power over flood risk  
18 management and, as importantly, responsibility for engagement and consultation with the  
19 public. Semi-structured interviews of approximately sixty minutes were undertaken to  
20 explore perceptions of flooding and flood management.  
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32 While the sample may seem small, the case study area is sparsely populated (in total  
33 approximately 130,000 people across nearly 5,000 sq. miles) with decision making power  
34 highly concentrated amongst these specific individuals. Our respondents, then, are not so  
35 much a sample representing some wider population, but a significant portion of the  
36 experts who direct decision making. This concentration of power is recognised within the  
37 literature (Kenyon, 2007), and is well explained by one respondent:  
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43 “well, the context in [place name] is eighteen hundred or two thousand  
44 square miles, with only about one hundred and ten thousand people in it. It's  
45 a very incestuous type of operation. Everywhere you go you meet the same  
46 people and therefore there's a much greater scope for individuals to have  
47 influence” (Government Agency: 07/2011)<sup>1</sup>.  
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52 This view is echoed throughout the interviews and speaks to the influence of a small  
53 number of experts. We utilise discussions over NFM to show how decision makers are  
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3 grappling with flood management. The interviews were analysed as part of a mixed-  
4 methods approach (see Forrester et al., 2015 for a discussion of the methodology). The  
5 responses given by the interviewees are divided into three interrelated themes: 1) NFM  
6 perceived as a good, albeit, contested idea; 2) NFM characterised as a socio-political  
7 concept; and 3) NFM viewed as ‘scientifically uncertain’ in terms of its ability to affect  
8 river behaviour.  
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16 *Finding 1: NFM as a ‘good but contested’ idea*

17 Amongst the respondents, the prevailing interpretation of NFM is that it is a good but  
18 contested concept. One respondent provided a representative assessment  
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20 “it’s a good idea, a great principle, the idea that there’ll be multiple benefits.  
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22 The concept that people can have this impact and should be looking to  
23 reverse it all makes perfect sense. It is a great concept and approach”  
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25 (SEPA: 06/2011).  
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28 Despite a positive view of NFM, each respondent spoke of uncertainty surrounding its  
29 effectiveness. For example, a respondent leading a number of projects that incorporate  
30 NFM stated that resistance to this ‘good idea’ is widespread and, unfortunately, limits  
31 opportunities for application.  
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33 “[It’s] a shame because I think that would really help, you know, to make  
34 this more mainstream, because it’s very cost-effective. For example the  
35 work we’re doing in [place], we’ve spent about three hundred thousand  
36 pounds to date. We’ve got approval to spend up to about six hundred  
37 thousand pounds. But a traditional flood scheme is going to cost three and a  
38 half million. Compared to that, [NFM] is far more cost-effective and  
39 practicality-wise it’s far better than trying to build flood walls in people’s  
40 back gardens, which was a non-starter” (Government Agency: 07/2011).  
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50 Respondents appeared to like NFM in principle, but several were hesitant because it does  
51 not correspond with their understanding of what flood management is. Furthermore, the  
52 respondents struggled to reconcile their personal, technically-validated expertise with  
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3 NFM, which challenges many associated assumptions. As a way of dealing with this  
4 discordance, respondents advocated a refinement of existing approaches. In this way,  
5 rather than challenge TFM, NFM is made a contributory element of existing practices.  
6 Echoing Werritty's (2006) grafting analogy, and *leaving the underlying framing intact*,  
7 one respondent explained: "it's only one very small piece of the overall picture for flood  
8 risk management" (SEPA: 06/2011).  
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16 *Finding 2: NFM as a socio-political concept*

17 According to the respondents, a critical aspect of NFM is that it does not correspond with  
18 expectations amongst the professional flood management community: it is deemed to be  
19 from another sphere. Respondents associated NFM with 'popular' (i.e., public) initiatives  
20 like river restoration, reconnecting rivers to floodplains, nature conservation, and  
21 allowing rivers to be 'more natural'. This characterization portrays NFM as an  
22 'environmental issue' rather than as scientific. Public support for NFM, in this context, is  
23 interpreted as well-meaning but largely naive due to a misunderstanding of flood  
24 management: meaning a disconnection from an understanding of the physical nature of  
25 river systems and the control of flood waters. During one exchange, a respondent who  
26 regularly interacts with members of the public explains this view. When asked about  
27 support for NFM, they explain that members of the public are:  
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37 "putting it forward the whole time. Which is their role and their job, and it's  
38 our job to look a bit more objectively at those" (SEPA: 06/2011).  
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43 The socio-political basis of NFM emerges most often with reference to Scottish  
44 legislation, which acts as a touchstone for debate over SFM. One respondent explained:

45 "legislation will require that we see much more of that type of work [i.e.  
46 NFM] going forward in catchments so that we have a greater variety of  
47 measures being used to tackle flooding than we have used in the past"  
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52 (Local Government 06/2011).  
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3 Another explained how the Scottish government came to endorse NFM, describing the  
4 development of the Scottish Flood Risk Management Act (Scottish Executive, 2009).  
5 NFM is portrayed as a 'cause' championed by groups from outside the flood management  
6 community: NFM  
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10 "was being proposed very heavily as part of the bill by the very successful  
11 environmental lobbying by [name of specific environmental NGOs]"  
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13 (Academic & Government Advisor: 06/2011).  
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16 As a result of the lobbying, the Scottish government is said to have incorporated SFM  
17 into policy with the aim of 'working with nature': that is, by adopting NFM.  
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21 Providing an economically-driven assessment of the English government's efforts to  
22 adopt more sustainable flood management, one respondent explained that NFM will  
23 eventually be accepted by the flood management community, primarily because  
24 expensive interventions are no longer justified. He stated that NFM  
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28 "will get there [...] because costs are such that we're going to have to do  
29 more of this. You know, we can't afford big flood schemes anymore, so the  
30 time will come" (Government Agency: 07/2011).  
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34 Returning to NFM's social backing, one respondent described the tension between the  
35 public interests behind NFM with those of individuals responsible for flood management,  
36 explaining that NFM is  
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40 "kind of common sense. You are returning the systems to a more natural  
41 state whereby floodplains are allowed to flood. You know, so it's quite a lot  
42 of common sense and that is the point: that there isn't a lot of science behind  
43 it (NGO: 04/2011).  
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47 NFM is made to sit apart from what is considered scientifically legitimate: not fulfilling  
48 the standards to which flood management is judged. This is not to suggest that alternate  
49 opinions are disregarded; the respondents clearly value public opinion, but they maintain  
50 a division based on a hierarchical interpretation of legitimate 'evidence', which for them  
51 places scientific and economic figures above personal and public perceptions. The debate  
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3 over NFM, then, is not strictly a science-policy debate, but construed as a debate between  
4 a scientific framing relative to a public or political movement.  
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9 *Finding 3: Knowledge of NFM is scientifically uncertain*

10 For the respondents, NFM is interpreted as uncertain and unlikely to affect flood  
11 frequency, inundation, or flow at the catchment scale. The respondents emphasise that  
12 NFM is unlikely to affect large-scale flood events. Even those who are disposed towards  
13 NFM communicate growing exasperation with advocates of NFM, characterising the  
14 concept as unsubstantiated. The respondents state repeatedly that ‘no one knows’ the  
15 effectiveness of NFM, particularly in relation to attenuating peak flows. Respondents  
16 typically state that “there’s not that much evidence [for] how effective those kinds of  
17 approaches are” (SEPA: 06/2011) and go on to argue that analyses are underway, but that  
18 it is too soon to make any judgements. The need for evidence is, more accurately,  
19 reference to a type of evidence that corresponds with what is expected and with what has  
20 traditionally fulfilled expectations.  
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30 “From the [government department]’s perspective, it comes down to cost  
31 benefit analysis. Like it or not, it’s a fact of life and the farmers kind of  
32 accept that the cost-benefit analysis from at least the ones that are done by  
33 the [department] don’t particularly add up to protecting agricultural land”  
34 (Government Agency 2: 05/2011).  
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39 This view alludes to the persistence of scientific metrics and to the role of scientific and  
40 economic evidence in determining what is effective. The uncertainty with which the  
41 respondents characterise NFM is often explained with reference to either science or to  
42 scientific method, for example:  
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46 “natural flood management? Well, yes, sounds good but where’s the science  
47 behind it? We shouldn’t really be adopting this thing until we understand  
48 exactly how it works and because instead of decoupling flood flows you  
49 could actually be having the opposite effect if you don’t understand the full  
50 impacts of the interventions that you are taking” (NGO: 04/2011).  
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3 Yet another respondent characterises scientific evidence as a precondition. The  
4 respondent argued that assessing NFM and flood management more generally meant  
5 measuring the ability to control river behaviour by affecting ‘the flood hydrograph’:  
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8 “There are certainly interventions where you can show at a small scale that  
9 it has an effect on the flood hydrograph, that I’m absolutely convinced of  
10 and there are examples of that, but I go along with DEFRA’s view that once  
11 you start taking it up to the catchment, there is very little to show that at the  
12 catchment scale – so far – these actually have a demonstrable effect”  
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14 (Academic & Government Advisor: 06/2011).  
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22 In summary, within wider discussions of SFM, the respondents show that NFM  
23 interventions have support, but that they are interpreted as part of a socio-political  
24 movement that is impaired by a scarcity of ‘legitimate’ evidence. For some of the  
25 respondents, as a result, NFM is unjustified. Others, who appear more optimistic  
26 concerning NFM, explain this lack of scientifically valid information with reference to a  
27 deep hold of a framing that disciplines the flood management community. This view was  
28 represented in a reflexive assessment of river managers.  
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34 “It’s got limited take-up because when you analyse this type of approach it’s  
35 difficult to demonstrate the benefits. It’s hard to show that by putting in six  
36 leaky ponds and some willow strips and some grass and things that you’re  
37 actually going to reduce the flood peak by three hundred millimetres. We  
38 have got quite a quantitative, risk averse culture within the [government]  
39 department; it likes to base things on analysis: what they call ‘sound  
40 science’” (Government Agency: 07/2011).  
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47 Respondents, despite nominal openness toward NFM and sustainable management,  
48 appear to revert to preconceptions associated with TFM. The findings suggest that, for  
49 this group of practitioners in this location, TFM remains a key influence by providing the  
50 basis for assessing the legitimacy of alternatives. Most importantly, despite policy  
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3 changes and openness towards alternate flood management, NFM is challenged using an  
4 institutionalised and often internalised framing.  
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### 9 **Discussion: what knowledge ‘counts’**

10 Our analysis shows that SFM and NFM are being judged using criteria, knowledge, and  
11 expectations associated with TFM (i.e., the framing). This is most clear with reference to  
12 the effect of NFM interventions on the stream hydrograph, but is most significant with  
13 reference to *the need for evidence* and *what is accepted as legitimate evidence*. TFM,  
14 then, remains dominant by shaping the context in which SFM is considered. The  
15 respondents, from this admittedly small but influential sample, show that the  
16 fundamentally different framing underlying SFM, and brought to the fore through debate  
17 over NFM, is perceived as outside or ‘overflowing’ the realm of professional practice  
18 (Donaldson et al., 2013). The flood management experts have responded to this situation  
19 by developing tests and demonstration sites, with the aim of calculating the impact of  
20 various NFM interventions, but the most trusted metric remains the ability to affect river  
21 behaviour, rather than attempt to alter or amend the human-environment relations that  
22 produce risk. What is evident is a paradigm (Kuhn, 1962) of flood management that is co-  
23 produced by a science-based assumptions, by historical practices, by a concentration of  
24 power, and by pre-existing institutions, practices, and expectations.  
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39 The default assumption amongst our respondents remains that flood management is the  
40 affecting of river behaviour. With emphasis on river behaviour, White’s (1945)  
41 differentiation between ‘flood management’ and ‘flood loss/risk management’ resurfaces.  
42 What these practitioners show is that, in the parlance of the flood management  
43 community, if  $\text{Risk} = (\text{Hazard}) \times (\text{Vulnerability})$ , then there is a bias towards ‘Hazard’  
44 relative to ‘Vulnerability’. Thus, the technical framing biases management by prioritising  
45 control of flood waters at the expense of considering flood risk.  
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53 Bias towards the physical behaviour of water undermines the potentially radical  
54 contribution of SFM by obscuring the possibility that the effectiveness of flood  
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3 management may be assessed using different criteria (i.e., vulnerability through  
4 behavioural change). For example, *if NFM interventions (e.g., plant riparian woodlands)*  
5 *prompt changes to human perception (e.g., accept periodic flooding) and to human*  
6 *behaviour (e.g., making structures more flood resilient), flood risk/loss may be reduced*  
7 *without any change to river behaviour.* However, such a situation would require a  
8 reimagining of what flood management is. Most importantly, at present, the effectiveness  
9 of such an intervention as framed by TFM would be nil because the framing prioritises  
10 physical measures of river behaviour.  
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### 13 *Experts and the public in the context of flood risk*

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21 The perceptions of expert decision makers are critical for understanding efforts to  
22 develop alternate forms of flood risk management: a necessary complement to recent  
23 analyses of farmer, community, and landholder perceptions (Holstead et al., 2015;  
24 Howgate and Kenyon, 2009; Rouillard et al., 2013; Rouillard et al., 2015; Spray et al.,  
25 2009; Kenyon and Langan, 2011). Practitioners are especially important in this case, in  
26 which it appears that policy has evolved only to leave decision makers to reconcile  
27 existing expectations with interventions that do not align with professional standards.  
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35 While flood managers are essential stakeholders, they are also highly disciplined (Cook et  
36 al., 2013b). Their authority is connected to existing practices, which during periods of  
37 change or controversy, places them in a precarious position. If all that was needed was  
38 refinement of current practices, practitioners would be ideal leaders, but the potential  
39 discordance implied by SFM suggests that the emerging debate is a fundamental critique  
40 of existing practices. For the respondents, the technical framing provides a stable basis  
41 for consistent and fair management, but the 'stickiness' (Waylen et al., 2015) of the  
42 framing requires further consideration.  
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51 If flood management is undergoing upheaval in line with that proposed by Werritty  
52 (2006), then those accustomed to applying TFM will be significantly affected if/when it  
53 is replaced. It should be expected that their dependence on the existing framing would  
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3 generate scepticism and resistance toward the legitimacy of an alternative (Kuhn, 1962).  
4 This resistance is not emotional or self-serving; instead, it is rooted in logic, rationality,  
5 and the desire to continue 'doing a good job' (Johnson et al., 2007), and is therefore a  
6 much more challenging barrier. Recent flood disasters in Scotland and England have  
7 drawn attention to flood management and to debates over alternatives. While these  
8 debates centre on practices such as dredging and embankments, they are also rooted in  
9 values and, less explicitly, in assumptions concerning what flood management is or  
10 should be.  
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### 20 **Conclusion: the future of flood risk management**

21 This case is an example of the type of debate that arises when a framing founded on  
22 sustainability is promoted as an alternative to an existing, technical framing (Johnson et  
23 al., 2007). With recent floods and calls to improve management, further debates loom.  
24 Our case shows that the individuals practicing flood management, as well as their  
25 framing, should be incorporated into the growing literature exploring flood management.  
26 Despite Werritty's (2006) suggestion that SFM is part of a reconfiguration of flood  
27 management, we observe that there has been little movement in the practices of these  
28 decision makers, though a receptiveness towards critiques of TFM is evident.  
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37 Johnson, Penning-Rowsell, and colleagues (Johnson and Penning-Rowsell, 2010;  
38 Johnson et al., 2005; Penning-Rowsell et al., 2014) have contributed greatly to  
39 discussions of floods and policy change, addressing the common assumption that  
40 disasters trigger fundamental changes to policy and practice. Lane et al. (2013) have  
41 responded by problematizing the assumed 'revelatory' role of disasters, arguing that risk  
42 researchers must focus equally on the ability of systems to reproduce themselves. Lane et  
43 al. (2013) argue that the periods 'in between' events are at least as important as specific  
44 disasters because of the consolidation of knowledge-practices that occurs during periods  
45 of 'normalcy'. Our findings contribute to this discussion by showing how flood managers  
46 prepare for future floods and flood risk reduction during periods of calm. Our case  
47 supports both Johnson and Penning-Rowsell, as well as Lane et al.. With on-going efforts  
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3 to validate NFM, following the next flood disaster, the expert decision makers may have  
4 legitimised NFM; alternatively, without such ‘evidence’, calls for alternatives are likely  
5 to be closed-down for failing to meet expectations. In both scenarios, the centrality of the  
6 decision maker and events are critical, as are the everyday practices that shape the context  
7 in which flood events occur.  
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14 Calls for SFM must overcome the persistence of an existing, though often implicit,  
15 framing (Cook et al., 2013b). With this situation in mind, calls to incorporate or refine  
16 existing practices are shown in a different light: with the viability of alternatives judged  
17 according to pre-existing criteria rooted in TFM. It bears repeating that in this case study,  
18 the persistence of TFM is evident not simply in terms of interventions and behaviour of  
19 catchments – embankments, dams, and river straightening will have a role in any flood  
20 management strategy – but through the establishment and maintenance of the criteria that  
21 determine ‘what flood management is’, ‘how it is informed’, ‘how it is practiced’, and  
22 ‘how effectiveness is measured’. Turning to the debate over NFM, despite its outward  
23 appearance as aligned with SFM, it appears more accurately to be a reassertion of TFM  
24 using more natural interventions.  
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35 We conclude that in discussions of regulatory change pertaining to flood management,  
36 we require further accounting of the perceptions that discipline the policy-practice  
37 relationship. This is particularly important when considering the two-fold issues of rapid  
38 policy change (Johnson et al., 2005; Lane et al., 2013) and the debates that have arisen  
39 following the 2013-2014 flood events (Penning-Rowsell, 2014). It is our view that the  
40 individuals responsible for practicing flood management show how regimes affect flood  
41 management practices, but also for how practitioners currently combine flood events with  
42 everyday practices to reproduce allegiance to a technical form of flood management.  
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For Peer Review

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<sup>1</sup> Given the concentration of power and influence, for this analysis, names and identifying references have been removed.



<b>Term</b>	<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Flood Risk Management	FRM	The philosophy, policy, and practices used to eliminate, limit, or cope with flooding.
Technical Flood Management	TFM	A philosophy guiding flood risk reduction grounded in the physical control of river systems. Measured through quantitative – usually scientific – and economic cost-benefit analyses to justify interventions.
Sustainable Flood Management	SFM	An alternative philosophy to technically-focused management, which prioritises risk reduction. Willing to incorporate technical control of river systems, but emphasis on behavioural adaptations.
Natural Flood Management	NFM	The use of natural features or processes as part of flood risk management. A suite of techniques that emphasise land-catchment interactions for flood risk management.

For Peer Review

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