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Environmental Policy Integration and the multi-level and multi-sectoral reality of water use development in the Algarve, Portugal.

It is the aim of this paper to reconstruct what dynamics and which actors' decisions lead to the construction of a dam endangering protected species in the Algarve, Portugal. The basis of this case study is extensive fieldwork in the course of a Ph.D. thesis on a related topic.

Sources comprise an extensive review of newspaper and official documents, as well as expert and actor interviewing at all levels related to the construction of the dam. The case study will be examined with regard to the role of various EU legislations, the role of the principal interacting levels of governance, the role of various sectoral policies and the role of overall societal and economic dynamics for how the construction of the Odelouca dam came about.

Subsequently I will answer several questions regarding the case study. In this context EPI will be defined as enhancing environmental protection. Questions will be: which actors at which levels were most effective in integrating environmental protection considerations in the case study, which instruments of policy co-ordination were most effective, which sectoral policies need to be co-ordinated due to their influence on the physical shape of the environment and which societal dynamics would need to be steered for reaching higher levels of environmental protection.

The case shows a contradictory use of arguments favoured by implementing conflicting European environmental directives. Most effective in introducing environmental protection considerations into the process were national NGOs acting on the supranational level. The EU complaint procedures opened the most effective window of opportunity for NGOs for articulating and imposing conservationist concerns. However, confronted with a tightly knit cross-level and cross sectoral coalition of interests/ perceptions favouring development policies, environmental protection lags behind the exploitation of nature. As points of reflection remain why the case developed as it did and that EPI as formulated by the EU COM legitimates contradictory claims towards nature.