

**Devolution of Authority Over The Management of Natural Resources:  
The Soufriere Marine Management Area, St. Lucia**

*Nicole Brown, 1997*

FOREWORD BY:  
Cletus Springer

Over the past decade, a great deal has been said and written on subjects such as empowerment, participation and community development. This unprecedented degree of ferment and foment on these issues and concepts seems to reflect a general acceptance of the failure of the approaches to governance which have been employed thus far.

Saint Lucia has been at the “heart” of this search for a form of governance that truly embraces the principles of “government for the people, with the people and by the people.” Efforts in this regard have run almost the full range of situations and issues, from the relatively basic to the complex, including the suspension of a system of elected local government which was then replaced by a system of decentralisation, involving Regional Councils and Regional Technical Coordinating Committees. In the field of natural resource management, there have been a number of innovative and pioneering efforts which have sought to involve people and their institutions in all stages of the processes of planning and management.

Instructively, it has been the more basic approaches that have yielded the most positive results. While these may have not been simple approaches, they have nonetheless demonstrated the merits of frank and open discussions and negotiations between representatives with competing interests. The value of information-sharing and trust was also reinforced. However, the central message which has emerged from the various processes is that resources, whether natural or otherwise, can be successfully managed by those with the closest attachment to these resources, that is the members of the communities in which these resources reside.

The story of the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) is in many respects a success story, with a number of insightful and important messages for policy-makers, resource managers, and community activists. This case study looks at some aspects of that experience, with particular attention to the institutional arrangements, and to the manner in which the SMMA has been able to formalise participatory management mechanisms and to devolve some of the authority to local institutions. The study reveals that current institutional arrangements at the SMMA have not allowed for a significant transfer of power from central to local institutions, and that much remains to be done to fulfil the original intentions. On the basis of this analysis, this document identifies critical lessons which should be useful to all those who are involved in this search for more participatory forms of governance in this region.

This entire document can be purchased from CANARI.  
Price: US \$7.00 or EC \$18.00 (includes shipping and handling)

To order the entire document, please fill out the [order form](#) or email [info@canari.org](mailto:info@canari.org). A pro forma invoice is sent in response to orders, and documents are mailed on receipt of payment.