Transforming water governance: A diagnostic approach

Transformer la gouvernance de l'eau - Une approche diagnostique

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RÉSUMÉ

De nombreux problèmes liés à l'eau peuvent être imputés à une gouvernance déficiente et ce, à divers niveaux de gouvernance, plutôt qu'à la base de ressources proprement dite. Dans le même temps, nos connaissances sur les systèmes de gouvernance de l'eau et les conditions de réussite de la réforme de la gouvernance de l'eau sont encore assez limitées. Pendant longtemps, la recherche et la politique ont été dominées par la recherche futile de panacées simplistes permettant de résoudre des problèmes complexes de gouvernance de l'eau. L'introduction présentera une approche diagnostique permettant d'identifier les lacunes de la gouvernance et les problèmes de durabilité persistants, mais aussi des points d'orientation permettant d'opérer un changement en profondeur. Une approche diagnostique prend en compte de manière systématique la complexité des systèmes socio-écologiques et favorise une analyse contextuelle et une transférabilité des idées entre des types de problèmes et de contextes similaires. Des cas en provenance d'Europe, d'Afrique et d'Asie seront utilisés afin d'illustrer le potentiel d'une telle approche pour identifier les échecs en matière de coordination et soutenir la mise en œuvre des objectifs de développement durable. Des plans seront présentés pour développer une base de données mondiale sur la gouvernance de l'eau et une plateforme internationale d'apprentissage - communauté de pratique entre les scientifiques, les décideurs et les praticiens.

ABSTRACT

Many water related problems can be attributed to governance failure at multiple levels of governance rather than to the resource base itself. At the same time our knowledge on water governance systems and conditions for success of water governance reform is still quite limited. For a long time research and policy have been dominated by the futile search for simplistic panaceas to solve complex water governance problems. The key note will introduce a diagnostic approach to identify governance failures and persistent sustainability problems but as well leverage points for transformative change. A diagnostic approach takes into account the complexity of social-ecological systems in a systematic fashion and support context-sensitive analysis and a transferability of insights among similar classes of problems and contexts. The potential of such an approach to identify coordination failures and support the implementation of the SDGs will be illustrated by cases from Europe, Africa and Asia. Plans will be presented to develop a global water governance data base and an international learning platform - community of practice among scientists, policy makers and practitioners

KEYWORDS

Integrated Water Management, Water Governance, Sustainable Development Goals, Diagnostic Approach

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The key note will elaborate on a diagnostic approach to identify governance failures and persistent sustainability problems but as well leverage points for transformative change. A diagnostic approach takes into account the complexity of social-ecological systems in a systematic fashion and supports context-sensitive analysis and a transferability of insights among similar classes of problems and contexts. Such an approach allows identifying promising solution strategies based on typical characteristics of problem constellation and taking into account influences of context factors to enable the identification of problem solving strategies. It is context-sensitive but not context-specific (Pahl-Wostl et al 2012, Ostrom 2007).

The development of a diagnostic approach has hitherto received little attention in water research (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2012, Lebel et al., 2013). The challenge is to find a balance between context sensitivity and assessment of transferability to avoid both context specificity and panaceas ignoring context. This challenge is particularly pronounced if stakeholders are involved in problem assessment and solution identification.

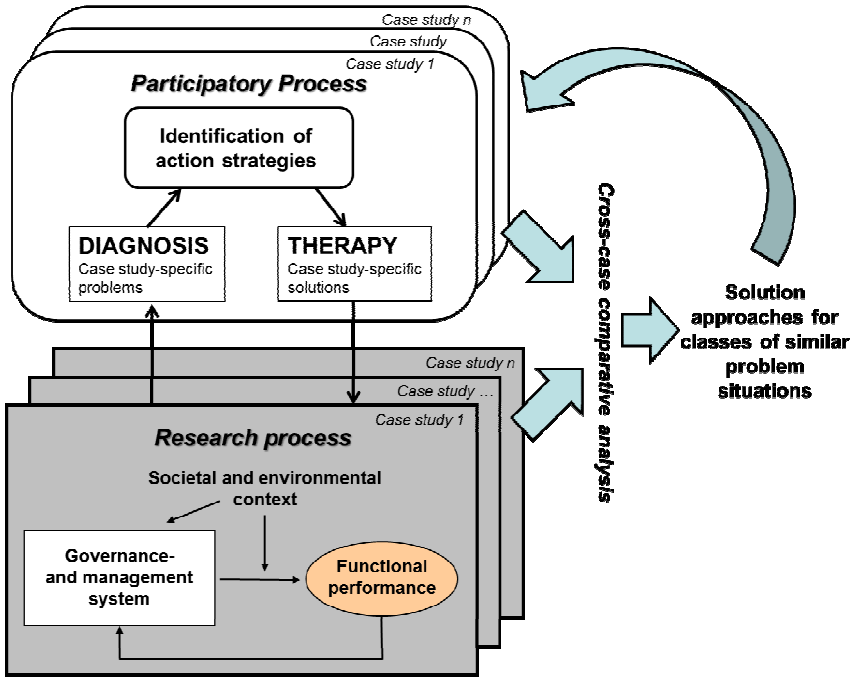

Figure 1: Basic components of the diagnostic approach of the project STEER[1].

As indicated in Figure 1, the diagnostic approach is an iterative process. The comprehension of the complex relationships and the fit of solution approaches can be continuously improved by the comparative analysis of further experiences in case studies. Such an approach has been adopted by the project STEER. The keynote will introduce the framework of STEER and discuss potential contributions in the light the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are formulated as seventeen individual goals with several specific targets for each. But, in

[1] STEER (Erhöhung der STEuerungskompetenz zur ERreichung der Ziele eines integrierten Wassermanagements - Increasing Good Governance for Achieving the Objectives of Integrated Water Resources Management - www.steer.uni-osnabrueck.de) is a project funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research under the umbrella of the program GROW – Global Resource Water.

essence, they can only be achieved if interconnections are taken into account in policy formulation and implementation. The SDGs deal with water, energy and food in three objectives (SDGs 6, 7, 2), but without explicitly highlighting the large number of inter-dependencies between these goals and their targets. As formulated in the UN resolutions, most emphasis is given on links to SDGs on sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), reduction of inequality (SDG 10), end of poverty (SDG 1), and inclusive economic growth (SDG 8). Many other goals explicitly refer via their targets to these goals. The pervasive and interconnected nature of water is not reflected in the current fabric of the SDGs. At the same time, the IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management) concept is still being pursued within the framework of the Water Sustainability Goal. However, SDG 6.5, which is to implement the IWRM approach at all levels by 2030, is only realizable when the achievement of the water, energy and food targets is dealt with in an integrated way and coordination failures are overcome (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2015).

The potential of a diagnostic approach to identify coordination failures and support the implementation of the SDGs will be illustrated by cases from Europe, Africa and Asia. Plans will be presented to develop a global water governance data base and an international learning platform - community of practice among scientists, policy makers and practitioners under the umbrella of the Sustainable Water Future Program, a core project of Future Earth.

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