



Improving international flood risk governance: exploring opportunities & barriers

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STAR
FLOOD



A blue-tinted photograph of a forest with tall, thin trees reflected in water. The text is overlaid on the image.

Nothing is more flexible, more yielding or softer than water, yet when it attacks, none can withstand it.

Lao Tzu, 6th century BC

Topics

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- What is needed at an institutional level to enable international cooperation?
 - What are the key elements?
 - What challenges need to be overcome?

水

+

口

=

治

RIVER

+

DIKE

=

POLITICAL ORDER



Flood resilient regions: a
governance challenge, especially
at the transboundary scale

Challenges identified in literature

- Need for collaborative, participatory and interactive approaches
- Bridging: **shared** sense of urgency
 - *Actors*
 - *Levels*
 - *Domains*

What is needed at an institutional level to enable international cooperation?

- Two sides: technical & political
- Start cooperation at technical level: build trust
- Reduce notions of risk = strengthen political support (Subramanian et al. 2014):
 - Capacity and knowledge
 - Accountability and voice
 - Sovereignty and autonomy
 - Equity and access
 - Stability and support



Key elements of international cooperation

“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”

— *Commonly attributed to Charles Darwin*

What make a good water institution?

Millington, 2002

- Institutional framework
 - Robust, flexible, modern legislation, integrated policy framework
- Planning + management = knowledge driven
 - Not only data management
- Ecosystem approach
- Community participation



What make a good water institution?

Delli Priscoli, 2013

- High political commitment
- Establish means for resolving disputes
- Promote flexibility
- Open + transparent rules
- Separate administration + policy
- Foster regional shared visions



But what about climate change?

... how to integrate fuzzy information into management, agreements, treaties and institutions?

- Effective international framework (UN)
- Expand scope of existing agreements/institutions
- Evaluate existing treaties/institutions
- Improve flexibility of existing institutions
- Establish joint monitoring programs
- Conduct assessments




Even more challenges to overcome?

- Again, see UNECE workshop report 2009!
- Difference in perception of problems
- Learn (even more) from each other
- Distributional effects
- “Operational governance”
 - Process agreements at national level
 - Cooperation at the operational level



Final thoughts



Institutional embedding of transboundary flood risk management strategies through governance arrangements is of crucial importance for their success

Improved management of transboundary flood risk is a matter of urgency

Improving the governance institutions for international river basins is a no-regret strategy

“Water ignores all separations and boundaries save for those of the watershed itself. As such it offers a vehicle to bring those who share it together. Since it touches all we do and experience, water creates a language through which we may discuss our common future.”

