
Assessing Management Regimes in Transboundary River Basins: Do They Support Adaptive Management?

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Transboundary river basin management, in itself a complex subject due to the variety of countries and stakeholders involved, is facing increasing challenges due to new social, economic and climate-change drivers. In this article, Tom Raadgever, Erik Mostert, Nicole Kranz, Eduard Interwies, and Jos Timmerman analyse the regime features that contribute to adaptive management of these basins.

River basin management is faced with complex problems that are characterized by uncertainty and change. In transboundary river basins, historical, legal, and cultural differences add to the complexity. The literature on adaptive management gives several suggestions for handling this complexity. It recognizes the importance of management regimes as enabling or limiting adaptive management, but there is no comprehensive overview of regime features that support adaptive management. This paper presents such an overview, focused on transboundary river basin management. It investigates the features that have been claimed to be central to effective transboundary river basin management and refines them using adaptive management literature. It then collates these features into a framework describing actor networks, policy processes, information management, and legal and financial aspects. Subsequently, this framework is applied to the Orange and Rhine basins. The paper concludes that the framework provides a consistent and comprehensive perspective on transboundary river basin management regimes, and can be used for assessing their capacity to support adaptive management.

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