

Panel 12: Adaptive Water Management: criticisms and complements

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The new fashion in water governance is called adaptive water management. Adaptive management is needed in order to come to meet the dynamic and highly uncertain conditions that characterize complex water systems. It can be seen as an attempt to transform technocratic, top-down and sectoral water management into a more democratic, polycentric, cross-sectoral and synchronized way of management.

Until now the concept of adaptive water management is broadly applied, both in theory and in practice. A vast body of scientific publications has described the new philosophy of adaptive water management and evaluated cases in which this management paradigm is applied. Also in water management practices we see various efforts to apply (elements of) adaptive water management.

It is time for a critical evaluation of the concept of adaptive water management. What is it (not), how does it (not) work in practice, which complements do we need to make water management really adaptive? We invite both theoretical and empirical papers in which the concept and application of adaptive water management is critically reviewed from a public administration point of view.

Ultimate goal for this panel was a special issue in a water-related journal. Therefore we especially invited papers in which cross-national comparisons were made and/or in which the concept of adaptive water management was critically posited in the international literature.