

International water management trends

RésEau webinar Series 2018 - Session 3
19 June 2018

Christian Bréthaut
Assistant Professor
Geneva Water Hub
christian.brethaut@unige.ch

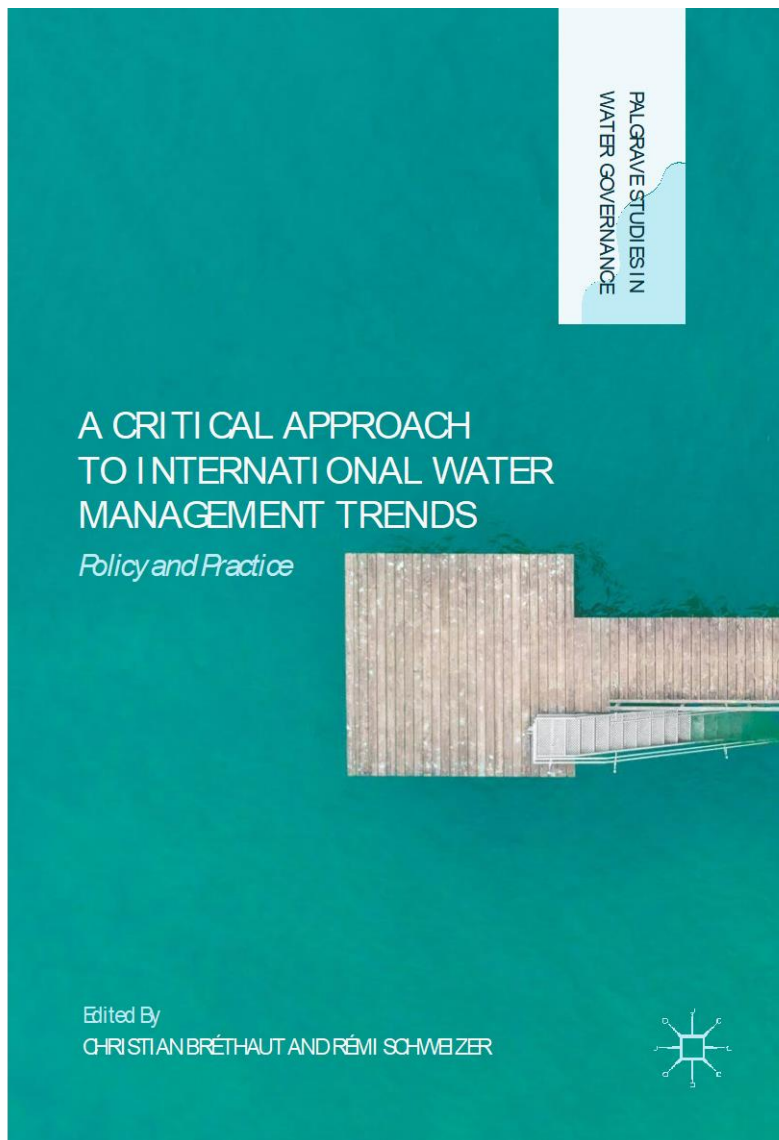


UNESCO Chair in Hydropolitics
at the University of Geneva



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

**INSTITUTE FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES**



Bréthaut, C., & Schweizer, R. (Eds.). (2018). *A Critical Approach to International Water Management Trends: Policy and Practice*. Palgrave McMillan.

- <https://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9781137600851>
- <https://books.google.ch/books?id=05o3DwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr#v=onepage&q&f=false>



UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE

International water management trends

- Definitions

- International : Frameworks, concepts, approaches that are replicated and transferable to different places and scales
- Trends : Frameworks, concepts, approaches that
 - have gained momentum, leading to lively policy and academic debates
 - led to strong network of actors that interact around the definition of shared visions



- The water sector = a complex array of interconnected water issues that cross multiple boundaries
- The entry point for wicked problems :
« High-intensity public problems that result from multiple sets of complex interdependent causes, negatively affect large portions of a population, and to which high political priority should be accorded »
(Levin et al. 2012)



Evolution of complexity

Command and control Government

Centralised and top down
water management systems

Growing environmental concerns /
Pillars of Sustainable Development / Uncertainties linked with climate changes

Water Governance

Decentralized, adaptive,
multiscalar, bottom up water
management systems

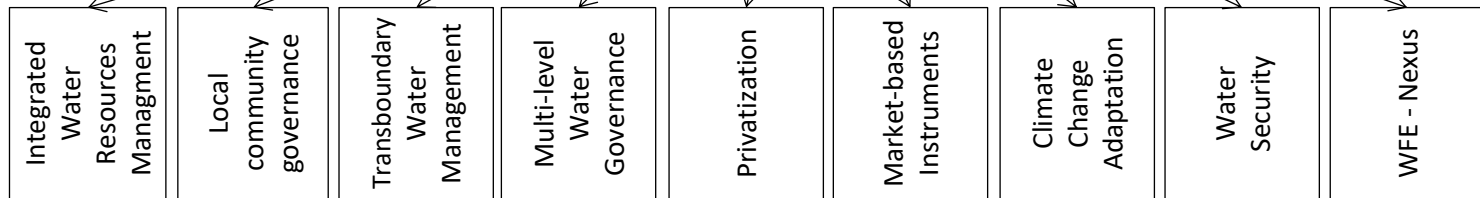


Different answers to complexity

Command and control Government

Centralised and top down
water management systems

Growing environmental concerns /
Pillars of Sustainable Development / Uncertainties linked with climate changes



Water Governance

Decentralized, adaptive,
multiscalar, bottom up water
management systems

Normative perspectives



Analytical perspectives

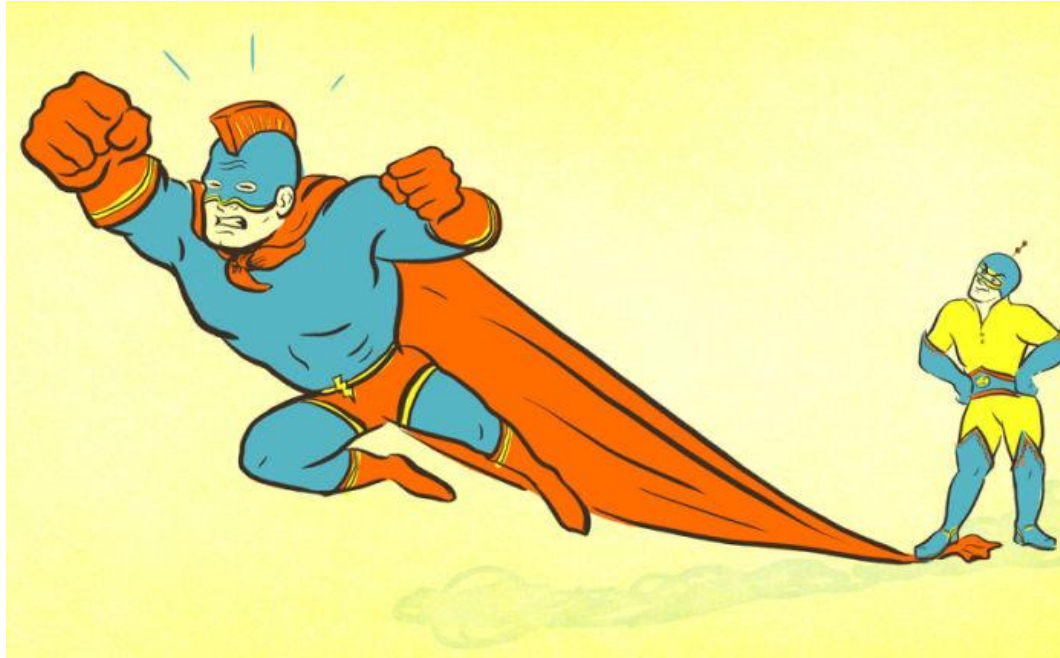


A focus on key international water management trends

Categories	Management trends
Communalization	Local community governance
Integration	IWRM Transboundary water management Multi Level Governance Water-Food-Energy Nexus
Commodification	Privatization of water supply Market based instruments
Adaptation	Climate change adaptation Water Security



Identifying shortcomings



- Key questions
 - Can we implement these different trends?
 - Do these trends improve our understanding of the real world?
 - What are the discrepancies between what is defined and what happens?



Key learning

- **The power of narratives**
 - Storylines that contribute to provide logical interpretation of social reality
 - Grasping complexity and legitimizing political action
 - Aim: to solve governance failures
- **Normative fuzziness**
 - Multiplicity of definitions and understanding
 - Polysemy in practice and conceptual ambiguities
- **Global norms and transcoding process**
 - Norms are constantly reshaped to fit local beliefs, interests and power balances
 - Transcoding during downscaling



Key learning

- **The power of narratives**
- **Normative fuzziness**
- **Global norms and transcoding process**



**Water governance as a
political process**



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

- What are the institutional dynamics that promote or hinder social changes?
 - What are the ideological objectives targeted behind global norms and trends?
 - Comparative explorations of transcoding processes
 - Highlighting patterns in actors configurations, power relations or strategies
- ...



« Although, ideally, the definition of particular modes of water governance should be an open and unending process of self-determination of site-specific institutions, this process is frequently distorted by lopsided power relations and traversed by frontal, and sometimes uncompromising, oppositions of viewpoints and ideologies » (Molle et al. 2008)



References

- Molle, F., Mollinga, P. P., & Meinzen-Dick, R. (2008). Water, politics and development: Introducing water alternatives. *Water alternatives*, 1(1), 1-6.
- Smith, A., & Stirling, A. (2010). The politics of social-ecological resilience and sustainable socio-technical transitions. *Ecology and Society*, 15(1).
- Levin, K., Cashore, B., Bernstein, S., & Auld, G. (2012). Overcoming the tragedy of super wicked problems: constraining our future selves to ameliorate global climate change. *Policy sciences*, 45(2), 123-152.
- Bréthaut, C., & Schweizer, R. (Eds.). (2018). *A Critical Approach to International Water Management Trends: Policy and Practice*. Palgrave McMillan.

