

Water Governance in the Mediterranean

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Most Mediterranean countries, particularly the arid and semi-arid ones, are chronically water-stressed. Population growth, urbanisation, development progress and climate change impacts will all exacerbate that stress and result in enormous pressure on available water resources.

It is well recognised that a water crisis is, in many ways, a crisis of governance. It is a crisis due to the failure of institutions to manage water resources for the well-being of humans and ecosystems. Progress towards water sustainability requires governance structures and practices that can foster, guide and coordinate positive work not just for conventional government agencies and business interests, but for the full set of public, private and civil society players, both collective and individual.

The questions now emerging at both the national and regional levels are: how can a crisis of governance be solved? What tools and approaches should be recommended? How can we, as individuals and as a part of collective society, govern the success and control of water resources?

These questions address the fundamental issues leading to effective water governance. However, achieving effective water governance is not an easy process, but rather one that is quite complex. It cannot be tackled using blueprints imported from overseas; instead, it needs to be developed to suit local conditions with the benefit of lessons learnt inside and outside the region.

Introduction

In the Mediterranean countries, and particularly in the arid and semi-arid ones, current practices in water re-

source management have led to severe challenges in meeting further human, economic and environmental water requirements. Such challenges could be successfully met through effective water governance of all sectoral water uses, especially agriculture, which gets the lion's share of available water resources.

Governance is a complex product of social and political interactions in which different societal actors are involved at different levels. In the case of water governance, these interactions directly generate policy outcomes affecting agriculture, food, health, education, economic development and poverty alleviation. Indeed, water governance is not about a single organisation that manages a water system; it is about the ability of mutual development to add value (Hamdy and Ragab, 2009; Hamdy et al., 2011). Nowadays, many countries are in the process of changing how water is governed. From a practical point of view, this means formulating, setting in place and implementing water policies, legislation and regulations (Tortajada, 2010).

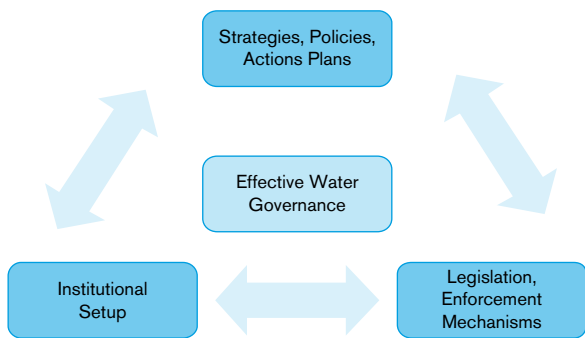
Governance should reflect broader concerns, such as issues of accountability, control, responsiveness, transparency and participation, in addition to important issues like economic growth and efficiency (OECD, 2011).

Water Governance: What Is It About?

Water governance has more to do with people than water. Therefore, the emphasis should be on connecting people in order to combat compartmentalisation. From a governance perspective, water management is not about hydraulics, dykes or purification plants, but rather the hearts and minds of the people and their vital interests, those requiring the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

Water governance is about joint decision-making. It is about consensus-building and conflict resolution,

CHART 23 Components of Effective Water Governance



as well as external legitimisation, which implies accountability. It mainly focuses on process. Governance arrangements can only work if the processes associated with the underlying systems are understood. It is to be emphasised that the concept of governance as applied to water refers to the capability of a social system to mobilise energies in a coherent manner for the sustainable development of water resources.

Defining Water Governance

At present, there is no universally agreed upon definition for water governance, and its ethical implementation and political dimensions are a matter of national and international debate. Water governance can be perceived in its broadest sense as comprising all social, political, economic and administrative organisations and institutions, as well as their relationships to water resource development and management (Chart 23). The Global Water Partnership (GWP, 2003) defined water governance as the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society.

The UNDP (2004) currently defines water governance as referring to the range of political social and economic processes and institutions through which governments, the private sector and civil society make decisions about how best to use, allocate, develop and manage water resources.

Water governance is therefore the set of systems that control decision-making with regard to water resource development and management. It is therefore more about the way in which decisions are made, i.e.

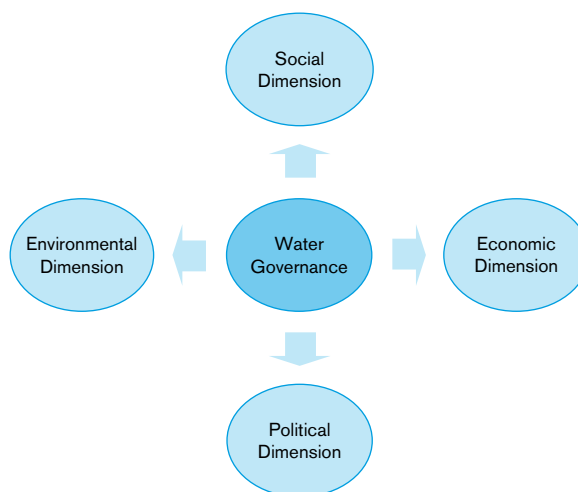
how, by whom and under what conditions, than about the decisions themselves (Moench *et al.*, 2003).

Water Governance: the Four Dimensions

Water governance has four dimensions: social, economic, environmental and political (Chart 24). The social dimension points to the equitable use of water resources. The economic one draws attention to the efficient use of water and the role of water in overall economic growth.

The political dimension is mainly directed at granting water stakeholders and citizens at large equal democratic opportunities to influence and monitor political processes and outcomes. It aims to ensure greater water equity for women as well as other socially, economically and politically disadvantaged groups.

CHART 24 Water Governance Dimensions



Source: Tropp, 2005.

The environmental dimension of water governance refers to sustainable water use and eco-system integrity, with emphasis on its essential role for maintaining a healthy environment.

Water quality degradation is consequently a serious threat to environmental sustainability and public health, and it will also reduce the use options of the water that is available.

Water Governance: Common Pillars

Most governance principles for managing water resources and services are based on common pillars.

They have been variously combined in different frameworks, thereby emphasising the following universal aspects of governance (Lockwood *et al.*, 2008):

- Legitimacy of the organisations' authority to govern;
- Transparency in decision-making processes;
- Accountability of actors with regard to their responsibilities, including integrity concerns;
- Inclusiveness of the different stakeholders;
- Fairness in service delivery or allocation and uses;
- Integration of water policymaking at the horizontal and vertical level;
- Capacity of the organisations and individuals managing water;
- Adaptability to a changing environment.

Keys to Good Governance

For good governance to develop, overall conditions and the general environment must be made favourable: the parties concerned must be amenable to collective decision-making; effective and functional organisations need to be developed; and policy, legal and political frameworks must be suitable to the goals that are being pursued for the common good (Rhoades, 1996; Loolman, 2003; Tilhonen, 2004). For these complex interrelationships to succeed, it must be taken into consideration that they are interdependent and that no single sector, public or private, has the knowledge, information or power to solve the changing societal challenges on its own.

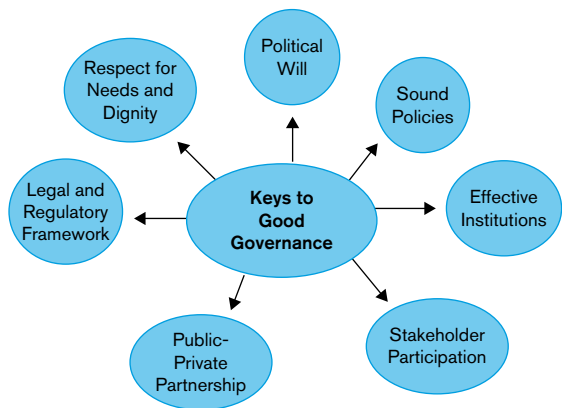
Today, it is well recognised, both politically and technically, that water security, food security and environment sustainability will never be achieved unless we have good water governance. The keys to good governance are summarised in Chart 25.

Water Governance: the Challenges

The challenges of water governance are enormous when it comes to bureaucratic implementation, public participation, sustainable management of water resources, and the provision of water services. Different interpretations of integrated water management, competing interests among different sectors/

CHART 25

Keys to Good Water Governance



Source: Abdel-Dayem and Odeh, 2010.

stakeholders, power dynamics, and lack of capacity-building are just some examples of the challenges involved.

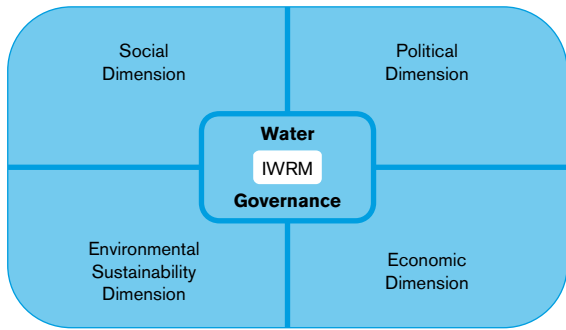
It is worth noting that water decisions are anchored in governance systems across three levels: government, civil society and the private sector. Facilitating dynamic interactions – dialogues and partnerships – among them is critical for improving water governance reform and implementation (Rogers *et al.*, 2003; UNDP, 2006A and 2006B).

As they are part of their national and international water agendas, many countries are currently responding to water governance challenges by developing and implementing national integrated water resources management (IWRM) plans and strategies (CEDARE and AWC, 2007).

The Diversity of Governance Roles and Operational Functions

The governance of multi-purpose and hydrologically interconnected natural resources requires many functions in order to provide efficient, equitable and sustainable services. These are the major issues most countries in the region are working hard to address. However, progress towards achieving these goals is still limited. This can mainly be attributed to the fact that some of the governance roles and operational functions needed for resource management and water service delivery have not been clearly identified. Due to the many different actors involved in water governance, the resulting governance structures will vary greatly from country to country, and, as a result, it is now

CHART 26 The IWRM-Governance Nexus



Source: Abdel-Dayem and Odeh, 2010.

widely accepted that there is no one ideal system that meets the needs and capacities of all countries (Molden, 2007).

Water Governance and Water Management

The terms “water governance” and “water management” are sometimes used interchangeably, but water governance should be distinguished from water management (Chart 26). Water management is about achieving goals, preferably in a functionally and socially responsive and efficient manner, with a given set of means and largely within a given set of conditions and constraints. Water governance is about identifying, choosing or adhering to values and translating these values. This is the key difference between water governance and IWRM (Lautze et al., 2011).

Water Governance in Agricultural Water Management

Good water governance in the agriculture field entails shifting from a generally construction-oriented focus to a management perspective. Some prescriptions for improved agricultural water governance include:

- Treating water as an economic good;
- Decentralisation and establishing effective participatory structures and processes;
- Stopping water management fragmentation and shifting to IWRM;
- Mainstreaming gender issues in water resource use and management;

- Introducing new implemental water laws and policies; and
- Declaring water as state property and creating water rights.

Overall, it should be remembered that, without good water governance in agriculture, it would not be possible, in any country, to achieve water security on a long-term basis.

Water Governance: Major Coordination Gaps

Table 10 and Chart 27 show the major types of coordination gaps found in water governance. In practice, many of these gaps overlap in terms of the solution intended to address them. This can be clearly observed in the definition of each one.

CHART 27 Water Governance: Major Coordination Gaps

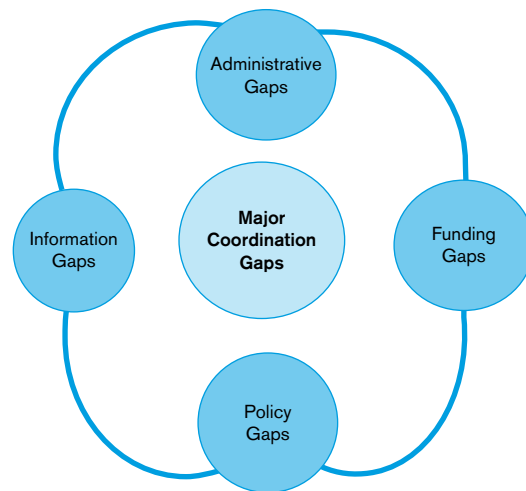
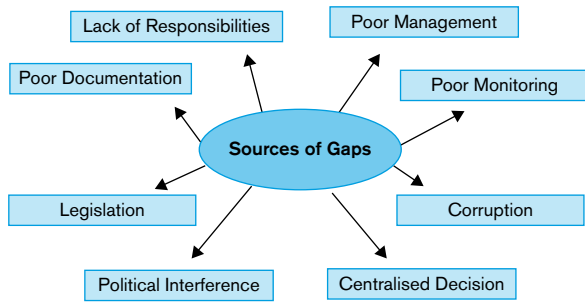


TABLE 10 Definition of Major Coordination Gaps

Gap Type	Definition
Administrative gap	Geographical “mismatch” between hydrological and administrative boundaries.
Information gap	Asymmetries of information between various authorities in charge of policymaking or implementation of water policy (and between public and non-governmental actors).
Policy gap	Sectoral fragmentation of water-related tasks amongst government ministries and agencies that hinders integrated policy development.
Capacity gap	“Local” water management actors have insufficient capacity to effectively apply water policy in terms of scientific and technical competences, size and quality of infrastructure, etc.
Funding gap	Unstable or insufficient revenues undermine effective implementation of water responsibilities at sub-national levels of government.

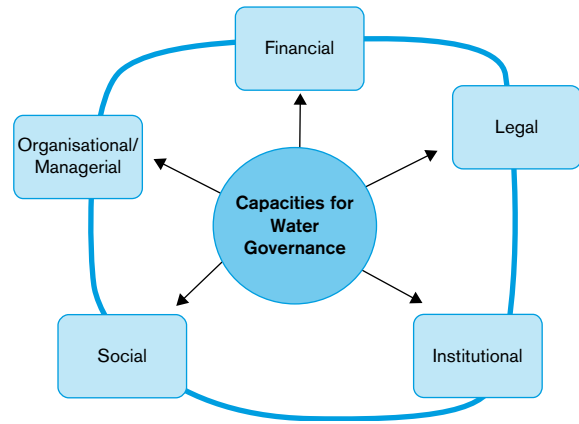
Source: OECD, 2009.

CHART 28 Water Governance: Sources of Gaps



Source: El Kassar, 2009.

CHART 29 Capacities for Water Governance



Such gaps proceed mainly from the multiplicity of actors in the water sector. They clearly show that the interaction between regional and central levels of government is not always coherent. The lessons learnt indicate that such coordination gaps are widespread and particularly acute and diverse in decentralised political systems.

Concerning water governance, it is quite evident that there are many different sources of gaps (Chart 28).

The presence of so many sources of gaps indicates that improved governance and impacts on water resource management and related services are both complex and dynamic.

Capacities for Water Governance

Water governance requires organisational/managerial, financial, legal and institutional, and social capacities (Chart 29).

Those involved in water issues need to be open-minded. In fact, they need to be able to manage their strategies across different organisations and disciplines. This requires building organisational and managerial capacities.

Tools Needed for Effective Water Governance

Establishing an Effective Basin Information System

In a successful water governance system, the basin information system has to be accessible, interactive, affordable, appropriate and equitable. However, the setup of such information systems requires trained people to run them and, therefore, training should be based on an analysis of needs

and focused on data administration methods and tools.

Characterising the Interactions between Public Policies (Governance) and Property Rights

To facilitate the effective and efficient use and management of water resources, property use rights must be clearly regulated (Allan and Chibli, 1995). However, in most cases, there are several public policies that regulate the use of a resource, which, when insufficiently coordinated, can result in the degradation of the resource.

Setting an Appropriate Water Resource Regime

Nowadays, the following is a key question for water managers: *Is it possible to establish a water resource regime able to take into account the different heterogeneous demands?* The answer could be positive if this regime can regulate all uses in such a way that it would be possible to sustainably maintain the capacity of the water resource in question to satisfy all uses and use functions.

Building a Coherent Legal Framework

The creation of an enabling environment for an effective water governance system requires a coherent legal framework with a strong and autonomous regulatory regime. There is a need to evolve a decentralised legal regime that empowers people and makes them the real managers of the resource through clear transactions between stakeholders in a climate of trust with shared responsibility for safeguarding the water resource.

Putting IWRM Tools into Practice

The water crisis in many countries of the world is a crisis of water governance that is mainly due to misuse and mismanagement of water resources. The GWP toolbox for IWRM brings together an array of over fifty tools and references to establish effective water governance systems and put IWRM into practice to overcome governance failures.

National Water Governance Indicators

Water governance indicators are intended to be useful to national stakeholders as a tool for priority-setting and for strengthening the responsiveness of institutions and processes to users' water needs. Each country has to develop its own indicators, in its own conditions, to monitor and evaluate both progress and drawbacks in a water governance programme.

Building Knowledge and Capacity

The growing challenges require a much greater volume of more structured and better targeted capacity-building supported by related materials and follow-on actions (Hamdy, 2010A). Attention has to shift to capacity-building among decentralised agencies in their new institutional context (Hamdy, 2010B).

Creating an Enabling Environment for Action Implementation

Nowadays, many actions are being taken to achieve more effective water governance, including, among others: revised laws, institutional reforms, the introduction of economic instruments, and social reforms like gender mainstreaming, participation and decentralisation. However, the crucial point is not to identify the actions and tools, but to determine how to implement such approaches successfully.

Building a Partnership Approach: Stakeholders and Public Participation

Governments should stimulate and facilitate the participation of interested parties, providing access to information, authority to act in meetings and, in general, the possibility of expressing opinions and formulating positions. Participation produces a sense of community between the administration and the users,

lowers central administration costs and ensures that the interests of users are taken into consideration.

Raising Awareness

Awareness is the foundation of water governance as it is the first step for sensitisation, participation and action. Nowadays, awareness-raising activities are ongoing in many countries, but their coverage is still limited among users, as they have not been approached in an organised way and with a long-term plan. This will affect the efficient use of water.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

- Water governance is clearly not an issue that can be approached only from within the water sector or only from the perspective of a single stakeholder or sector. It is, instead, a development challenge that requires cooperation, collaboration and coordination from within and outside the water sector, as well as from the multiple interested parties.
- There is no blueprint for improved governance. The goal should be for each country to plan policy reforms, dialogue, build capacity, implement actual reforms and develop infrastructure in an integrated, timely and sequential manner.
- Implementation of the concept of water governance requires that the entire water cycle be considered a system. An overall "system thinking" mentality is urgently needed wherein the entire water cycle is considered and managed by a single institution rather than fragmented under several.
- It is to be emphasised that transparency and accountability are the two most important pillars of governance in order to build an efficient system that is sustainable over the long term.
- The implementation of any long-term vision of water governance will require understanding the immense changes and challenges that are likely to be faced in the coming years and determining how they can be best understood and addressed to the overall socio-economic benefit of each country and its citizens.
- Governance arrangements, as they have evolved in particular countries, regions or localities, need to be understood fully before conclusions can be drawn regarding their transferability to other countries or regions.

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