

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE IN GERMANY - MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE AGENTS (?)

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Abstract:

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) proved to be the biggest transition in German Water Management. Most of all the management along hydrological borders instead of political administrative borders was new to many water management actors in Germany. Instead of using the opportunity to realign the way water is managed, i.e. create new water governance regimes, Germany decided to stick to its habits by adjusting existing structures according to the requirements of the EU-WFD. While this caused little friction within water management bodies, it led in many cases to an overlap of responsibilities and causes friction as the institutional setting is complex and diffuse. In addition water ownership is complex and varies from federal state to federal state. On the other hand new stakeholders were and are involved in water management from neighbouring policy fields such as agriculture or forestry. Subsequently the paper tries to assess the question whether Germany has missed the chance for a thorough transition with regard to water governance, thereby hindering possible change agents and opportunities or if there are opportunities to come with regard to climate change adaptation. Empirical data will be presented from the German federal state of Lower Saxony. Here, we find a complex and historically grown network of water management run by state and non-state actors. Often these actors defend their borders or their respective water bodies and management practices thereby missing the chance for a transition to new and climate change adaptive modes of water governance. This produces institutional overlaps causing delays and hampering innovation.