

15 Conclusions

*Joanne Vinke-de Kruijf, Gül Özerol,
Cheryl de Boer and Hans Bressers*

15.1 Introduction

The chapters of this book have highlighted the many pathways through which concepts related to water governance are emerging and being transferred in countries all around the world. The motivating purpose of collecting these chapters into one volume was to begin a critically-based understanding of the balance between learning and implementing lessons from abroad, and recognizing the special character of local contexts when assessing appropriate water governance approaches at a given scale (local, regional, national or international). We use this concluding chapter to accentuate the interesting aspects of these transfers, to make some notes on the commonalities that have been found, and to discuss what this means for possibilities to generalize statements about the transferability of water management knowledge. These reflections are made on the basis of relevant theoretical insights (presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3) and empirical findings (see Table 1.1 in Chapter 1 for an overview of Chapters 4 to 14).

Chapter 2 begins with an introduction of some of the concepts that are widely promoted by international organizations as solutions to different water problems being experienced around the world. A number of empirical chapters present concrete experiences with the translation of these concepts. For example, they discuss how ‘integrated water resources management’ is formalized in Kazakhstan or how ‘public participation’ is given meaning in Turkey’s water management system. Chapter 2 also introduces the phenomenon of ‘policy transfer’ as an interactive process that may involve various types of knowledge, a wide range of actors and result from various factors. Transfers in the water management sector can take different forms as the diversity of the empirical cases reflects. The cases illustrate that questions about the transferability of knowledge arise when projects are initiated for the purpose of transferring concrete knowledge from one country to another (Chapters 4 and 5) or when international commitments or principles get implemented (or not) on the ground (Chapters 7 to 11). Such questions also arise when reflecting

upon existing or emerging ‘best practices’ (Chapters 6 and 14) or upon governance regimes’ need to adapt (Chapters 12 and 13). On the basis of the literature on ‘transfers’, Chapter 2 also presents some ideas about what distinguishes successful from less successful transfers and how the transferability of knowledge is influenced by contextual factors. In Chapter 3, we elaborate a theoretical lens – the Contextual Interaction Theory – that is used in various chapters to understand policy transfers. In this theory, the process and outcomes of interactive processes are shaped by the interactions and characteristics of actors in relation to the context in which they occur. This includes the wider context as well as the governance context. Various authors use this theory to analyse both the characteristics of actors and the wider and governance contexts (in particular Chapters 4, 5 and 11). Others focus upon the theory’s assertions about governance qualities (in particular Chapters 10 and 13). Furthermore, some authors build more directly upon policy transfer literature (Chapters 6 and 7).

In this concluding chapter, we reflect upon the broad range of experiences that are presented in various empirical chapters. First, we reflect on the empirical findings using three lines of understanding: the transfer of established policy knowledge (Chapters 4 to 6), the transfer of policy concepts that are part of global discourses (Chapters 7 to 11) and the emergence of policy concepts (Chapters 12 to 14). Following this, we reflect upon the methods used for studying transfers and discuss the possibilities for future studies on this topic. Section 15.3 reflects on the impacts these results have had on our understanding of the importance and appropriateness of contextual water management. Finally, we choose to conclude by reflecting on the value of critically discussing the feasibility of policy transfers for modern water governance.

15.2 Reflections on empirical findings

As one of the central questions of this book is related to understanding how, where and why context affects actors involved in a transfer process, we have chosen to make use of a broad range of experiences in the included chapters. This wide variety of cases provides us with examples of various pathways in which transfers of knowledge about water management and governance concepts take place. We organized the empirical chapters along three lines of understanding that were introduced in the introductory chapter (Chapter 1). This reflection on the empirical findings is organized accordingly. While discussing the findings of these three sections, we reflect upon the descriptive, explanatory and evaluative questions that are introduced in Chapter 1. This includes questions about the transfer process, the context(s) of the transfer under study and the effectiveness or benefits of the transfer.

Transfer of established knowledge

The transfer of knowledge that was developed and applied in one country and subsequently used in the development of policies or practices in another country is central in the first three empirical chapters of the book. The first two chapters describe cases that involve the actual transfer of knowledge from a developed country to a transition country, namely from the Netherlands to Romania (Chapter 4) and from the United States to India (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 presents a prospective evaluation by assessing the potential of such a transfer from a Canadian province to elsewhere in the world.

The chapters on the Romanian and the Indian cases both use insights of the Contextual Interaction Theory to understand the interactive process that evolved around the transfers under study. Regarding the actors involved, international actors were not directly involved in the Romanian and the Indian cases. In both cases, the transfers were initiated by external experts (such as private consultants, water managers or faculty–student teams) who implemented the project in collaboration with various stakeholders of the receiving country. The analyses of actor characteristics provide insights regarding the nature of the transfers. Both transfers were driven by a desire of the transferring actors to share their knowledge and characterized by an unequal distribution of resources. The authors of both chapters further observe that receiving actors were often not as convinced about the transfer as the transferring actors but became more motivated over the course of time. Therefore, the transfers are not considered to be imposed but also not as completely supported by the receiving actors. The willingness of the receiving actors to contribute increased as a result of their ongoing interactions. The Contextual Interaction Theory adds here to the literature on policy transfer by drawing attention to the diverse and dynamic nature of transfer processes. It sheds light on the diverse motivations of actors to engage in such processes and how these motivations are likely to change over time.

Regarding the knowledge being transferred, the respective chapters focus on knowledge about flood risk management, water drainage and drinking water source protection that had been previously applied. The ‘universal remedies’ that were introduced in Chapter 2 are not the objective of the transfer in any of the three chapters. However, all transfers were or would be implemented under the influence of a water governance panacea – integrated flood management in the Romanian case and collaborative water management in the Indian and Canadian cases. Thus, even transfers of established knowledge are not limited to ‘specific’ solutions but come along with broader ideas and practices.

What characterizes the ‘context’ in which solutions are developed is analysed in detail in the Canadian case. The authors distinguish between various indicators of transferability related to the policy problem, the

characteristics of the policy being transferred and the policy context. They conclude that aspects of the water governance context – including prevailing participation and integration practices and the division of responsibilities – require special attention since they are closely interwoven with the knowledge being transferred. The Romanian case confirms this prospective evaluation of transferability. The authors conclude that the effectiveness – or rather the lack of effectiveness – of the cases is correlated with how well knowledge is embedded (or not) into Romania's governance context. The authors also analyse differences in the wider contexts of the transferring and the receiving countries and conclude that contextual differences do not only complicate the policy transfers, but also constitute an incentive for policy transfers.

The Romanian case and the Indian case use different methods to evaluate their respective transfers. The authors of the Romanian case use 'the degree to which the objectives of the transferring country are achieved' as the indicator of effectiveness. They conclude that none of the analysed transfers made a direct contribution to problem solving and that only one of the transfers is likely to result in direct follow-up actions that would benefit the Dutch water sector. Probable explanations are sought in contextual factors and appear to be closely related to the involvement and support of national actors. The authors of the chapter on the Indian case base their assessment on the criterion of 'true collaboration' (i.e. active cooperation rather than passive or forced cooperation), which is operationalized by five traits: purpose; dialogue; decision making; action; and evaluation. They identify areas of improvement in decision making and action, and conclude that this is related to the lack of a formal (collaborative) decision process and structure. Thus, the involvement and commitment of the receiving actors emerges as an important factor in realizing successful transfers. The crucial importance of the receiving actors also appears from the conclusions of Chapter 6: to realize the benefits of policy transfer, receiving actors should understand the factors that shape transferability and develop the capacity to utilize the lessons. Chapters 4 and 5 show that in cases of an 'unequal' transfer (e.g. from a developed country to a less developed country), transferring actors should ensure the involvement and commitment of the receiving actors. In this regard, the authors of Chapter 5 conclude that the Contextual Interaction Theory can help to recognize – and preferably to prevent – when coercion is taking place.

Transfer of international concepts

Following the idea that several policy concepts are being promoted by various international organizations, five chapters in this book focus on the transfer – or the translation – of these policy concepts into new contexts. These chapters include cases regarding the transfer of internationally promoted concepts to Kazakhstan's national water policy (Chapter 7),

regional water management in Turkey (Chapter 8), water-related local projects in Palestine (Chapter 9), urban water management in Vietnam (Chapter 10) and river basin management in Mexico (Chapter 11).

Central to the analysed cases is the application of concepts that are closely linked to ideas about 'integration' and 'participation' that were presented in Chapter 2. In all chapters, international organizations played a role in the initiation of the transfers. It is therefore debateable to what extent these translations took place through entirely voluntary efforts from the receiving countries. Developing countries (including low- and middle-income countries and emerging economies) often feel pressure to adopt and implement 'first-world' solutions. This pressure can come in many forms and will be experienced differently based on the specific, structural and wider context of the case being studied. In these chapters the motivations to adopt new strategies were related to various desires:

- 1 the general desire to improve the governance of resources based on the belief that these new panaceas would help solve current issues;
- 2 the desire to be eligible for development aid; and
- 3 the desire to participate in international discourses as an equal partner.

In the case of the Kazakhstan chapter, the translation of the policy concepts into the national discourse and legal institutions are influenced by international development projects, discourses, actors and funding. In the Turkish case, the authors argue that the transition towards more participatory water management is characterized by a top-down imposition by successive governments and international agencies. The chapter on the Palestinian case examines multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) in water and sanitation projects, and concludes that the MSPs emerge as an empirical practice with or without external pressure from donor organizations. In the Vietnamese case, the author analyses the transfer from the perspective of international organizations. He shows that integrated urban water management involves very complex and hierarchical governance structures. Therefore, international commitments referring to 'integration' cannot be transferred to the local level without an accompanying change in the overall culture and governance structure of Vietnam. In the Mexican case, the river basin councils were not only a response to international studies and influence of international agreements but also to urgent problem pressures and were further enabled by changes in the political and economic context.

Various chapters show that questions about the success or benefits of the transfers of international concepts are closely related to questions about the context to which knowledge is being translated. In the Mexican case, there is a lack of progress made in increasing the water quality in the focus areas. This, however, is only one of the indicators being used by the local participants in determining the successfulness of their actions. General

ecosystem improvement was seen as an additionally relevant goal, one that was improved as a result of actions designed to improve water quality and prevent fish-kills. The studied river basin commission emerged in a bottom-up fashion and was thus not experienced as an external intrusion into the governance context. Issues did develop, however, with respect to the river basin commission's ability to be seen as directly connected to the new commitments for water management such as watershed-based governance and stakeholder participation. Constructive stakeholder participation led to a joint vision of the future of the basin and common understanding and joint ambitions developed over time. A lack of financial and legal support and minimum public attention to their contributions is proposed to have resulted in a governance regime context that is only in principle supportive. The authors conclude that the governance regime does not adequately equip organizations like the basin commission with sufficient support for its integrated ambitions for the basin. While river basin management and public participation are realized to a large extent and in a productive way in the commission itself, the integration of the commission's process into the context of the mainstream policy process remains challenging. In the Vietnamese case, the desire to improve water management cannot be decoupled from the more immediate goals of poverty alleviation and general economic development. Thus, while there is a lack of capacity to fully implement integrated water resource management in the manner which is envisioned by the many international visioning and policy documents, the improvements made in increasing regulatory control, providing green belts for urban areas and recognizing urban agriculture as a stakeholder in the city's development are considered important advances in addressing the more immediate issues related to their primary goals. In the case of Kazakhstan, the author describes the translation of policy innovations as a 'bumpy ride with unplanned consequences and great complexities'. As one of the major hurdles facing the implementation of these policies, the author mentions the lack of public deliberation options. He recognizes however that the development of capacity for policy deliberation is a long-term process, and one that is not common in post-Soviet regions. He concludes that the special context of Kazakhstan, in terms of its history of water and land management as well as the characteristics of water policy and politics (such as the presence or absence of a forum for policy deliberation), have contributed to the way that these policy concepts have been translated. Regarding the role of contextual factors, similar conclusions are reached in the Turkish case. Despite the strong imposition by international organizations, contextual factors (mainly the pre-existing hierarchical structure and the related lack of experience with participatory mechanisms) limit the success of transfer by leading to the contestation of public participation. The authors also pinpoint the role that actor characteristics (mainly power asymmetries and insufficient local capacities) play in the contested nature of public

participation. In the Palestine case, the authors reveal that the multiplicity in the fragile structural context (actors, structures, regulations and practices) facilitates the emergence of MSPs as a practice, while at the same time hampering the effectiveness and complicating the governance and cooperation processes. The authors attribute these limitations in implementation to the polarization and politicization of cognitions and the inefficient use of resources under fragile settings.

Emergence of policy concepts

The chapters in this final category examine three policy concepts that are in the phase of emergence in their respective case contexts, namely 'climate change adaptation' (Chapter 12), 'adaptive policy responses' (Chapter 13) and 'Building with Nature' (Chapter 14). In the preceding sections, we concluded that the observed transfers of established policy knowledge and recognized international concepts were initiated or introduced as such by groups and organizations in the developed world. Similarly, the internal implementation of emerging policy concepts often starts in developed countries, as Chapters 12 to 14 demonstrate. Given the current ease and frequency with which information and ideas cross borders, these cases of emergence are unlikely to have developed completely independently from similar experiences in other areas. The difference thus between these cases and the cases discussed thus far, is the low degree to which these policy concepts are being deliberately transferred as one concept, from one case to another, in a more or less organized manner.

The Netherlands case explores how climate change adaptation is transferred from the national level to the local level and how the concept is interpreted at the local level. The motivation to implement climate adaptation measures differs based on the level of abstraction. From the national perspective, the efforts are generally related to a high level of awareness of the future issues expected to occur and the high level of associated cost and risk. This relatively voluntary response is then translated to the lower administrative (municipal) levels through slightly more coercive means. The municipalities must then incorporate the national goals alongside their more specific local goals in order to remain credible. In the analysed case, municipalities also appear to have a sense of peer pressure which further encourages similarly adaptive actions. In Chapter 13, the authors examine the way in which governmental actors deal with and respond to problems of water scarcity in an adaptive way. Experiences from two southern European countries (Spain and France) are compared with those from two northern European countries (the United Kingdom and the Netherlands). In all countries, the general water governance regime is observed as undergoing change with respect to how water scarcity is being addressed. A variety of contextual factors accompany these changes and there is also variation in the types of changes that are developing. The

role of the public and their perception of the state and urgency of various contextual factors was seen to be important in determining how adaptive the policy responses were and how much they were able to move against existing norms with respect to private property rights and problem responsibility. When there was a relatively low sense of urgency experienced by the public and technological solutions were seen as being capable of solving future issues, most changes were voluntary and maintained the status quo. This was different in cases where a higher sense of urgency was held by the stakeholders, which often accompanied more coercive (formal and informal) types of processes that would include new stakeholders, new problem perspectives and thus new recognized rivalries. With empirical data from various European Union (EU) countries, Chapter 14 examines two transfers, namely the actual transfer of the EU Natura 2000 biodiversity policy from the supranational level to the member-state level, and the prospective transfer of 'Building with Nature', an emerging approach to water infrastructure design and development, to projects in the EU member states. Of the various cases explored in this book, this chapter presents the clearest examples of 'institutional isomorphism' (see Chapter 2 for an explanation). The EU Birds and Habitats Directives oblige member states to designate Natura 2000 areas and to manage these areas accordingly. As a result of the experiences with Building with Nature, this approach is increasingly recognized as a 'best practice' and is therefore becoming a legitimized approach in the development of water infrastructure projects.

Regarding the role of contextual factors in the transfer of emerging concepts, the various chapters reach multiple conclusions. Chapter 12 addresses how climate adaptation issues in the Netherlands are translated through a set of different storylines in order to be implemented at the local level. The underlying storyline that has enabled the effective translation of these policies is related to water management and its related concerns. Good water management has maintained itself as a consistently valued and understood policy goal that has coincided with efforts designed to address climate adaptation actions. The chapter shows that how policy concepts emerge closely relates to case-specific conditions, including the level of urbanization, the presence or lack of flooding experience, and the general level of the risk from flooding. Chapter 13 concludes that adaptive policy responses to water scarcity can develop based on a cognizant transfer of concepts from one region to another or as a learned response to a series of threats accompanied by the recognition of the expected continued experience of future threats. In Chapter 14, the authors identify specific (site-related) and structural (governance-related) contextual factors that affect the implementation of Natura 2000 in EU member states. By utilizing these factors, the authors conduct a prospective transfer of Building with Nature and conclude that Building with Nature stands a considerable chance of becoming a 'best practice' for water management in estuaries and coastal zones.

In all of these cases there were internal case variables that encouraged the actors to develop their water governance approaches collaboratively and according to self-reinforcing and emerging principles that fit both the present contexts and were expected to be able to achieve the desired results or address the problems that were being experienced or expected. These self-reinforcing factors were in all cases coherent with the majority of water governance panaceas discussed in Chapter 2 of this book. This is perhaps a result of the countries having similar wider contextual variables however it may also say something about the naturally appropriate manner in which to govern water. It is beyond the scope of this book to provide an adequate response to this issue, yet it is one that certainly begs further research and attention.

15.3 Reflections on the objective and approach

The initiative for this book resulted from our desire to develop a better understanding of contextual water management. As editors, we chose to adopt a broad definition of policy transfer and decided not to impose a comparative framework. Instead, we asked authors to reflect on several questions. We further promoted the use of the theoretical concepts that were introduced in Chapters 2 and 3. As the chapters evolved, we started to recognize the many forms that a policy transfer in a water management context can take. In the empirical cases, we found examples of established knowledge being transferred as well as international concepts being applied and emerging. Thus, the approach used helped us to understand the role of policy transfer in a water management context, and to discover that transfers are not only worth studying when knowledge has proven to work but also when concepts are emerging.

In analysing these different transfer processes, we have learned that transfers are unlikely to result from a strict desire of actors to learn from other actors' experiences or from external imposition or pressures. In fact, none of the authors came up with examples of transfers that were strictly voluntary or coercive. Interestingly, the desire of countries to export knowledge – a cause which is seldom mentioned in the literature – played an important role in several cases. More generally speaking, we find the transfers were shaped by external *and* internal factors. In many of the cases, a top-down or external imposition of the transfer was insufficient to effectively realize the transfer. To actually transfer knowledge, a bottom-up, or at least internal, stimulus from the receiving actors was required. Local actors, who realize the relevance of the international concepts, are the ones who shape the actual transfer. The role of external actors, such as international organizations or consultants from more developed countries, was rather to support the process or to conceptualize an externally invented concept or idea. We asked authors to describe not only the transfer process but also to reflect upon questions about contextual factors and the success of the transfer. In their assessments of their respective transfers, none of the authors

chose to focus on criteria that are often mentioned in policy transfer literature, such as the degree of policy learning or the gradations of transfer (e.g. was knowledge copied or rather a source of inspiration). In the cases in which established knowledge was transferred, authors came up with specific criteria to measure effectiveness (Chapter 4) and collaboration (Chapter 5). In the cases focusing on international concepts, questions about the success of a transfer appear to be closely related to questions about contextual factors. In the chapters about emerging concepts, the focus is on contextual factors and the potential success of a transfer was not questioned.

In various chapters, authors used the Contextual Interaction Theory (presented in Chapter 3) as a theoretical lens to examine and assess policy transfers. Compared to the policy transfer literature, the theory provides a compact model that incorporates both actor characteristics and contextual factors. In various empirical chapters, the theory provided an adequate theoretical lens to explain the causes, process and outcomes of a transfer through the analysis of what motivates these actors, what information they hold to be true and how resources are distributed. At the process level, the variables of the theory help to understand the type of cooperation that emerges between actors (including the likelihood of implementation). The layers of context – often in combination with actor characteristics – are used by various actors to analyse how contextual factors impact transferability. Thus, the Contextual Interaction Theory provides a useful addition to the literature on policy transfer. Moreover, the analyses of this book provide a useful basis for systematic research regarding transfers in a water management context.

15.4 Lessons learned about contextual water management

The empirical findings of the chapters in this book support the development of a set of valuable lessons that demonstrate the relevance and importance of contextual water management. Based on the empirical findings, this section presents these lessons as our overall conclusions.

Throughout the book, the importance of various aspects of the pre-existing context in the ‘receiving’ countries was demonstrated over and over again. Context factors impact not only the likelihood that a certain policy idea is transferred at all, but are also of paramount importance to their degree of ultimate success. With the layers of context specified in the Contextual Interaction Theory (see Chapter 3), these factors can be systematically identified and assessed. What is more important however, is answering the question ‘what main lessons can be drawn from this?’

Contextual differences provide both opportunities and constraints

It is tempting to exchange one rather simplistic axiom, such as ‘internationally esteemed approaches and best practices are improvements that

should be followed', by another one that sounds compelling but might preclude options for water management improvements that would have been possible. Such an axiom could be 'be aware of contextual factors in advance of the transfer to see what could fit and what will not likely fit'. The problem with such a short summary of the results presented in this book is that it can lead to a conservative bias. It is by now quite clear that policy options that are too far from the pre-existing context to be able to be cohesively incorporated will probably not be introduced, or introduced in such a way that the real meaning of the concept gets lost. It is however also quite apparent that a transfer across contexts that are extremely similar would probably not be considered to have the characteristics of a real innovation. Thus, transfers needs congruence of context, yet only congruence with the pre-existing context does not offer much potential for learning and improvement. Such conservative lessons that are drawn from the importance of contextual factors also underestimate the diversity of the people and organizations in the receiving countries and uses an evaluation period which is insufficiently long. Take, for example, the desired transfer of the 'Room for the River' approach from the Netherlands to Romania that is discussed in Chapter 4. The project was not very effective in the sense that it did not directly contribute to solving any of the flood risk problems. However, as a result of the projects that were undertaken some of the Romanian actors became more aware of this concept and are now more open to the concept than they had been before. Through these types of influences, potential foundations for change at a later time are established, perhaps even a change that evolves internally.

What then is an appropriate lesson to be drawn from the overwhelming evidence in our book that contextual factors are extremely important in policy transfers related to water management? For convenience let us refer to the Romanian example again: should actors who invested in the project conclude that it was a failure when immediate success was not achieved? Or should they have more realistic expectations, together with a longer-term orientation in which the gradual opening of mindsets (motivations, cognitions) and building of support (resources, capacity, power) is kept in focus? Of course the answer depends very much on what the transferring actors would themselves like to achieve, yet awareness of the context could lead to a more sophisticated array of responses to decisions about the continuation of a transfer project than to either just 'stay or leave'. A similar line of reasoning holds when there is no clear 'donor' and it is more a matter of ideas that are taken from the international discourse on water management (sometimes with some pressure from international organizations). Here, typically it is domestic actors that are transferring, or translating, the concepts into their own practice. Again they could base their decisions upon 'an all or nothing' perspective and with an outlook based on the achievement of immediate results, or alternatively they could orient their actions towards gradually developing a basis for further

innovation. In the Mexican case, the river basin council was very outspoken in their vision that their long-term approach was the only sensible manner for achieving their goals. They focused on building a joint vision, opening the minds of the people to the importance of water issues, and increasing the acceptance of a new agency (with different geographical boundaries) and new actors. Shorter-term successes were also recognized as important in being able to achieve these longer-term goals.

Receptivity goes both ways

Continuously trying to understand the relevant contextual factors and their developments and being alert to the opportunities and threats that they pose for the potential innovation of water management practices requires a lot from the 'donor' organizations. In Chapter 3 we refer to the concept of 'receptivity' to indicate what kind of quality these people and organizations should possess. Receptivity is not only dependent on the degree of exposure to knowledge, but also more specifically on the way the actor can associate and exploit such knowledge around existing knowledge, activities and objectives (Jeffrey and Seaton, 2004). This requires that the actor 'lets the outside come in', and can open and regroup their understandings to include the new knowledge. It is also important to note that receptivity is not a passive quality but one that enables innovative and adaptive action by self-confident actors and organizations (de Boer, 2012). This is certainly an important factor for the actors on the receiving end of the policy transfer. Our considerations above allow us to conclude that in fact it is equally important for both ends of the transfer, since the donor also needs to be aware of contextual factors and their consequences and ultimately reckon with these in their actions (Bressers, 2011).

All in all, the importance of contextual factors is not an issue that should either spur or halt the transfer of innovative water management concepts. Rather, for both situations mentioned above, the lesson to be drawn can be synthesized as: 'be aware of contextual factors in order to expose where the potential misfits can occur and try to assess where the options for gradual acceptance and implementation of relevant new ideas are best placed'.

15.5 Implications and outlook

Not all policy transfers described in this book have clear donor–recipient relations. The concepts that are transferred are also often taken from the international discourse on water management and/or simultaneously stimulated by an array of organizations operating at various scales. While the top-down role of international organizations like the World Bank has a high visibility in such processes, there are increasing opportunities for other forms of transfer of water policy and management concepts that stem from other directions of learning: horizontal or even bottom-up.

Additionally, learning is increasingly taking place across different levels and scales due to the ease of global communication and hence a local action group can refer directly to internationally accepted concepts when striving for instance for an increase in participation rights. Similarly, supranational authorities such as the European Union can derive its new policy ideas directly from subnational initiatives.

Policy transfer is thus not only a subject of top-down transfers or transfers from one country to another, but in fact occurs in many different directions that sometimes skip many intermediate levels and scales. Across the globe various levels of authorities and organizations can easily learn about each other's activities and establish direct linkages to coordinate them. Global communications and networks enable policy transfers of concepts directly from the global debate to the local context and then presents its results back to the entire world. As such, more transfer – not less – is likely to be part of the future of water management.

The cases included in this book cover a comprehensive set of policy transfers that have been occurring or will soon occur in water management. It can be expected that policy transfers in water management can take even a wider range of forms. Our findings demonstrate that a multitude of contextual and actor-related factors influence the effectiveness of transfer. The overall conclusions of this book can provide the basis to develop a systematic approach to conduct comparative research regarding policy transfers in water management. We hope that the book stimulates actors with a role in the management and governance of water resources to engage and to carefully consider the international transfer of lessons.

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