

Governing International Watercourses

River Basin Organizations and the Sustainable Governance of Internationally Shared Rivers and Lakes

By Susanne Schmeier

Susanne Schmeier has worked with a number of river basin organizations, international organizations and bilateral donors in the field of transboundary river basins, among them the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Mekong River Commission. She holds a PhD from the Berlin Graduate School for Transnational Studies (BTS), a joint endeavour of the Hertie School of Governance, the Social Science Research Centre Berlin (WZB) and the Freie Universität Berlin.

About the book

This book focuses on River Basin Organizations as the key institutions for managing internationally shared water resources. This includes a comparative analysis of all 119 River Basin Organizations worldwide and three in-depth case studies from three different continents. The detailed case studies are the Senegal (west Africa), Mekong (South-east Asia) and Danube (Europe) rivers. The book contributes to the academic debate on how shared natural and environmental resources can be managed in a sustainable way and which institutional and legal mechanisms actually matter for doing so. It adopts the neo-institutionalist approach, according to which international environmental institutions do make a difference. The analysis not only confirms this argument for the specific case of shared water resources, but also refines existing hypotheses on the influence of different independent variables, namely the nature of the collective action problem, the constellation of actors and the institutional design of an international environmental institution. The work also contributes to the policy debate on how to better govern internationally shared natural resources and the environment. It provides policy makers with advice on which exogenous conditions to be aware of when managing water resources they share with co-riparians and which institutional design features and governance mechanisms to set up in order to increase effectiveness in management.

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