

For more effective water resources management

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Janet G. Hering, director of Eawag and professor at EPFL and ETHZ, published together with Prof Karin Ingold (Eawag and University Bern) a commentary in the latest issue of Science. She calls for a more pragmatic approach to integrated water resource management.

According to its definition by the Global Water Partnership, Integrative Water Resource Management (IWRM) is “a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.” Despite its laudable goal of addressing the issue of sustainable water management, it has been criticized as being a recipe for paralysis, placing too much emphasis on integration.

In their commentary, Janet G. Hering and Karin Ingold argue that trying to be too inclusive can be detrimental to actually getting things done. They conclude that “the level of international acceptance of IWRM warrants a concerted effort on the part of the technical community to overcome barriers to its implementation. We propose a pragmatic approach to integration that uses case- and site-specific conditions to set both the appropriate geographic scale and scope of integration. We concur with the lesson drawn from South Africa that ‘less ambition may result in better delivery’.

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