

PREFACE

The *Global Challenges in Water Governance* series has three interlocking aims. First, to provide a resource for understanding multiple aspects of the challenges of water governance in an era when humans are impacting the Earth system—and its water—like never before. Second, to draw together different elements of the natural and social sciences that serve to clarify the different aspects of water governance, such as how propositions of water scarcity and water security connect people and planet. Third, to elucidate the challenges of water governance at multiple scales such that decision makers and educators have further resources in thinking about the possibilities, and limitations, of water governance institutions.

In this first volume of the series, Nathaniel Matthews and I track the emergence of global water governance. It is a story that unfolds in the larger context of growing environmental awareness in the late twentieth century, advances in Earth sciences, and international efforts in sustainable development that came to prominence after the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. These factors coalesced—loosely, but recognizably—in projects of integrated water resources management (IWRM) that rose to prominence throughout the 1990s. The goal of integrated management for water was to organize a holistic approach to the triple-bottom line of sustainable development: environment, economy, and society. In this volume, we examine how this triple-bottom line starts to look different when water governance emerges in the new millennium. Efforts to impose uniform institutions, policies, and practices quickly ran into the rough ground of uneven development, environmental variability, and political

contests over how, and for whom, sustainable development was pursued. Yet, sustainable development had considerable inertia, both as a common language and as an organizing framework for many types of knowledge. One result is that treating the triple-bottom can be understood in plural—environments, economies, and societies. Recognizing this plurality helps to reflect the turn from management to governance of natural resources now widely underway within and beyond the water sector.

By exploring how water governance emerges in this broader context, this volume provides a historical orientation and a contemporary analysis of why global challenges in water governance are framed as they are and what possibilities and limitations result. As the first in a series that explores particular issues in greater depth, this volume provides context for understanding the emergence of global water governance and content regarding how its particular challenges are the outcome not only of human impacts on freshwater but also from previous attempts to resolve them. It aims to elucidate these challenges from multiple perspectives, to show why some problems are perennial and to identify those that are novel. With these in mind, it suggests possible paths forward in a time when water concerns occupy a central place in responding to the challenges of global environmental change.

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