

Launch of the "Governance as a Trialogue" Book
Speech by Mrs LB Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry
Gallagher Estate, Midrand, Gauteng
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Professor Biswas
Programme Director
Honourable guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Introduction

It is a privilege for me to have been asked to officially launch the "Governance as a Trialogue" book, here today.

This book looks at the Trialogue Model, a model that aims to facilitate a better understanding of governance and how science can best inform policy-making in complex areas like water resource management. I am informed that the Trialogue Model and hypothesis concluded that successful governance depends on six elements.

The first three are that governance requires the existence of an effective:

- Science process;
- Government process; and
- Society process.

The second three elements are that governance requires effective interfaces between the three processes, namely:

- An interface between society and science;
- an interface between government and society; and
- an interface between government and science.

These interfaces, I am informed, have to be appropriately balanced and available in the right format, at the right time in order to ensure "good" governance.

With the changes that have happened in South Africa over the past 13 years since we attained democracy it does not surprise me that a book of this nature would emerge from a South African institution; and I would like to commend the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) who developed this Trialogue Model and hypothesis, as well as partnering in the publication of this book.

2. Governance

The political transformation in South Africa resulted in an overhaul of how we manage and govern our water resources, and was no doubt fertile ground for research into governance issues and in the development of models. Experiences which could no doubt be tested in other contexts.

Given the historical allocation of water resources as a result of Apartheid, the necessity for South Africa to overhaul its governance structures and water allocations was clear. The inequality between people of different racial groups can be seen in the 1996 census which found that 97% of white-headed households had water piped inside their dwellings, while only 26,7% of African-headed households had this level of service. The racially skewed allocation was also compounded by the urban – rural bias, with rural households consuming a fraction of water compared to households in urban areas.

Part of the inequality in allocations were related to (1) the way in which the Apartheid State allocated water rights – for example to grow water hungry crops in areas that were not suitable for these crops, and therefore required unsustainable water allocations; or water allocated cheaply to attract 'dirty' industry that resulted in pollution and externalisation of the costs of pollution. (2) The spatial development of Apartheid cities; and (3) the institutional arrangements governing water allocation and distribution.

Consequently, one of the drivers of our transformation was the need to transform institutions; and the over-riding goals of our policy became Integrated Water Resources Management and the establishment

of equity in resource distribution, and efficiency and sustainability in water use. Our need for transformation required the deepening of democracy in our water institutions and saw the inclusion of historically disadvantaged groups in the policy development process. This transformation process started as early as 1992 during the transition period to democracy, with the establishment of a broad consultative forum between existing water institutions, unions, and NGOs. This forum made a number of recommendations – many of which were incorporated in the RDP.

The RDP declared as a fundamental principle the “right to access clean water – water security for all”. The aim was to ensure “Some for all and not all for some”. The principle was later enshrined in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution (in Section 27), which states that everyone in South Africa has a right of access to “sufficient food and water”. It also says that the state must take reasonable measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realization of this right.

While equity is a significant principle in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution, importantly the Constitution also lays the foundation for environmental rights and co-operative government in South Africa. Section 24 provides for a safe and sustainable environment as a fundamental right, and Sections 40 and 41 provide for the principles of co-operative government.

These progressive and consultative foundations were the starting point for our policies that were more inclusive than the past and dramatically reshaped the relationship between government, science and society. In overhauling our water legislation and promulgating the Water Services Act, Act 108 of 1997 and the National Water Act, Act 36 of 1998 we drew on these principles; and in doing so we looked at international best practice and adapted it to meet the specific conditions of South Africa.

The new model of government is one of decentralised decision-making specifically designed to promote democracy through a process of participatory decision-making. This has changed the way that government, industry and society interact. These changes pushed water management into an era of rethinking the nature of water institutions and the role of local government in the provision of water services so that they would meet the objectives of sustainable development, poverty eradication and improve the quality of life of our people.

There have been a number of challenges in the implementation of these policies, and translating them into institutions and programmes that work effectively. This year is the 10th anniversary of the Water Services Act and it may be an opportune time to review how successful we have been in implementing our legislation - in doing so we would need to continue in the spirit of consultation and engaging with stakeholders.

The esteemed Professor Biswas was with us in Stockholm last year when the issue of whether the world would run out of water in 20 years was raised; it came out very clearly at the conference that if we better manage our water resources we can avoid such a crisis. This sentiment was further confirmed by the 2006 United Nations Human Development Report which states that the water crisis facing the globe is not as a result of scarcity, it argues that the crisis is a result of poverty, power and inequality. I am also informed that the Global Water Partnership declared that the water crisis facing the world is in reality a crisis of governance.

It is therefore of critical importance that we ensure our institutions are correctly aligned, have clear mandates, are well run, and are able to effectively deliver the services required by our people and the environment.

3. Ecosystem / Environment

Programme Director, environmental considerations cannot be neglected in our approach to water use, and the National Environment Management Act promulgated in 1998 makes sustainable development, historic redress and the provision of basic needs statutory requirements. Chapter 3 specifically mentions co-operative environmental governance.

Recent (publicly available) reports about heavy metal contamination and pollution in the waterways of the country are of concern to us and require us to take action. Engaging with scientists and the scientific community to ensure a reduction in this pollution is critical if my department is to take its role of monitoring and ensuring compliance with legislation seriously.

In my address this morning and during the course of today there has been discussion on water stress, water conservation and demand management. Again these areas require extensive inputs from scientists on the availability of water, rainfall patterns and the conversion of that rain into water in rivers.

I am told that during the International Symposium on Ecosystem Governance in 2005, the Trialogue hypothesis for ecosystem governance was interrogated by a select group of specialists. This Symposium sought representation from local, regional and internationally recognised experts who could examine the Trialogue and test its validity and use in society. The first outcome was general acceptance of the model as a good conceptual framework accompanied by a set of high level research programmes that could guide developments in ecosystem governance.

4. "Governance as a Trialogue"

Programme Director, the second outcome of that symposium, and the reason why we are here today, is that this process led to the publication of the "Governance as a Trialogue: Government-Society-Science in Transition" book by the CSIR and Springer-Verlag. This book is the achievement of the pooled knowledge and experience of these researchers and practitioners of ecosystem governance and I have been asked to say a few words about the book.

Each chapter in the book interrogates the Trialogue Model and tests its applicability and usefulness for real-world governance.

The foreword contains high impacting statements by Khungeka Njobe (CSIR) Phera Ramoeli (SADC) and Jerome Delli Priscoli (World Water Council) on the importance of governance, specifically ecosystem governance for sustainable development. They further highlight the national, regional and international significance of the book.

The book itself is divided into three parts. Part 1 has five chapters that examine local and international perspectives on governance and importantly, how governance is linked to social and ecological sustainability. The six chapters in part 2 interrogate the applicability and validity of the Trialogue Model to real-world ecosystem problems. Using case studies from South Africa, North America and global institutions, these chapters show how legal, social, institutional and political viewpoints are reflected in how we govern.

Cross-cutting issues of science communication, knowledge management, learning and issues of power are dealt with in the third and final part of the book.

5. Conclusion

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, the book concludes with a new definition of water governance, and states that water governance is the process of informed decision-making that enables trade-offs between competing users of a given resource so as to balance protection with beneficial use in such a way as to mitigate conflict, enhance equity, ensure sustainability and hold officials accountable.

This definition recognises the importance of how decisions are made and who makes these decisions so that we are able to use our natural resources to address the pressing needs of our society, while at the same time balancing these demands with the need to protect our resources as the heritage of future generations. The challenges therefore include doing this in an equitable and sustainable manner for continued growth and transformation in South Africa and internationally.

I thank you.