Assessing water governance: introducing the GOVAQUA Assessment tool

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GOVAQUA assessment tool in a nutshell

Scope	Multi-dimensional and cross-sectoral criteria and indicators Based on existing assessment approaches and the GOVAQUA thematic innovations
Purpose	To assess how the water governance regime at the catchment/basin level impacts the implementation of a specific innovation and its contribution to sustainable and equitable water use
Application	By Living Labs in two iterations: 2024 to assess current situation and set ambitions for a desired water future 2026 to assess progress, reflect on lessons learned, and reconsider ambitions
End-users	Water managers and other relevant stakeholders at the basin or catchment level

Note: governance assessment is also included in our "sister projects"

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A note on innovation & instruments

- "the use of new ideas, products or methods where they have not been used before" (EUROSTAT, n.d.)

- Can be related to both the process of innovating and the product of that process.

- In GOVAQUA: water governance innovations are instruments, approaches and arrangements that have the potential to accelerate a **transition to sustainable and equitable water use in Europe** (EC, 2019; EEA, 2019).

- **Regulatory** - enforcement by means of law and regulation.

- **Economic** - influencing costs, benefits or markets.

- **Information and communication** - providing information in the form of, for example, facts, options or norms and communication.

- **Collaborative** - reaching public-private agreements and the development of certification or labels.

- **Service and infrastructure** - allowing or enabling others to take desirable action or hindering or inhibiting undesirable action

Adapted from Kaufman et al., 2001

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How the tool was developed

1
- Adapted version of existing Governance Assessment Tool
- Baseline understanding of current governance regime

2
- Review existing approaches and policy targets
- Review of existing scoring methods, e.g. OECD

3
- Draft criteria and indicators – discussed during online sessions and workshop with a focus on relevance, understandability, scalability, transferability and acceptability
- Choice for four-point scale

4
- V1.0: tested in Living Labs (Spring 2024)
- V2.0: currently applied in Living Labs

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Baseline assessment

- Purpose:
  - understand the water governance challenges and problems to be addressed,
  - if known, consider challenges from the perspective of a specific governance innovation.

- Description of 5 dimensions, i.e. elements that make up a governance context
  - E.g. Which strategies or policy instruments are already in place to address the problem at hand? If known, which strategies or instruments does the innovation adopt?

- Optional: assessment of completeness
  - E.g. Is any important problem perspective missing or overlooked in the context that should be considered in the Living Lab?

Problem perspectives and goal ambitions

Strategies and instruments

Levels and scales

Actors and networks

Responsibilities and resources

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The GOVAQUA assessment tool

- Inspired by OECD framework consisting of 12 principles, with attention for efficiency, effectiveness, and trust and engagement.
  - Limited attention for systematic transition
  - Focus on role of governments
  - Applicability at non-national level unclear

- Indicators for each criteria, e.g. related to
  - Completeness of information
  - Access to safe water
  - Recognition of water users
  - Transparency of decision-making
  - Ownership of problems
  - Etc.

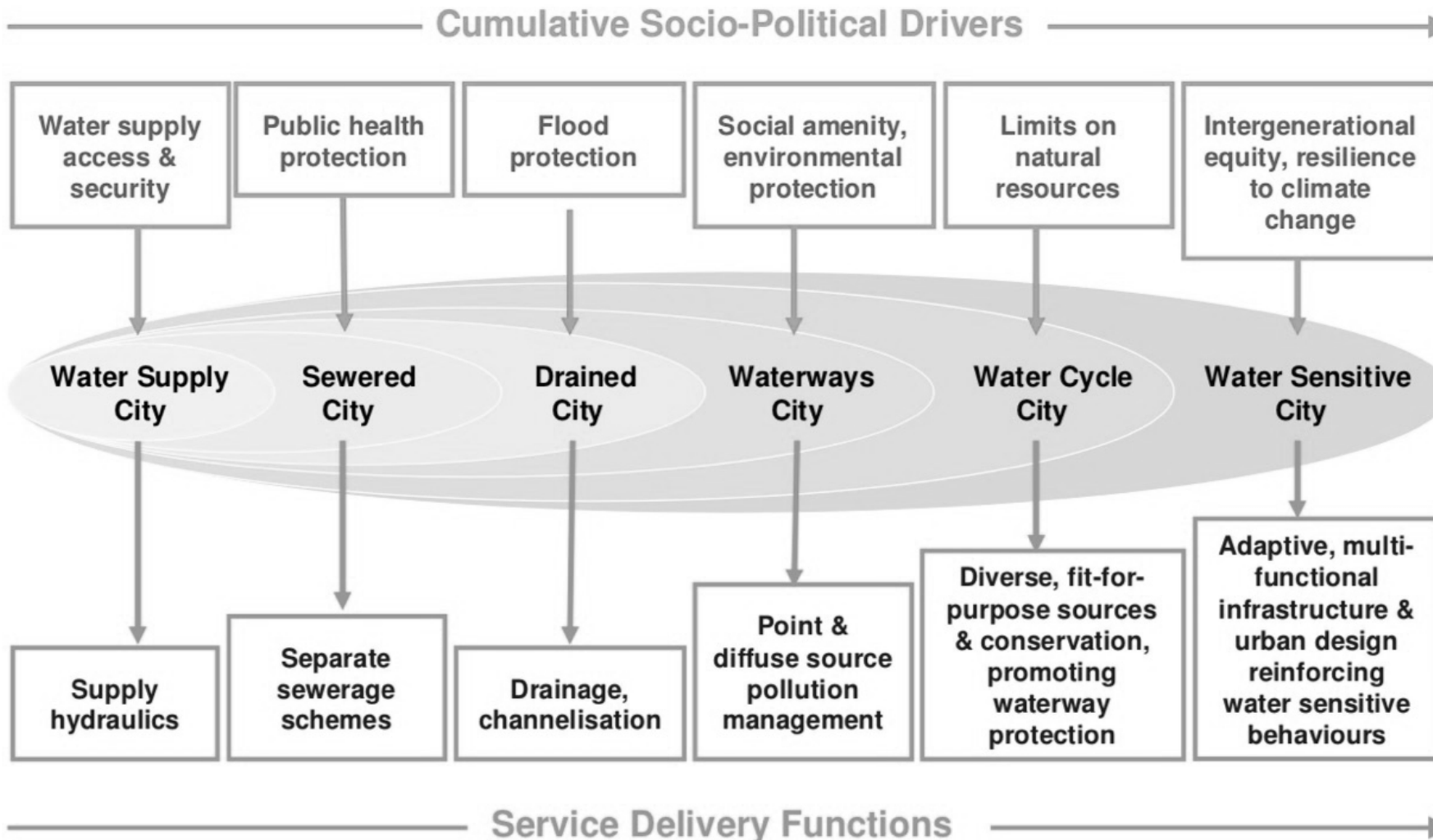| 1. State of the freshwater environment	2. Fair sharing of data and information	3. Distributional justice
4. Recognitional justice	5. Procedural justice	6. Financial efficiency and effectiveness
7. Institutional capacity	8. Horizontal and vertical coordination	9. Enabling policy mix

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Urban water management transitions

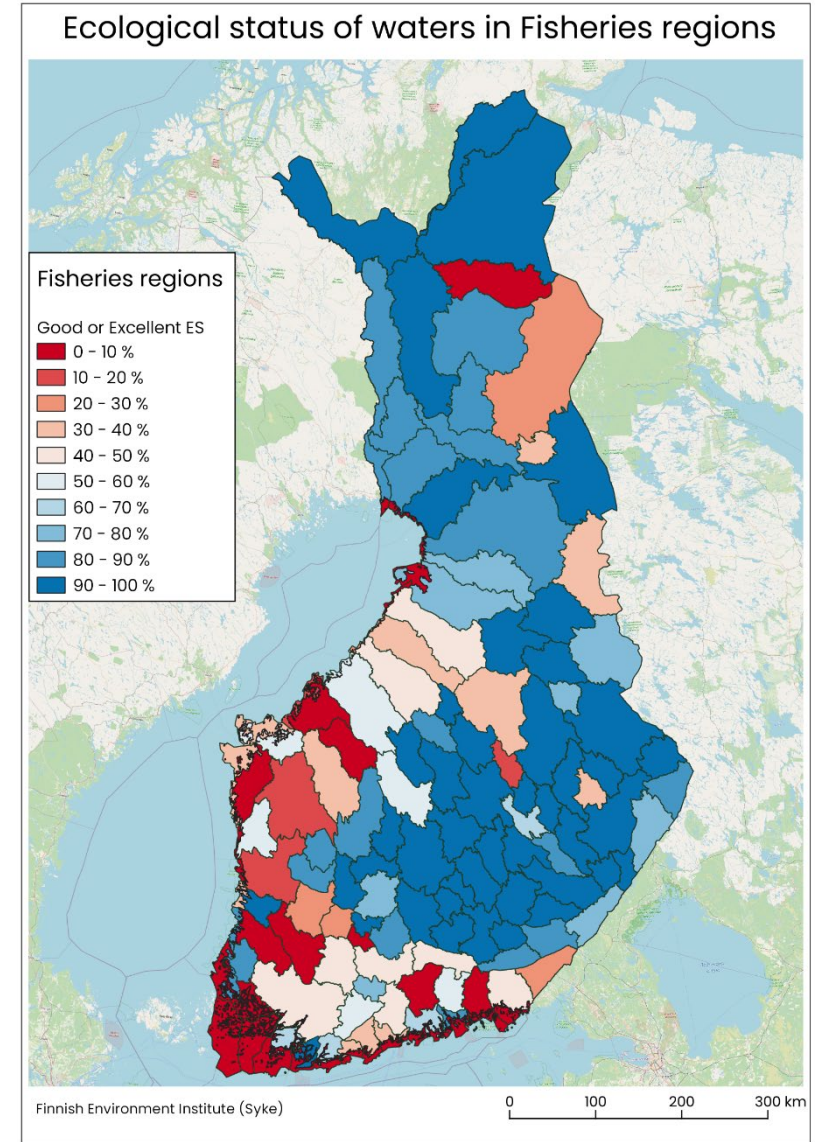Urban Water Management Transitions Framework (Source: Brown et al., 2008)

To conclude the introduction

- For a transition to occur towards more sustainable and equitable water use, governance challenges need to be considered

- GOVAQUA developed an assessment tool that helps to
  - Understand the governance regime (baseline)
  - Identify key governance challenges, including missing knowledge and information, using a set of nine criteria and related indicators

- Our questions to you (we will use an interaction tool):
  - Are you familiar with such tools? Do you find them useful? What elements are most relevant?
  - Would you benefit and, if yes, how?
  - What difficulties would you encounter using such tool

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Reflections from the first application of the tool with Archipelago Sea Programme stakeholders I

Part of GOVAQUA Archipelago Sea Catchment Living Lab work 2023-2026

- Tool tailored to the context of Archipelago Sea catchment

- Arhipelago Sea Programme 2021-: focus on curbing diffuse pollution, removing Archipelago Sea from the HELCOM hot spot list by 2027

- Close collaboration with the Archipelago Sea Programme coordinator and RBO VAR-ELY

Ecological status of waters in Fisheries regions

Fisheries regions

Good or Excellent ES
- 0 – 10 %
- 10 – 20 %
- 20 – 30 %
- 30 – 40 %
- 40 – 50 %
- 50 – 60 %
- 60 – 70 %
- 70 – 80 %
- 80 – 90 %
- 90 – 100 %

Finnish Environment Institute (Syke)

0   100   200   300 km

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Reflections from the first application of the tool with Archipelago Sea Programme stakeholders I

Testing the tool for the Programme monitoring and assessment purposes in a workshop with 25 participants representing various stakeholder groups

➢ Rich discussions, focus on equity aspects new and needed

➢ Agreement on scores in groups, but differences between groups

➢ Suitable for river basin or programme level, not project level requiring more specific targets

➢ Main challenges easy to identify with the tool: cross-sectoral steering difficulties, lack of capacity

➢ Second application in 2026 zooming into progress with innnovative approaches: corporate water stewardship and impact investment blending public and private funding

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