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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Bridging Knowledge and Action: Enhancing a ‘Science for Development’ in Water Resources Management

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Abstract

In the context of “Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”, research cooperation between so called ‘developed’ countries and ‘developing’ countries or ‘emerging economies’ plays a crucial role: They are main institutions of generating new context-specific knowledge.

However, if science shall have positive effects on development as such, or on sustainable resource management in particular, it is necessary to go beyond scientific outputs and to turn knowledge into action and impact. A beneficial design of research projects as well as surrounding science policy is crucial to achieve this.

Based on findings of my ongoing PhD research, my contribution to the Tropentag 2014 will focus on factors that positively influence the impacts of science cooperation for water resources management along the example of research projects carried out between scientists in Germany and Peru, Brazil and other countries in the global South. Qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation of cooperative projects and among science policy makers gives interesting insights into the process of creating research impacts. Funding institutions as well as researchers are well aware of the basic principles that enhance uptake of results, such as cooperation on eyelevel, common ownership, transdisciplinarity, involvement of non-scientific stakeholders and problem owners in the research process, etc. However, realities of cooperation on the ground are often difficult and messy. Based on these insights, in my contribution I will point out the success factors of science for development projects, but also reflect on their limitations. I will furthermore expose stumbling blocks in the policies framing the projects. The objective of my presentation thus is to contribute to making better use of the knowledge generated in research through making it applicable in real life settings, beyond publications in scientific journals.

Keywords: Cooperation, impact, innovation, knowledge, science policy, water resources management