

The dynamics of systems and the whimsicality of policy processes

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TNO | Knowledge for business



Policy processes concerning sediments

have a growing complexity because of:

- the system approach: river- groundwater-soil-sediments
- the connection to other policy issues (nature conservation/development, economic development, use of space, etc.)
- the connection to a wider variety of stakeholders with different interests

On the other hand...



Policy processes concerning sediments

.....are based on an illusion

- of control of the environment and the dynamics in river basin systems
- of control of the social system
- of predictability of the outcomes
- That we know what is 'good' and 'bad' for people and for the natural system

How many examples of this illusion do we see in practice ?



A need for a new approach

- Based on “is” instead of “should”
- That acknowledges and appreciates whimsicality
- “Effect based” and based on “real insight” in the system
- That acknowledges stakeholder’s views, interests and appreciations





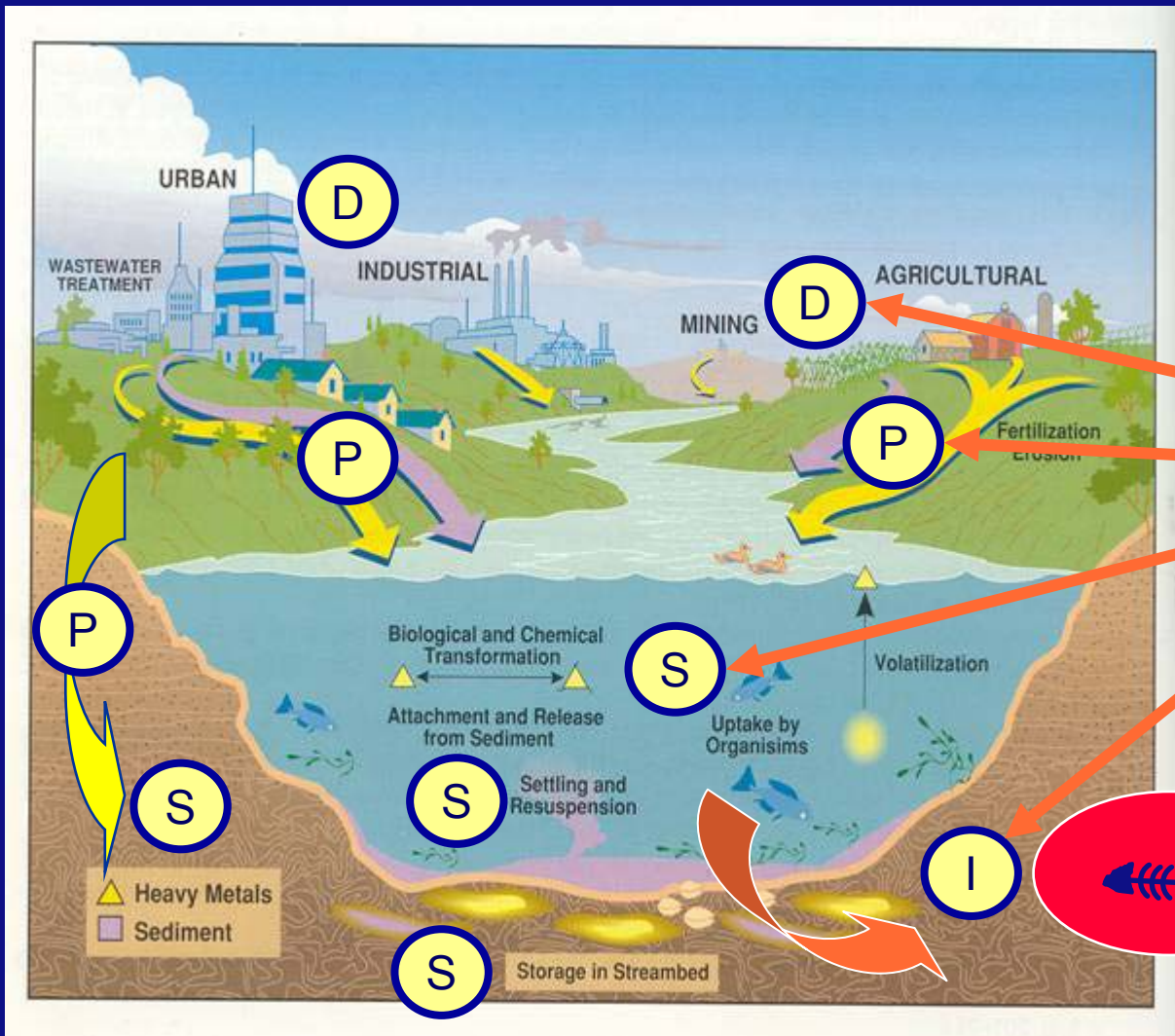
YES!

Different stakeholder appreciations



What do we really know about the system?

Base sketch from Meade (1996)



Our national “ oracle”



Johan Cruijff

“Let the ball do the job”



'Waterboard Rijnland' Case

- Problem with backlog of dredging
- Stakeholders involved from different perspectives
- Proces architecture along six workshops :
 - Problem definition
 - Future images
 - How to reach these future images
 - Input of scientific and local knowledge
 - Pictures of today and future ways of dealing with sediment
 - Handling over to waterboard management
- But with workshop 3 problems arose: time out
- Solution: workshops in the area to bring in local knowledge



Contours of the new approach:

- “Go with the flow”
- Improvisation while keeping direction
- Acknowledgement of stakeholder’s interests and local knowledge
- A ‘learning approach’ based on short feedback loops
- Science to help stakeholders to understand the system and not as the ‘absolute truth’



Challenges for water policy and management

- Acknowledgement and appreciation of different stakeholder interests and perceptions
- Organisation of 'taylor made' stakeholder processes
- Timing, smart coupling to other issues, working 'outside in'
- 'Letting loose' in stead of 'control'
- Coupling between different decision making scales of the river system



Challenges for science

- Describe watersystems from perspectives of people who are using it
- Stronger coupling between natural, technical and social sciences
- Multi- and transdisciplinair ways of working
- 'demand driven' ways of working in stakeholder processes / 'joint fact finding'





‘Let the system do the job’

Thank you for your attention!

