

Interactive comment on “The seven rules for hydrologists and other researchers wanting to contribute to the water management practice” by E. Mostert and G. T. Raadgever

Anonymous Referee #1

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REVIEW of the paper: The seven rules for hydrologists and other researchers wanting to contribute to the water management practice.

This paper is an interesting addition to the literature on the relationships between policy and science. It is in general well supported by references to the literature and by personal concrete experiences. The title of the paper is clumsy, too long, and more critically- announces a set of "rules", a word that does not befit the ensuing discussion (let alone the ironical "look for the seven mistakes" that it could prompt). This creates a major discomfort while reading the text because 1) one can dispute that the points addressed translate into "rules", and 2) the step-by-step logic of the presen-

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tation is in contradiction with many paragraphs that stress the messy process-driven and ideological nature of the policy/science nexus. This presentation by steps suggests a purposive strategy to mobilize and implement means that will serve chosen interests. It reifies what is generally a non-linear learning-process where the subjectivity of the researcher is not explicit (especially in the eyes of the researcher himself). Things do not happen in such steps and the paper does not convince us that they should. I would strongly recommend dropping the presentation by 'rules' or 'steps' and to merely discuss the seven points as characteristics of science/policy interactions that practitioners should be made aware of.

Section 2 Discussion P847 would benefit from an earlier reference to Jasanoff, who has chartered this terrain, and mention of the debate on local or traditional ecological knowledge. "is to identify the relevant disciplines." Relevant to what?

Section 3 The political dimension of stakeholder identification is lacking; that "they are invited to explore their mutual interdependencies" might work for some situations in the North but is not realistic; and naïve- in situations with lopsided relations of power.

Section 4 This section is the weakest and internally inconsistent. It starts with: "The third rule for researchers is: choose which stakeholders and which interests to serve." Why is that a rule if this is a mere acknowledgement of subjectivity? This formulation suggests that this is a rational choice aimed at optimizing certain benefits or serving one's ideology but the options presented are not really 'options' (to be selected in each case the researcher is involved in). Choices have generally been made 'upstream' in the researcher's career (working for governments, or as a consultant, or as a researcher, etc). "They may want to serve only science and not take sides on policy issues" establishes a dichotomy and sets science and policy apart, as if they were in full opposition.

Section 5 This section continues on the same mode: "After having decided whom and

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what to serve, it is time to decide on the best strategy to do this. As with the stakeholders and interests to serve, the choice is not completely free but there are many choices to be made." This suggests a cold decision-making on how to use science (its power, legitimacy, etc) as a tool in a controversy to support one particular agenda. I understand the intention of the authors but this step-by-step linearity is misleading: all the types of situated research presented in the section reflect the context but rarely a purposive –manipulative- decision of researchers. "A third type of research use is strategic use." This paragraph is misplaced: what is described is not all a type of research but a way of using certain research output to further particular agendas. These are two different things.

Section 6 "Realistically"; the authors probably mean here "ideally".

Section 7 This is about communication but also about building legitimacy: You may refer to Latour and Cash et al.

Section 8 This section brings relevant questions to the discussion (but, again, it is not a 'step' and we are quite far from the title). Rephrase last line of page 856.

Section 9 "These rules do not constitute a recipe for success and leave room for different types of research. Moreover, they have not been proven in a strict sense. More cases studies should be conducted, describing research processes and research impact, using the seven rules as hypotheses to be tested." The first sentence is fine (if discarding the word 'rule'); as for the second I can't picture myself getting involved in a research and sequentially 'testing' these rules. It's food for thought, as stated at the end, not potential guidelines.

Also: P845 also specifies that "The aim of this paper is not to lay down the law for researchers or provide a recipe for success, but to invite them to reflect on their role in water management". These are points for reflection not successive rules to guide practice.

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P844: "rewards are political power and influence": more practically "votes"!

P844 & 846: this duplicated reference to Bourdieu is intriguing : " Science can only exist as an independent “social field” following its own rules if it enjoys the tacit support from the world of policy" reads like a contradiction (it is independent only if dependent on the policy sphere)

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