

Joint Water Project
Amsterdam, Free University, 22-23 May 2001

Participants: Sylvia Karlsson, Steve Lonergan, Eric Odada, Taikan Oki, Wim Salomons, Neil Summerton, Charles Vörösmarty, Holger Hoff (George M. Hornberger missed his connection due to storms).

Objective: To make a second effort to start the planning process for a joint water project between the three GEC programmes, ideally producing a draft idea in time for the Amsterdam conference.

Result: Holger Hoff had sent out a number of background documents which was a good reference (and will probably be even more useful later) but it was not the time and place to refer back to them in the discussion. As there were no formal presentations of participants' research (only some small longer inputs on specific items) the consultative process started from what everyone brought to the table. This is more time-consuming than some would think, and the somewhat unrealistic ambitions of producing a set of research questions and implementation plan (implicitly to catch up with the other projects) could not be met. However, over the two days there were definite progress in reaching a common vision (if a bit coarse in conceptual framework) of the key focus of the project and the value-added it would bring. The final feeling among the participants was definitely one of strong enthusiasm. The project document lists the following as the goal and specific objectives of the project:

Goal: The overall goal of the Joint Water Project is to increase the scientific understanding of the interactions and feedbacks from local to global scale between human and biophysical systems as parts of the Earth system, and through that contribute to the sustainability transition of water systems (includes the coupled human-water systems).

Specific objectives: The specific objectives of the Joint Water Project are to contribute to answering the following three overarching research questions:

- I. What are the impacts of global change on local and regional water systems?
- II. What are the feedbacks of changes in water systems on the global hydrological cycle and the Earth System, particularly the cumulative effects of local and regional changes, critical thresholds of abrupt changes and hot-spots² in the Earth system?
- III. What are the most crucial measures to achieve the sustainability of water systems on a global, regional and local scale?

Follow-up: It was agreed that the product of the meeting should be a three page outline of the goal, specific objectives, integrative themes, key common requirements and proposed activities. The skeleton of the document was developed in the last session, Holger and Sylvia got in charge of making a first draft out of that, then the other participants would be given two weeks to comment. The revised document would then be sent to the directors and projects of the three programmes to allow for thinking and input before and during the Amsterdam conference. At the conference individual participants in the group could take up the project idea in their presentations, and it would also be attempted to include it as topic for the roundtable discussion on integrated water assessment. It was also decided that Neil Summerton would be the chair of that roundtable. The group agreed to try and meet during the conference as most participants would be there (not Steve).

If the chairs and directors meeting on the 14th of July gave the green light for the planning of the project to go ahead, the next step envisioned would be a workshop in November/December with around 20 participants, mainly from core projects (funding source unknown). From then on, there could be one track of integrating and synthesising already available data, and bring this to international water discussion arenas (such as the 3rd World Water Forum in 2003), and another track of starting new research activities.

Sylvia Karlsson
Bonn, 8 June 2001