

COP21 – its relevance for future water research

7th WRHC
Open Space Workshop
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15:30 – 17:30
UBA, Dessau

Climate Service Center Germany (GERICS)

Daniela Jacob
moderator / organiser
in cooperation with the
Water Science Alliance
Peter Krebs
co-chair

Motivation

Although not explicitly mentioned in the Paris Agreement, water plays a key role when it comes to climate change. It is the central element in the climate system so that changes in the climate system manifest themselves mainly through changes affecting the water system, e.g. climate-related floods, droughts or heavy rain events. Therefore, any future climate policy will have direct impacts in the water system.

The central goal of the Paris Agreement is to keep global mean warming well below 2°C, in order to reduce the potential threat of climate change. To handle future climate change the Paris Agreement highlights the importance to develop and implement comprehensive risk management strategies as outlined also by the Sendai Framework. These strategies have to be based around a stringent mitigation strategy and comprehensive mitigation activities together with widespread efforts to adapt to climate change. Water is of central importance in both adaptation, as well as mitigation activities.

Additionally the Paris Agreement makes a reference to the Sustainable Development Framework, in which water is included in several goals – especially in the global goal 6 entitled “Ensure access to water and sanitation for all”. Given the strong need for substantial mitigation/adaptation activities on the one hand, and the goal for sustainable development on the other, may introduce trade-offs in the water sector that have to be addressed by future research activities. However, it is also possible to conceive of future adaptation and mitigation activities that are win-win. For example, reforestation offers the potential to work as an effective CO₂ store, while at the same time offering greater water retention, thus offering potential to reduce flood risk.

Finally, the Paris Agreement clearly states that any decision making has to be based on solid scientific information, thereby strengthening the need for multi-/transdisciplinary research activities related to water, as well as further efforts to transfer and include the science information into the decision making process e.g. in the frame of developing science-based-climate services for water management.

In this workshop we would like to discuss the future challenges in water research linked to the COP21 outcome. The discussion will include multi-disciplinary and multi-scale aspects starting from a systemic perspective targeted around the core topics mitigation, adaptation and sustainable development. The key thematic areas will be centred on the aspects of water availability, water quality and water policy activities as well as on improving ways on how to ensure the practical implication of the science findings into the decision making process. The workshop is seen as a first approach to facilitate a cross-disciplinary interaction on these policy relevant issues. The envisaged output of the workshop is to summarize the workshop results in a perspective paper which could stimulate further activities along this topic.

Agenda

The organizers will provide a short impulse statement, thereby introducing a set of few guiding questions. This will be followed by an open discussion along these guiding questions. Depending on the number of participants, the open discussion will either take part in working groups or in the plenum.