Hydrology or psychology?

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How can cooperation over transboundary surface and groundwater resources be achieved in a sustainable and equitable manner?

It is not evident that cooperation starts
• International basin cooperation was a rare phenomenon in Europe until 1994.
• It is now the general rule

Cooperation Meuse and Scheldt
• Two virtually equal conventions
• Decisions through consensus
• Permanent secretariats
What is sustainable and equitable cooperation? (1)

Partners develop sustainability by cooperating over a longer period, by producing common results, by developing solutions for problems.

Ministerial guidance and political involvement will help. Also technical experts should be involved.

It takes time, patience and exercises

It is not at all evident that cooperation is sustainable.
What is sustainable and equitable cooperation? (2)

Technical, economical, political, societal and cultural characteristics will differ
The others will not be like you are

Equitability helps to bridge the differences
Equitability means acceptance of differences
Equitability is a condition for sustainable cooperation

Diversity is an added value and creates opportunities
Diversity and equitability can go together
What are the mechanisms and tools that support the achievement of cooperation, while nurturing genuine cooperation?

High level agreement and umbrella instruments
Governing body and some rules of procedure
Meetings, platform for expert groups, capacity building
Process management, secretariat

Accept:
• no common actions but coordination of individual actions
• different agendas but same long term objectives
• different methods and plans but transboundary coherence
• different languages
International commissions, arbitration commissions, transboundary basin authorities: What can be learned?

Learned:
Sufficient time and patience is needed to create a commission
To develop the cooperation one needs a working organisation
People need to become accustomed to the new situation
It demands additional national efforts, new communication and working methods, creativity and flexibility.
Expectations and ambitions may differ and may continue to differ
Acceptance develops with time and must be maintained
Are principles and tools used in one region transferable to other regions? And if so how would that be possible?

Compare “brother” Rhine with his twin sisters Meuse and Scheldt
The point of departure is virtually equal
Cooperation in the Rhine basin started in 1950 and was at a high level in 1975
The cooperation in the Meuse and Scheldt basins started in 1995
Attempts to transfer failed even on short distance!

- European transboundary basin cooperation is governed by one single WFD, but methods of the river commissions differ
- Basin cooperation is partner cooperation
- Each basin should develop its own cooperation
- Principles, tools and experiences are available and should be exchanged.
CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainable cooperation can be reached in transboundary basins and aquifers when the partners

• meet regularly
• accept differences
• find a balance between the (geo)hydrological and the administrative systems
• jointly develop planning schemes and projects
• are prepared to coordinate their measures
• and intensify their cooperation when necessary (climate change?!)
AMICE: Adaptation of the Meuse to the Impacts of Climate Evolutions
Thank you for your attention