

DUPC3 Inception Report

6 June 2022

Project name: Trans-Path-Plan: Water Transformation Pathways Planning

You can use this space to describe your experience as a team working on the feedback and building the project during the inception phase. There is space for feedback to the programme at the end of this template.

We had a very fruitful and productive team inception workshop, hybrid online and in Delft, 17-19 May 2022. This was very useful to further build our team, discuss the focus of our project and plan project activities.

Feedback report

Here you can reply to the comments provided in the feedback report and how you have (or not) addressed them. Please copy the comments per section in the relevant box and include your reply underneath them. You can also mention any other major changes or items related to the budget in this section, in the last box.

Comments from eligibility check – budget criteria

The following budget criteria were not met:

- At least 60% of the project funds requested should go to early-career professionals (either to reimburse their time input and/or to invest in their education).*
- Please note that the criteria to at least 50% of the total time input funded by the programme should go to female team members and/or members from (other) marginalized groups in society is met because you have several team members not yet identified and labelled them as women and/or marginalized. If we adjust this the percentage changes from 74% to only 11%. Please consider this and explain how the project team aims to still meet this criterion in case no candidates can be identified for these positions.*

Action: Please adjust your budget accordingly.

We have adjusted our budget. For early career professionals we have indicated now also for the non-staff expenses what parts will benefit early career professionals. Earlier we overlooked this and only added the indication for staff-time costs. All project staff on PhD and postdoc positions is considered as early career – also for the few positions that are foreseen as vacancy. For those positions staff will be recruited after finalization of project contract and consortium agreement. For those staff, we intend to hire qualified female candidates. All partners have agreed to this. If we indeed succeed to do this, the percentages are met.

Comments from eligibility check – co-funding

· The sources of co-funding are not sufficiently specified, in particular IHE Delft's. Please ensure that all sources of co-funding are viable.

Action: Please specify the source of co-funding and adjust in the budget if needed.

· The source(s) of co-funding are potentially not eligible as it comes from the same source as the programme, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands and/or from IHE Delft base-funding.

Action: Please remove this co-funding from budget, and in case co-funding becomes less than 25% of the requested budget, justify why this is the case and which other opportunities for co-funding the project team might anticipate during the project duration.

We have included the sources of co-funding based on the guidance provided in the documentation and on the DUPC3 website during the proposal development phase. IHE co-funding comes from the WaPOR Phase 2 project, as specified in the IHE letter of support. This is not IHE Basefund, but is a project that IHE is doing for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, under a Letter of Agreement with FAO. TransPathPlan activities align well with this WaPOR project and its activities in Sudan, which enables the co-funding. Another significant amount of co-funding is provided by TU Delft, through a project at TU Delft that is funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), Living Dikes. Similar to the WaPOR project, also this project fits very well within the Trans-Path-Plan project, enabling the co-funding by TU Delft.

Both these larger single sources seem viable against the co-funding guidelines as communicated during proposal development. We also have co-funding for many of the other partners, but without the TU Delft and IHE Delft co-funding we probably move below the 25% threshold. Given the size of the IHE and TU Delft co-funding, should they be not eligible, we will make an effort to identify other sources, but we expect that it may be difficult to find sources of similar financial size.

· The amounts of co-funding mentioned in the support letters deviate from the amounts listed in the budget. For example, Vienna University is not included in the budget.

Action: Correct either the budget or the support letters to make them consistent.

We have checked and adjusted. BOKU for instance is now corrected. In some cases, pledges in co-funding letters are higher than in our project budget. This is for instance the case for IHE co-funding. We have for now included the co-funding activities that we could readily identify, but expect more synergies can be found, within the ceiling indicated in the support letter. For payments and consortium agreement, some of the smaller partners are handled via larger partners, to reduce the administrative burden. This also applies to BOKU (and University of Arizona).

Comments from external reviewers

The proposal provides little detail on the social and ecological relations, issues and risks and can therefore be strengthened on these aspects.

Recommendations:

- *Further specify the explicit equity-dimension, both in terms of challenges, approaches, activities and (project) target groups (see also points below). This might also require a reallocation of budget and ensuring sufficient capacity is in the team to work on these activities.*
- *Further specify the ecological issues and the socio-ecological relations that will be explored and transformed (see also points below). This might also require a reallocation of budget and ensuring sufficient capacity is in the team to work on these activities.*

The proposal strongly invests in a transdisciplinary approach, which is a strength of the proposal.

Recommendations:

- *Capacity building outcomes are clear and evident, but what are the outcomes in terms of the water sector, what is it that you are trying to transform? These are listed as outputs in transdisciplinary research but the project team most likely already has (normative) ideas/aims/wishes of transforming the water system or at least shifting it in particular directions. Make your own standpoint more explicit and in this engage with the processes, issues and challenges around equity and ecological sustainability (as mentioned above);*
- *Would be good to show how Stream 1 and Stream 2 interface with each other before the project team gets to the outcomes as it is here in this interaction that a transdisciplinary research process should begin to change things;*
- *On page 4 the proposal refers to water scientists who are capable of transdisciplinary approaches, yet all actors need to be part of this as transdisciplinary research requires scientists and other actors to include views, experiences, wisdoms of a diverse range of actors;*
- *Include clear processes for co-production of knowledge as part of the knowledge sharing and make explicit when and how the different actors in the project (and beyond) co-produce knowledge;*
- *The educational outputs might also be knowledge inputs: consider including students (BSc/MSc) in data collection to build a more robust interaction between the project components.*

In our project we have transformation cases at seven different sites. The connecting element is the water-related transformation, but the specifics differ for each case. This makes it almost impossible to further specific issues and relations beyond what is in the proposal. These are different from the urban wetland case in Mexico, to the transboundary Brahmaputra river navigation or the agriculture in the Mekong delta. However, we have discussed these issues in the Inception workshop, and identified some further issues that we will keep in mind during our project.

Our project budget will not suffice to support a full transformation, or to study transformation processes at full depth across these case sites. However, within budget conditions, each case has a similar amount available that we expect is sufficient to add a meaningful transdisciplinary research component to support these case-specific processes. Clear management of expectations and communication throughout is required through, to clarify our (limited) role as research-partners to the other stakeholders involved.

We have discussed some strategies for our engagement with the cases and will continue this as the first actual project activity in the team, via online webinars/sessions. During the inception phase, we have also started with the discussion about transformations, and what we understand to be transformation and transformation processes. Also these discussions will be continued during the first project months, to come to some shared elements and maybe even indicators that can characterize transformation processes.

Different actors will be included in the knowledge co-production processes; case-specific plans for this are elaborated based on the results of a first problem framing phase, as indicated in the first year planning in the project proposal.

Including students at BSc and MSc level is indeed what we hope to do – although also here the exact role of students may differ across the different cases/countries.

Other budget changes made (if applicable)

We have made some other small budget changes and clarification, mostly based on the specific budget review received from DUPC3.

In the remarks in the budget Excel file, these comments and changes are addressed. Some main points:

- Lumpsum amounts, for amongst others communication, are now further broken down into different components. Often, parts of these lumpsum amounts involve staff time; this has then been added there.
- Additional descriptions have been added for activities where requested
- Audit costs have been checked with partners, are included where needed, and in some cases, have been adjusted slightly
- Overhead costs have been double-checked with partners; partners that include overhead costs do not include those in their staff tariffs. In many cases, the budgeted overheads follow the mandatory regulations for their institutions.

Policy Guide:

In this section you can address the requirements listed in the Policy Guide: Inclusive Collaboration, Monitoring & Communication. We have copied the requirements below, but you might need to look at the Policy Guide again to find more context.

Link to the Policy Guide: <https://www.notion.so/Policy-Guide-Inclusive-Collaboration-monitoring-Communication-f18bc04fb3744bde87d7029b8c1af2fe>.

Diversity, Inclusion and joint learning (networks)

- Provide us (per project team) with two or three resources that you find inspiring and helpful on diversity, equity and inclusion. This can be videos, articles, blogs, podcasts, et cetera. We will include this in our database to make available to everyone.
- Develop ground rules for diverse, open and inclusive collaboration with space for critical reflections and learning.
- Assess what are the training needs to create an open and inclusive culture for critical reflections and learning.

- Assessment of which groups are not (yet) sufficiently represented and included in your teams and how you are planning to engage them.
- Develop a document listing clear roles and responsibilities for all team members. Carefully look at how (collective) duties can be fairly distributed among the team members and how this relates to allocated time in the budget.
- Describe the team's expectations for the thematic learning network and what they would like to contribute to them.

Useful resources identified by project team members, with annotation/abstracts::

1. Blog on transformative research:

<https://steps-centre.org/blog/transformative-research-sustainability-look-like/>

"The researchers and partner organizations in the Transformations to Sustainability Programme are learning from and accompanying some of those ongoing efforts, in order to shed light on key processes in transformative change, and to better understand how such efforts might be facilitated, adapted, joined up and enhanced across different contexts and scales.

While the overarching goals are quite similar, each of the three networks associated with the programme is approaching 'transformative research for sustainability' in different ways. We recently had an opportunity to reflect on the differences, and the synergies between our approaches(...)"

(STEPS-Centre has a wealth of information from earlier projects and network on transformative research)

2. Article: Six modes of co-production for sustainability.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-021-00755-x>

Chambers, J. M., Wyborn, C., Ryan, M. E., Reid, R. S., Riechers, M., Serban, A., ... & Pickering, T. (2021). Six modes of co-production for sustainability. *Nature Sustainability*, 4(11), 983-996.

(PDF available with team; Article is not open access)

"The promise of co-production to address complex sustainability challenges is compelling. Yet, co-production, the collaborative weaving of research and practice, encompasses diverse aims, terminologies and practices, with poor clarity over their implications. To explore this diversity, we systematically mapped differences in how 32 initiatives from 6 continents co-produce diverse outcomes for the sustainable development of ecosystems at local to global scales. We found variation in their purpose for utilizing co-production, understanding of power, approach to politics and pathways to impact. A cluster analysis identified six modes of co-production: (1) researching solutions; (2) empowering voices; (3) brokering power; (4) reframing power; (5) navigating differences and (6) reframing agency. No mode is ideal; each holds unique potential to achieve particular outcomes, but also poses unique challenges and risks. Our analysis provides a heuristic tool for researchers and societal actors to critically explore this diversity and effectively navigate trade-offs when co-producing sustainability."

3. Journal: *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*

<https://td-sa.net/index.php/td> (open access)

“The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research (TD) is a journal dedicated to promoting the concept of transdisciplinary research. It is aimed at creating knowledge with the collaboration of the formal sectors of the natural and human sciences as base. Over and above this, the intention is to focus on levels of knowledge that are to be found at grassroots level. It is important to explore this knowledge because it becomes the groundwork for further knowledge, which is often not confined to a fixed formal discipline or area of knowledge. The editorial team of the journal welcomes contributions of a theoretical nature, as well as material based on empirical research. Preference is given to southern Africa as a region of focus. However, should submitted articles show the potential for making a contribution towards our understanding of science beyond the confines of single disciplines, it would enjoy favourable consideration.”

4. Guide: *The Transformation Laboratory of the Social-Ecological System of Xochimilco, Mexico City: Description of the Process and Methodological Guide*

<https://steps-centre.org/publication/the-transformation-laboratory-of-the-social-ecological-system-of-xochimilco-mexico-city-description-of-the-process-and-methodological-guide/>

The activities described in this guide are designed to support participatory research in the search for transformative pathways to social-ecological system sustainability. The guide offers activities with practical examples to help researchers creatively explore new ways for participants to relate to each other and to their environment. This publication draws on the experiences of implementing the project ‘Transformation Laboratory of the Xochimilco Social-Ecological System, Mexico City’. It describes the process and methodology developed during the life of the project (between 2016 and 2019), and provides practical resources associated with its main activities, to help facilitate similar processes in different contexts. This guide is aimed at groups who are genuinely committed to the sustainability of the social-ecological systems they inhabit.

The principles to collaboration shared in the WDPP Policy Guide are very similar to the principles that underpin our project proposal. We did an exercise to work on the principles of transdisciplinarity. We have discussed collaboration, inclusion, diversity and principles for collaboration and participatory work, within the team and with the stakeholders in the case-activities and in the international networks we are part of. This enabled us to start the discussion, share experience and identify challenges and pitfall. We have not yet translated this into a set of very practical collaboration rules; In the starting phase we will further review available existing guidance and handbooks for transdisciplinary collaboration and participatory processes, to distil a practical starting point for our team.

Similarly training needs have been discussed during the Inception workshop. We will start with developing some online sessions to cover two aspects of importance to our project team. One type of session(s) will be dedicated to transformation theories, concepts and frameworks. This should result in a better understanding, and possible agreement, within our team of the different perspectives on transformations, and the elements and indicators we will use in our project – these may also be different for different case teams. A second type of session(s) will be dedicated to methods and approaches for participatory transformative pathways planning. This will also cover the aspects of inclusion, diversity, joint learning. Both within our team but also in the relation of our project team researchers and experts and the case-stakeholders.

Within the team, the key roles for each team member have been discussed. Over time we expect these may change and/or that maybe additional tasks and roles will need to be added. The current overview of tasks and team roles is shown in below table.

Tasks / roles	Sub-team	Lead contact (max 2)
Overall project management and coordination	Anamika (leader), Leon (co-leader), Natasha (support)	Anamika Barua, Leon Hermans
“Stream 1” Case studies		
Brahmaputra basin	IIT Guwahati, The Third Pole, IHE (Emanuele, Jaap).	Anamika Barua
Nile basin	NBCBN, InfoNile/WJA, IHE (Emanuele, Wim)	Amel Azab, Fredrick Mugira
Sudan/Gezira scheme	Khartoum Univ, Gezira Irrig Scheme, IHE (Abebe, Andres, Marloes)	Ahmed Ekshaikh-Hayati
Vietnam (circular agriculture Mekong delta)	ICED, IHE (Jaap, Wim)	Hong Quan Nguyen
Kenya (Yala basin wetlands)	Egerton Univ, ACTS, Kaimosi Friends Univ College, BOKU, IHE (Edwin, Angeles)	Nzula Kitaka
Mexico (Xochimilco wetland)	UNAM, Umbela, Univ Arizona, IHE (Edwin)	Lakshmi Charli, Patricia Perez
Netherlands (flood management Wadden sea)	TU Delft, IHE (Leon)	Leon Hermans
“Stream 2” Network tasks and project roles		
Team learning and “language” ¹	Jaap, Lakshmi, Quan, Leon	Jaap Evers and Lakshmi Charli
Communication and Media	Ruth, Annika, Joydeep, Patricia	Ruth Mwizeere
Educational products and activities	Abebe, Amel, Angeles	Abebe Chukalla
Scientific outputs and activities	Kitaka, Tu, Natasha, Edwin	Nzula Kitaka
Budget development	Anamika, Leon, Wim	Wim Douven
Monitoring and evaluation	Natasha, Ruth, Amel, Leon	Natasha Hazarika

¹ Workshops and (online) meetings to share and develop transformation concepts and participatory approaches

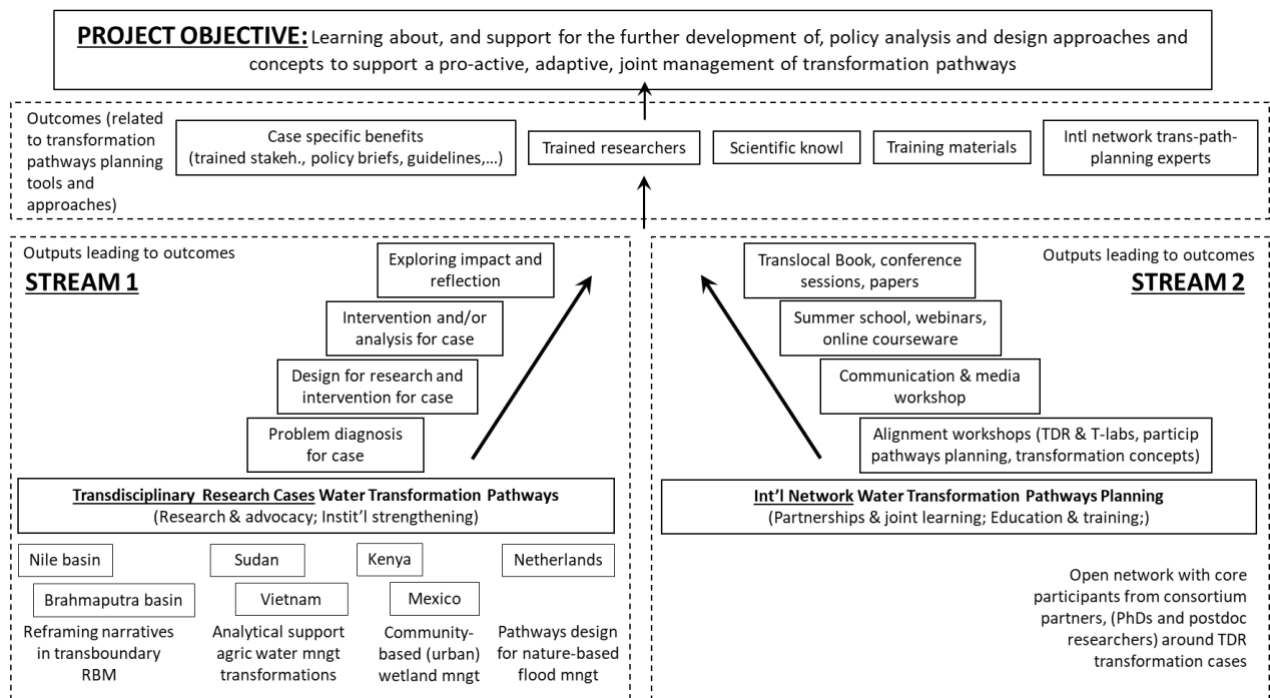
For the WDPP Regional and thematic learning network, project team members will be distributed over the different pre-identified themes and regions, given the cross-thematic and cross-regional composition of project cases. The learning and discussions we hope to have in our project on transformation pathways planning would be interesting to share and contribute to the WDPP learning networks. Also, many project activities will be considered as (semi-)open events to which broader participants can be invited, live or via recorded sessions. This depends a bit on the purpose of these events and the extent to which a more public space can be used to reach the activities’

objectives (especially earlier activities for instance may serve purpose to discuss among team members, or may require a safe and closed space for dialogue).

Monitoring and evaluation

- During the inception phase you will need to revisit your Theory of Change and explicitly identify the *pathways of change* that you aim to study in more depth in your project. The pathways can be very project-specific, yet we also would like you to choose two to four pathways identified at programme level. Also, describe how you will document these pathways. We suggest that, besides measuring where possible in quantitative terms, you also use qualitative methods such as story-telling, diaries and visual methods (e.g. photographs, video clips).
- Explain how did your team find to develop the Theory of Change of your project based on the programme's, and state if you need support for fine tuning it.
- How will you capture the meta-data on project outputs and how do you plan to evaluate the use and relevance of outputs for your target group (e.g. surveys for participants in trainings offered)? We especially welcome outputs produced, owned and used primarily by organizations in low- and middle-income countries and/or marginalized and/or underrepresented individuals within these countries.
- Have you found someone in your team that would like to be the communication point for *Monitoring and Evaluation*? You should find a project member to carry out that task, and we advise you to not select the project coordinator.

We have revisited and further detailed the Theory of Change during the project Inception. The main structure, with two main streams of activities, remained intact. Further consolidation of the more detailed activities is needed and is part of the first project phases. For the cases, for instance, this also will be done based on the initial problem framing activities and early discussion with case stakeholders.



During the Inception workshop, and given also the diversity in transformation case studies, we focused on the lower parts of the Theory of Change, i.e. desired change (broadly), objectives and strategies (activities). The domains of change were planned on our workshop agenda, but were not covered; elaboration of the activities/strategies took more time and was prioritized.

For our project, we see linkages with multiple WDPP programme level impacts. Among those, the following three are especially supported by our project, as currently formulated:

- *Ecological sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture that contributes to securing food production, supporting rural livelihoods and protecting vital ecosystems.*
- *Decisions made and implemented in river basins and delta areas and wetlands through inclusive processes that stimulate collaboration over water and reduces conflicts among actors.*
- *Collaborative initiatives on water research and/or education embrace diversity among partners, nurture plurality in understanding of and engaging with water, and foreground reflexivity in their approaches.*

For capturing meta-data on project outputs, different partners have different (institutional) requirements and practices. For capturing the meta-data as a WDPP project, we would welcome guidelines on formats expected by WDPP, for its programme level reporting.

More detailed information to evaluate use and usefulness of project outputs and activities will be tailored to the activities and case locations; surveys and interviews are likely modalities, probably also more interactive forms via our project website or digital home.

We have identified a sub-team within the project for the aspects of monitoring and evaluation (see table above). Natasha Hazarika (IIT Guwahati) will act as the communication point for this sub-team with the WDPP programme team.

Communication

- **Identify a creative** (Please provide us with a name and contact details of this person)
- **Building a digital home | Medium** (If you have created a Medium page, please paste the link below)
- **Creative Manifesto** (See the policy guide)

We have discussed about communication and media for project results during the Inception workshop. We identified some basic media-strategies, considering parallel channels of scientific in-depth and peer reviewed routes, specialized media (with a first list of regional channels for water and sustainability issues) and mass media. We have also identified a sub-team within the project to further look into the design of an internal communication platform for our project, to collect and share internal materials within the project team and an external medium or website (see Table above).

Within the time available for the inception workshop, and the size of our project team, we have not yet managed to write a two-page communication manifesto. The use of Medium is a new feature that we are willing to explore, to see if this could be an alternative to a project website hosted by IIT Guwahati or the digital home that NBCBN would be designing.

Education

Please describe how you intend to make the products produced under your project freely available and list here the planned development of educational product for which you need support from IHE Delft's Educational Bureau and indicate approximately when.

We would like our educational products, and also our scientific products, to be as openly available as possible. Support from IHE Delft in this regard is very much appreciated, especially if it can be done in collaboration with the various project partner institutes and their open education initiatives.

The boundaries between education and open science within our project are not always fully clear, which also may impact the type of support, and the support channels, to IHE Delft. For instance, also online webinars can be seen as educational products, and IHE Delft platforms have a good reach to attract a global audience, for instance via YouTube channels.

Publications in open access journals are important and partly included in the budget. Depending on the developments in this area of science, and the institutional support policies in the different partner institutes, budget adjustments may later be needed.

Feedback for the programme

Let us know any feedback you have for us on the process, support or anything else you would like to tell us. We are eager to learn from your experience. You can use this space to mention anything that you did not find fitting in any of the boxes above

We appreciate the opportunity to develop our project under WDPP, and the openness of the programme team to support us in our ambitions and be flexible and open for dialogue.

We realize we have a quite large and complicated project design. We are very enthusiastic about it, working as an international network around junior researchers, to learn about different water transformation pathways. This also makes it difficult to detail some planning aspects at the level of each and every case; in part we need the first project phases for this, when PhD and postdoc researchers can start their work with case study stakeholders.

Combined with this internal project design, the policy guide was sometimes overwhelming. In planning our team discussions during the Inception workshop, we therefore haven't managed to cover every aspect in the detail that may have been hoped for by the programme. Also, we have not managed to have dedicated sessions with your experts on for instance Diversity and on Communication within the timeframe available for the Inception phase. We ask for understanding and do think that the main items suggested have been covered, and have helped us in our team to have meaningful and fruitful discussions to kick-start our project.

Our main challenge is likely to be to match our ambitions to our resources; our enthusiasm easily drives towards ambitions that are beyond our feasibility. Balancing enthusiasm and realism therefore is one of the main challenges for all of us in the journey that we have just started together in our project team.