



Wolfram Mauser  
Monika Prasch *Editors*

# Regional Assessment of Global Change Impacts

The Project GLOWA-Danube

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 Springer

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ISBN 978-3-319-16750-3                      ISBN 978-3-319-16751-0 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-16751-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015943584

Springer Cham Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London  
Translated from German

The Work was first published in 2006 by GLOWA-Danube-Projekt (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Department für Geographie, Lehrstuhl für Geographie und geographische Fernerkundung, Luisenstraße 37, 80333 München, Germany) with the following title: 'Global Change Atlas, Einzugsgebiet Obere Donau', ISBN: 978-3-00-026548-8. The Work was also published in electronic version, available at: <http://www.glowa-danube.de/atlas/index.php>.

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Cover illustration: © ASTER GDEM is a product of METI and NASA. ERSDAC (EARTH REMOTE SENSING DATA ANALYSIS CENTER) (2009): The Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) of Japan and the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA): Aster Global Digital Elevation Model (GDEM), available from <http://gdem.ersdac.jspacesystems.or.jp/> (22.9.2014).

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer International Publishing AG Switzerland is part of Springer Science+Business Media ([www.springer.com](http://www.springer.com))

# Preface

The onset of Future Earth marks a new era in global change research and acknowledges that only integrative and transdisciplinary research will allow science to contribute adequately to solving the challenges of global change that humanity is facing in the coming decades (Mauser et al. 2013). Future Earth will heavily rely on codesign through science and society of research and knowledge production, which will allow societies to both form a sustainable future environment and at the same time to adapt to changing global conditions, be it in the field of climate, economy, or environment. Adaptation to these changes will mostly take place on a regional level. Different adaptation options as well as alternative development paths will have to be formulated as scenarios. Their consequences and trade-offs will have to be carefully analyzed and explored in order to identify the most effective, efficient, and appropriate adaptation decisions. This requires a structured dialogue between scientists and regional stakeholders. This FutureEarth mode of operation marks a considerable paradigm shift towards a maturing global change science, which understands itself as science for society.

The new transdisciplinary role of global change science evolved from a number of regional global change projects, which have been carried out during the last decade in order to develop and test a suit of methodologies to integrate the scientific disciplines from natural sciences and humanities into a new whole. The new whole becomes more than its parts and for the first time allows to explore and understand the full range of processes and interactions, which led to rapidly changing environments and societies and which will have to be instrumentalized by societies to develop towards sustainability. At the same time these projects for the first time in the history of global change research motivated their participants to leave their scientific comfort zones and to strongly engage in exploring new, participatory ways to communicate with society and its administrative, economic and political governance structures.

GLOWA-Danube, which started in 2001 and finished in 2011, was among the first of these new projects. It was launched by the German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the Global Change of the Water Cycle (GLOWA) initiative. GLOWA for the first time aimed at systematically exploring integrative

and transdisciplinary scientific approaches to identify decision alternations for regional adaptation to global change. GLOWA purposefully chose water issues for this new kind of projects because water is among the most important, most universal and at the same time most vulnerable natural resources. There is hardly a sector of society which is not affected by change in the water cycle, and water availability and water use will strongly be affected regionally by climate change as well as by changing water demands by society, industry and agriculture.

GLOWA-Danube followed the ambitious goal to for the first time explore in full the interactions between nature and society in the context of global change (climate, demography, economy , etc.) by looking at regional water resources and their management. We chose the Upper Danube basin and its inhabitants as the natural laboratory for the GLOWA-Danube project. It covers the full Danube and its tributaries until it leaves Germany in Passau, has an area of 80,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is the home of 12 Mio. inhabitants, which enjoy one of the largest per capita GDP on the globe. The Upper Danube challenges any simulation of present and future interaction of nature and society because it is spatially, politically, and administratively heterogeneous and complex including the Alps and their forelands as well as five countries and six states. Its water resources are sensitive to climate change because slight temperature changes have large impacts mainly in the Alps.

Integrative, transdisciplinary research in GLOWA-Danube was based on two approaches:

- Firstly to develop and use a new simulation tool, which integrates the relevant natural as well as societal and technical components and their interaction to represent and simulate a man-made water cycle and the related water uses as they are typically found in rich, densely populated watersheds. For this purpose, it couples the latest dynamic process models in hydrology, plant science, snow science, and glaciology with spatially distributed actor models, which simulate the behavior and decisions of human actors like farmers, households, water suppliers, and tourist facilities in an open parallel simulation model. This enables to study in detail the interaction between nature and humans and allows, on the basis of an understanding of actors, choices to better simulate the consequences of today's decisions on future environmental and societal conditions.
- Secondly to explore the transdisciplinary codesign of research and co-creation of knowledge through a close communication process of project scientists and regional stakeholders. It consists of a spiral of steps which include the formulation of scenarios of desirable futures based on the existing knowledge of likely climate change and other influencing factors, simulation of the transient evolution of environment and society in the Upper Danube watershed according to these scenarios, and translation of the simulation results into relevant information, which can be communicated with the stakeholders and which can be used to prepare decisions to adapt to global change. For this latter purpose, the Global Change Atlas of the Upper Danube was developed as a living document, which evolved during the course of GLOWA-Danube.

The GLOWA-Danube Atlas was purposefully published in German, the language of the stakeholders, and is the common, easy to understand by practitioners and stakeholders scientific knowledge base for the dialogue among stakeholders and scientists. It documents purpose, philosophy, architecture, methodologies, scenarios, and results of the project. After 2 years of consolidation, refinement, and further communication with the stakeholders, we decided to translate the Global Change Atlas of the Upper Danube into English and offer it to the growing Future Earth research community as one possible blueprint for successful future global change science for society in their respective regions.

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# Acknowledgements

The editors thank the following ministries and the LMU for funding the project GLOWA-Danube: German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Heinemannstraße 2, 53175 Bonn, Germany, [www.bmbf.de](http://www.bmbf.de); German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Robert-Schumann-Platz 3, 53175 Bonn, Germany, [www.bmu.de](http://www.bmu.de); Bavarian State Ministry of Education, Science and the Arts, Salvatorstraße 2, 80333 Munich, Germany, [www.km.bayern.de](http://www.km.bayern.de); Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1, 80539 Munich, Germany, [www.uni-muenchen.de](http://www.uni-muenchen.de); Ministry of Science, Research and the Art of Baden-Württemberg, Königstraße 46, 70173 Stuttgart, Germany, [www.mwk-baden-wuerttemberg.de](http://www.mwk-baden-wuerttemberg.de)

The provision of data and photos by the referenced institutions and persons is gratefully acknowledged.

Additionally, we want to thank the authors of this book for their cooperation after the project GLOWA-Danube was finished. The graphic design by Vera Falck and the support of Andrea Reiter, Ruth Weidinger, and the student research assistants Leonie Keil, Stephanie Lumnitz, and Magdalena Mittermeier, all from the Department of Geography of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), are gratefully acknowledged.





# Contents

## Part I Introduction

<b>1</b>	<b>GLOWA-Danube</b> .....	<b>3</b>
	Wolfram Mauser, Monika Prasch, Ruth Weidinger, and Sara Stöber	
<b>2</b>	<b>DANUBIA: A Web-Based Modelling and Decision Support System to Investigate Global Change and the Hydrological Cycle in the Upper Danube Basin</b> .....	<b>19</b>
	Rolf Hennicker, Stefan Janisch, Andreas Kraus, and Matthias Ludwig	
<b>3</b>	<b>DeepActor Models in DANUBIA</b> .....	<b>29</b>
	Andreas Ernst, Silke Kuhn, Roland Barthel, Stefan Janisch, Tatjana Krimly, Mario Sax, and Markus Zimmer	
<b>4</b>	<b>Validation of the Hydrological Modelling in DANUBIA</b> .....	<b>37</b>
	Wolfram Mauser	
<b>5</b>	<b>The Stakeholder Dialogue in the Third Project Phase of GLOWA-Danube</b> .....	<b>49</b>
	Hannah Büttner	
<b>6</b>	<b>GLOWA-Danube Results and Key Messages</b> .....	<b>55</b>
	Monika Prasch and Wolfram Mauser	

## Part II Data

<b>7</b>	<b>Digital Terrain Model</b> .....	<b>69</b>
	Anja Colgan and Ralf Ludwig	
<b>8</b>	<b>Soil Textures</b> .....	<b>75</b>
	Markus Muerth and Ralf Ludwig	
<b>9</b>	<b>Land Use and Land Cover</b> .....	<b>83</b>
	Markus Probeck, Anja Colgan, Tatjana Krimly, Marcelo Zárate, and Karl Schneider	

<b>10</b>	<b>Climate Stations</b> .....	91
	Anja Colgan and Ruth Weidinger	
<b>11</b>	<b>Spatial and Temporal Interpolation of the Meteorological Data: Precipitation, Temperature and Radiation</b> .....	99
	Wolfram Mauser and Andrea Reiter	
<b>12</b>	<b>Ice Reservoir</b> .....	109
	Markus Weber, Monika Prasch, Michael Kuhn, Astrid Lambrecht, and Wilfried Hagg	
<b>13</b>	<b>Trends in Temperature and Precipitation</b> .....	117
	Andrea Reiter and Ruth Weidinger	
<b>14</b>	<b>Hydrogeology – A Consistent Basin-Wide Representation of the Major Aquifers in the Upper Danube Basin</b> .....	125
	Roland Barthel, Jürgen Braun, Vlad Rojanschi, and Jens Wolf	
<b>15</b>	<b>Mean Daily Discharge and Discharge Variability</b> .....	133
	Winfried Willems, Georg Kasper, Peter Klotz, Konstantin Stricker, and Astrid Zimmermann	
<b>16</b>	<b>Population</b> .....	139
	Matthias Egerer, Markus Zimmer, and Markus Probeck	
<b>17</b>	<b>Gross Domestic Product</b> .....	147
	Matthias Egerer, Erich Langmantel, and Markus Zimmer	
<b>18</b>	<b>Water Demand in Tourism Facilities</b> .....	153
	Mario Sax, Jürgen Schmude, and Alexander Dingeldey	
<b>19</b>	<b>Agriculture</b> .....	159
	Alexander Wirsig, Tatjana Krimly, Marta Stoll, and Stephan Dabbert	
<b>20</b>	<b>Extraction of Water for Public Drinking Water Supply</b> .....	165
	Roland Barthel, Alejandro Meleg, Darla Nickel, and Alexandar Trifkovic	
<b>21</b>	<b>Topsoil Organic Carbon Content</b> .....	171
	Christian W. Klar, Peter Fiener, and Karl Schneider	
<b>22</b>	<b>Data on Quantity and Quality of Groundwater</b> .....	177
	Thorben Römer, Jan van Heyden, and Roland Barthel	
<b>23</b>	<b>Hydropower Plants</b> .....	185
	Franziska Koch, Andrea Reiter, and Heike Bach	
<b>Part III Models</b>		
<b>24</b>	<b>Groundwater Recharge</b> .....	195
	Wolfram Mauser and Ralf Ludwig	

<b>25</b>	<b>Run-Off Formation</b> .....	201
	Wolfram Mauser and Ralf Ludwig	
<b>26</b>	<b>Groundwater Contour Maps for the Alluvial Aquifers of the Upper Danube Basin</b> .....	207
	Roland Barthel, Vlad Rojanschi, and Jens Wolf	
<b>27</b>	<b>Total Extraction and Total Water Supply per Community</b> .....	215
	Roland Barthel and Darla Nickel	
<b>28</b>	<b>Modelling the Effects of Global Change on Drinking Water Supply: The DeepWaterSupply Decision Model</b> .....	221
	Roland Barthel and Darla Nickel	
<b>29</b>	<b>Surface Water: Discharge Rate and Water Quality</b> .....	229
	Winfried Willems, Georg Kasper, Peter Klotz, Konstantin Stricker, and Astrid Zimmermann	
<b>30</b>	<b>Mean Snow Cover Duration</b> .....	237
	Markus Weber and Michael Kuhn	
<b>31</b>	<b>Future Changes in the Ice Reservoir</b> .....	243
	Markus Weber, Monika Prasch, Michael Kuhn, and Astrid Lambrecht	
<b>32</b>	<b>Precipitation and Temperature</b> .....	251
	Barbara Früh, Volkmar Wirth, Josef Egger, Andreas Pfeiffer, and Janus W. Schipper	
<b>33</b>	<b>Two-Way Coupling the PROMET and MM5 Models</b> .....	261
	Florian Zabel, Wolfram Mauser, and Thomas Marke	
<b>34</b>	<b>Mean Number of Storm Days</b> .....	271
	Boris Thies, Thomas Nauss, Christoph Reudenbach, Jan Cermak, and Jörg Bendix	
<b>35</b>	<b>Energy: Simulation of Hydropower Generation and Reservoir Management</b> .....	279
	Franziska Koch, Andrea Reiter, and Heike Bach	
<b>36</b>	<b>CO<sub>2</sub> Fluxes and Transpiration</b> .....	287
	Victoria I.S. Lenz-Wiedemann, Tim G. Reichenau, Christian W. Klar, and Karl Schneider	
<b>37</b>	<b>Plant Growth and Biomass Production</b> .....	295
	Victoria I.S. Lenz-Wiedemann, Tim G. Reichenau, Christian W. Klar, and Karl Schneider	
<b>38</b>	<b>Nitrate Leaching</b> .....	303
	Tim G. Reichenau, Christian W. Klar, Victoria I.S. Lenz-Wiedemann, Peter Fiener, and Karl Schneider	

<b>39</b>	<b>Agricultural Land Use and Drinking Water Demand</b> .....	311
	Alexander Wirsig, Tatjana Krimly, and Stephan Dabbert	
<b>40</b>	<b>Actor Model for Farmers' Crop Management Decisions: The <i>DeepFarming</i> Model</b> .....	317
	Tatjana Krimly, Josef Apfelbeck, Marco Huigen, and Stephan Dabbert	
<b>41</b>	<b>Water Demand by Private Households and the Public Sector</b> .....	323
	Andreas Ernst, Silke Kuhn, Carsten Schulz, Nina Schwarz, and Roman Seidl	
<b>42</b>	<b>Modelled Domestic Water Demand 2: The <i>DeepHousehold</i> Decision Model</b> .....	331
	Andreas Ernst, Silke Kuhn, and Roman Seidl	
<b>43</b>	<b>Diffusion of Water-Saving Technologies in Private Households: The Innovation Module of <i>DeepHousehold</i></b> .....	339
	Nina Schwarz, Silke Kuhn, Roman Seidl, and Andreas Ernst	
<b>44</b>	<b>Modelling Risk Perception and Indicators of Psychosocial Sustainability in Private Households: The Risk Perception Module in <i>DeepHousehold</i></b> .....	347
	Roman Seidl, Silke Kuhn, Michael Elbers, Andreas Ernst, and Daniel Klemm	
<b>45</b>	<b>Environmental Economy: Industrial Water Abstraction</b> .....	355
	Matthias Egerer and Markus Zimmer	
<b>46</b>	<b>Tourism Research: Water Demand by the Tourism Sector</b> .....	361
	Mario Sax, Jürgen Schmude, and Alexander Dingeldey	
<b>Part IV Scenarios</b>		
<b>47</b>	<b>GLOWA-Danube Scenarios</b> .....	371
	Andreas Ernst, Silke Kuhn, and Wolfram Mauser	
<b>48</b>	<b>The GLOWA-Danube Climate Trends</b> .....	377
	Wolfram Mauser, Thomas Marke, Andrea Reiter, Daniela Jacob, and Swantje Preuschmann	
<b>49</b>	<b>The Statistical Climate Generator</b> .....	397
	Wolfram Mauser	
<b>50</b>	<b>The GLOWA-Danube Climate Variants from the Statistical Climate Generator</b> .....	419
	Wolfram Mauser	
<b>51</b>	<b>Climate Variants of the <i>MM5</i> and <i>REMO</i> Regional Climate Models</b> .....	435
	Thomas Marke, Wolfram Mauser, Andreas Pfeiffer, Günther Zängl, Daniela Jacob, and Swantje Preuschmann	