

# Green Water: Can Rio+20 succeed where others have failed?

Dr Rebecca Bates  
Brunel University

# Overview

- Complex and competing framework of ecological considerations
  - Ecological, humanitarian and economic service
- Return to Rio...
  - Poverty reduction
  - Johannesburg Plan of Implementation
- Green Economy
- Application to water resources and supply
- Green Water?

# Outcomes of Rio +20 for Water

- *The Future We Want*, Paragraphs 119-124
  - Recognise water as being at the core of sustainable development and closely linked to a number of key global challenges.
  - Reaffirm the commitments made in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Declaration to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation and the development of integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans, ensuring sustainable water use.
  - Reaffirm the commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. The right is however to be progressively realised with full respect for national sovereignty.
  - Recognise the key role that ecosystems play in maintaining water quantity and quality and support actions within respective national boundaries to protect and sustainably manage these ecosystems.
  - Underline the need to adopt measures to address floods, droughts and water scarcity and encourages investment in infrastructure
  - Stress the need to adopt measures to significantly reduce water pollution and increase water quality.

# Water and the Green Economy

- What is the Green Economy
  - Objective and pathway towards sustainable development
- *The Future We Want*, paragraph 56
  - 'we consider green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development and that it could provide options for policymaking but should not be a rigid set of rules. We emphasize that it should contribute to eradicating poverty as well as sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare and creating opportunities for employment and decent work for all, while maintaining the healthy functioning of the Earth's ecosystems'.

# Water and the Green Economy cont.

- Definition and objectives
- Understanding the wider implications of the Green Economy
  - Recognition outside Rio +20
  - Symbolically and physically transforming the economy from brown to green
  - UNEP and *Towards a Green Economy*
- Conceptual challenges and relationship with sustainable development...

# Green Water?

- Role of water in the Green Economy
- First, enhanced privatisation
  - Rio+20, Millennium Development Goals, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation
- UNEP estimates that bringing into the Green Economy will require an additional investment of \$191 billion a year until 2030 and \$311 billion per year until 2050
- Existing pressures on watersheds
  - 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report

# Green Water cont.

- Effectiveness of traditional economic measures
- Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)?
  - Not mentioned in the *Future We Want*
  - The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)
    - evaluates 'flows of value to human societies as a result of the state and quality of natural capital'.
    - Reconciling approach
    - The legacy of Rio+20 for water?

# Challenges for Green Water?

- Water services remain natural monopolies
  - Cost will always be at lowest point when there is a single enterprise producing output for market
  - Nature of water infrastructure
- There are no renewable alternatives to water
  - Challenge in transitioning from 'brown' to 'green'
  - Distinction between sustainable energy and water use