

Valuing Rivers

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Rivers are often neglected. They are forgotten in international negotiations, even when they are at the heart of geopolitics. Rivers bear the brunt of climate change – droughts, floods, rising sea levels, cyclones, storms and the disappearance of wetlands. They are often little known by populations that live next to them, who don't understand the services that rivers render to them every day. In general, people are unaware of their responsibility for preserving these common resources of humanity.

The need for a shared vision of rivers in a common sustainable future has led to the establishment of the Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers (IFGR). With an approach rooted in action and multi-disciplinary collaboration, IFGR has been working to preserve rivers in the face of climate change and to promote them as sources of solutions and levers for development. IFGR brings together a strong network of international experts committed to sharing multi-disciplinary expertise in targeted initiatives, especially concerning international deltas such as those of Bengal, Camargue and the Amazon. A recent trip the IFGR made to Bangladesh demonstrated the importance of physical experiences on a river from source to sea, inspiring philosophical reflections and calls for advocacy and cooperation to strengthen the role of rivers in public policy and to promote projects firmly rooted in local areas. IFGR's interest in sharing and disseminating knowledge and building new networks closely aligns with the work of the UNESCO Chair Water, Ports and Historic Cities and the mission of *Blue Papers*.

Volume 3 no. 1 of *Blue Papers* showcases the importance of rivers in all parts of the world, their physicality as carriers of water and transport, the remnants of rivers and their former uses in the ground and underwater, the covering up of rivers and their contemporary uncovering, historic governance and knowledge systems and the need for a culture of great rivers. We need to harmonize knowledge with emotion, spark imagination, stimulate dialogue, provide testimony and inspire concrete solutions that will reconcile us with rivers and the many values associated with them. People of all ages who use and enjoy rivers, professionals working on rivers, academics researching them, and the guardians of rivers of different countries all have a role to play!

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Preface