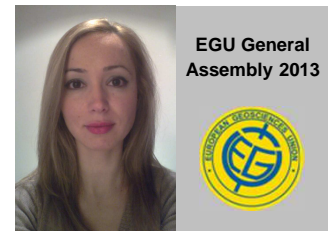


# Assessment of the Effects of Climate Change on the Mobility and Distribution of Metals and Pathogens at the River Basin Scale

M. Stergiadi<sup>1</sup>, T. De Nijs<sup>2</sup>, A. Sterk<sup>2</sup>, M. Van Der Perk<sup>1</sup>, M.F.P. Bierkens<sup>1,3</sup>



Universiteit Utrecht

Corresponding author: m.stergiadi@uu.nl



(1) Department of Physical Geography, Utrecht University, The Netherlands (2) National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), The Netherlands (3) Unit Soil and Groundwater Systems, Deltares, The Netherlands

## 1. BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

Anticipated climate change will most likely affect the mobility and distribution of contaminants, such as metals and pathogens, in soil, groundwater and surface water, ultimately affecting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, as well as public health. For example, temperature-induced changes in soil structure may affect species composition, thereby promoting the transport of toxic substances, such as copper and cadmium, and pathogenic microorganisms. Aim of this project is to assess the effects of climate change on the concentrations and fluxes of metals and pathogens at the catchment scale.

## 2. RIVER BASIN MODEL

A dynamic, spatially distributed River Basin Model that integrates catchment-scale transport models will be developed. The River Basin Model will consist of modules describing the transfers and feedbacks between the environmental compartments soil, groundwater and surface water.

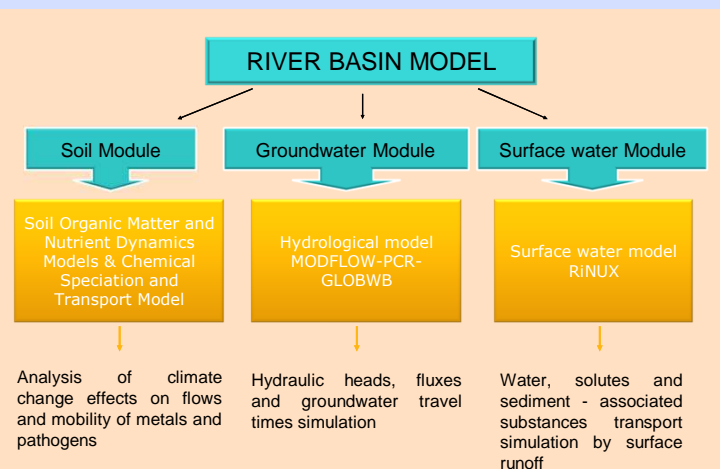


Figure 1: Schematic overview of the River Basin Model and the different environmental compartments

## 3. SOIL MODULE

The *innovative aspect* of this project involves the development of a novel soil module to include the effects of changing soil organic matter content and composition on the speciation and transport pathways of contaminants. For this purpose, a point-scale soil organic matter and nutrient dynamics model will be linked to a chemical speciation and transport model, which allows a quantitative assessment of climate change effects on the mobility of metals and pathogens in various soil types. The results of this model analyses will be used to parameterize a large-scale soil module to be included in the river basin model.

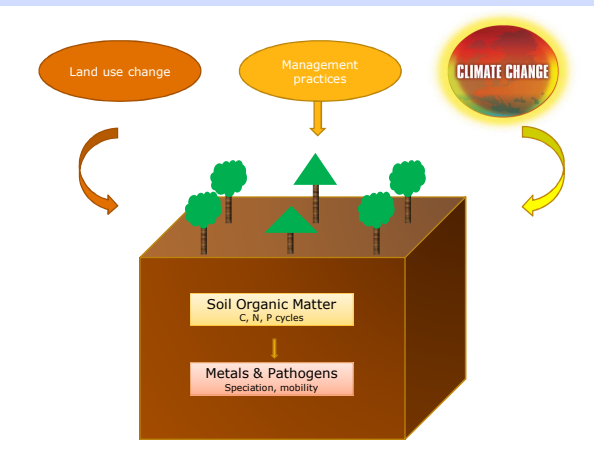


Figure 2: Development of soil module

## 4. MODEL APPLICATION

To assess the impact of climate change and changes in land use on the future distributions of contaminant concentrations in the major exposure pathways to man and ecosystems, a selected number of scenarios addressing climate change, agricultural practices (land use change, land management), current policies and mitigation strategies, will be defined. For each scenario, the River Basin Model will be used to project the probability distributions of contaminant concentrations in soil, groundwater and surface water.

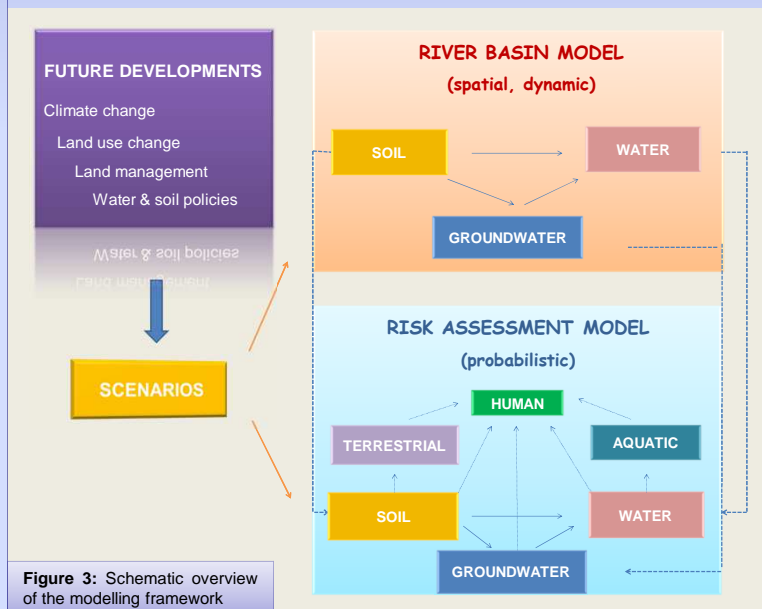


Figure 3: Schematic overview of the modelling framework

## 5. ANTICIPATED RESULTS & OUTLOOK

The River Basin Model will be tested in a moderately-sized river basin in the Netherlands and will feed input to a probabilistic risk assessment model that is being developed in a parallel project. The results of the model will be included in the larger framework of the "Climate Cascades Project" which aims at assessing the impacts of toxic substances and pathogens on man and terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that result from the effect of climate change on soil, groundwater and surface water at the river basin scale.