



## **Can we encourage scientists to work together? The WaterNet example.**

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Disciplinary breakthroughs are often the result of cross-disciplinary cooperation. Probably all scientists would agree that cooperation among research groups with different research focus, different cultures and customs, different frames of mind, different approaches and jargons, is stimulating, broadening one's view, and can sometimes trigger a bolt of lightning that suddenly sheds light on a new perspective. We probably all recognise this. Yet, we also realise that cooperation is difficult. It is difficult to reach out from your safe environment and let other people into your small circle. We may be protective, defensive, cautious, too proud or even envious. There are always many reasons for not working together. In this paper I shall present the WaterNet experience and draw some lessons of a general nature. WaterNet is a network of about 50 universities in Southern Africa which runs a joint master programme in water management, has a joint research fund, organises an annual symposium, and runs a few international research programmes. Which are the success factors of WaterNet and which are the hurdles and pitfalls for setting up such a type of cooperation?