

Socio-hydrology and hydrosocial analysis: towards dialogues across disciplines

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In this paper we review the ways in which water has recently been conceptualized by both natural and social scientists as either hydro-social or socio-hydrological. We do this in order to discuss whether and how they can be compatible, in order to enable dialogue across disciplines that seek to address the ecological and social challenges related to the complex human/water interactions. Through our review we document the emergence of these specific terminologies, identify how these terms – and the conceptualizations they represent – relate to each other, and suggest what opportunities there are for building further interdisciplinary approaches to understanding water and society. Specifically, we review the recent rise in socio-hydrology amongst natural scientists/hydrologists to put this in discussion with a much longer tradition in social sciences of seeing water as both natural and social. We identify what the paradigms are in both conceptualizations in order to assess what their respective focus is, and what they omit. Our purpose is not to judge competing claims. Rather we want to assess the knowledge claims made in both paradigms: what can we learn when we employ these different approaches, what different rationales for action do they suggest, and what scope exists for collaboration. We conclude that there is scope in combining both approaches without a need to antagonistically question their respective fundamental assumptions, and playing to the strengths of each: the rich case study narratives produced by hydrosocial research can be the basis for the conceptual and quantitative modelling of socio-hydrology.