



On the role of cultural, political and economic context in hydrological research

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With this contribution I take my cue from the session description, where it says “Science is performed and influenced by humans, hence it is never free of value, personal interest or societal pressures. The historical context in which scientists work can therefore help to understand the development of the science, its current state and future directions.”

I will present a collection of cases that illustrate how hydrological “facts” are products of particular cultural, political and economic contexts. I will draw from Krueger et al. (2016) and cases I found since. These are stories of certain research questions getting asked but not others, certain methods prevailing, and uncertainties being interpreted selectively – all with profound political consequences.

I will reflect these cases against my own experience to suggest how we as hydrologists may develop research practices that are more aware of their cultural, political and economic influences.

References

Krueger, T., Maynard, C., Carr, G., Bruns, A., Mueller, E. N. and Lane, S. (2016), A transdisciplinary account of water research. *WIREs Water*, 3: 369–389. doi:10.1002/wat2.1132