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The Mediterranean and climate change: An online participatory simulation – Results from the front lines

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Modern, educational simulation/games (s/g) have a rich legacy, stretching back to the 1960s. They are used today for communicating science in educational, environmental or governmental organizations. Other uses are to help groups and organizations conduct research, solve complex problems or make collective decisions.

Over the last two decades, a particularly powerful, but underused, form of s/g has developed, called participatory simulation (PS). It contains (elements of) game, simulation, role-play, experience, human interaction, decision-making, negotiation, engagement, stakeholder, etc. It is often large scale, open ended, goal and results oriented, free form and data driven. Of course, debriefing is a crucial component.

Last summer (2020), the International Oceans-Climate School (IOCS), of the Ocean Open University (OOP), France, planned to organize an in-person summer school with a PS as its capstone event. We then postponed and made it an autumn school. It then became clear that this also was impossible, and so, after some hesitation, we scrambled to turn it into an online PS (OPS).

The theme was *"The Mediterranean and climate change: Impacts, people, action"*. Our overarching goal was to help participants understand the **oceans-climate nexus** and to become better **ocean-climate-literate stakeholders**. The IOCS was an official event of the **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)** of UNESCO, as part of the **UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development**.

The school ran over three days, with the OPS over two days. We searched for a platform that would accommodate the flexibility needed for the OPS; we chose Discord. We had participants originating from Brazil, France, India, Italy, Iran, Spain, Tunisia and the UK; ages ranged from 19 to 60 years. It was a great success. A detailed, online feedback form two weeks after the event collected participants' opinions, including:

- *"It was a wonderful experience.", :I felt very good with all the participants.", "When I*

describe the experience to friends I always say that it was something really useful for my personal and professional growth.”, “It was a very enriching experience for me to meet all these people with different training and knowledge, coming from different countries.”, “Enriching moments, so much more to discover.”, “What a great experience! I felt happy, engaged and surrounded by beautiful minds.”

We will run the event again in the Spring and the late summer or autumn, with different geoscience themes. The success of the October 2020 event raises several research questions, including:

- How do the online and the in-person versions compare?
- What are the advantages and drawbacks of each?
- Which is more effective for what objectives and what results?
- How do the two versions stack up in regard to conducting research on such events?
- What are the implications of OPS for geoliteracy?

Our presentation will describe the event in more detail, offer tentative answers to the above questions, and help you decide if you wish to participate in the next event. Co-authors include both organizers and participants.