



Toward a sustainable education program - Water and Society : A space-time framework for integrated studies.

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In the context of climate change, the European Union and its southern partners are particularly concerned with water resources issues, including droughts, dry-spells, water quality, excess of runoff and extended floods. The coupling of natural and social processes requires a deep understanding of the scaling problems involved in each domain and a clear idea of the spatio-temporal dynamics of interactions between each domain. This challenge calls for interdisciplinary collaborations in the early stage of the design of long-term observation strategies of natural and social processes that integrates spatio-temporal scales.

In May 2011, the International Summer School “Water and Society : A space-time framework for integrated studies” was organized to strengthen interdisciplinary around water issues and in particular, Mediterranean flash-flood.

It brought together hydrologists, meteorologists, climatologists, geographers, sociologists, and politics from academic and operational fields; half of the participants came from Social Sciences. It gathered 10 different countries (Morocco, Hungary, Italia, China, India, USA, UK, Spain, Burkina Faso).

Based on the concepts developed by Holling (2001) and illustrated by Ruin et al. (2008) and Creutin et al. (2009) for Mediterranean flash-flood issues, the school proposed to explore how time and space frameworks can be developed and applied in interdisciplinary research and education that aims to investigate water and society studies.

Based on lectures focusing on central concepts and theories, the participants worked in small interdisciplinary groups. In each groups, the exercise aimed first at listening and understanding each other’s expertise in order to build a common virtual research question weaving water and society’s problems. Then, the groups were asked to approach their research question through the lens of the space-time conceptual framework in order to better apprehend the concept and to test its limits and strengths. Several challenges had to be handled, mainly because of disciplines and language barriers.

This presentation will give an overview of 1/ how the program was built to reach the objectives and 2/ the main issues of the projects proposed to the students. It will be open to new perspectives dealing with how and why to maintain and strengthen interdisciplinary networks for integrated studies, in particular, dealing with water issues in Mediterranean.

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