P12 / Questioning the turn of water-related risk policies towards nature

Topic : SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND POLICY

Chair : Joana GUERRIN (INRAE, Strasbourg, France)

Second Chair : Sara Fernandez (INRAE)

Third Chair : Anna Serra-Llobet (University of California, Berkeley)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In many countries, flood or drought risks have traditionally been managed with structural works, such as levees (dikes) or dams. However, from the late 1990s onwards, the negative impacts of hydraulic infrastructures on aquatic ecosystems and the false sense of security associated to these structures were publicized and brought to the political agenda in different countries. This situation led to substantial changes in water-related risk policy goals and instruments (Guerrin and Bouleau 2014). In Europe this process culminated with the 2000 EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the 2007 EU Floods Directive that entails the willingness to value and preserve floodplains according not only to economic justifications but also to ecological goals.

In a context of an increasing politization of environmental hazards and changes, international institutions and scientists have recently developed a new concept: “Nature-based Solutions (NbS)”, which promises to strengthen this environmental turn by simultaneously reducing water related-risk, conserving biodiversity, and adapting to climate change (Cohen-Shacham et al. 2016, p. 5). NbS embeds measures such as river restoration, the conversion from impervious to pervious surfaces, or the use of green roofs.

While global or international organizations have widely embraced the concept of NbS, some scholars also point its fuzziness and its Eurocentric focus (Bridgewater et al. 2018, Escobedo et al. 2019). A growing literature aims at developing and operationalizing the concept worldwide (Eggermont et al. 2015, Keesstra et al. 2018, Nesshöver et al. 2017, among others). National governments and the EU are now investing in NbS projects and actions, with the NbS label, are also starting to be implemented in very different local settings (EC 2015, p. 5, Keesstra et al. 2018). Not much is known about the dynamics and characteristics of such “territorialization” process apart from scattered case studies. Yet, scholars have pointed out the importance of national/local settings in how policy mechanisms such as the WFD are being implemented nationally (Liefferink et al. 2011). This is why putting in perspective different regions or countries, with their specific institutional, geographic and socio-political characteristics, and the manner they adopt, adapt and reframe such concepts and territorialize them appears to be particularly relevant. The actors implementing NbS usually have different and often conflicting goals, values, representations, sources of legitimacy and power. To assess whether, in practice, NbS keeps their promises to reconciliate risk protection with environmental stakes, we thus need to go beyond an evaluation of their “efficiency” or their “innovative nature”.

This panel will specifically address the territorialization of NbS by exploring the following topics:

1. Do nature-based solutions illustrate a new framing of water-related risks problems? What are the constructions of the problems these new solutions are supposed to tackle?

2. What are the governance and the socio-political effects of NbS implementation in practice? Has the concept of NbS, within water-related risks policies, enabled more participative and decentralized making of public policies?

3. To what extent the capacity of NbS in reconciliating risk protection with environmental concerns depend on State characteristics and policy-making traditions?

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel is focusing on the environmental turn of water-related risk policies, illustrated by the development of “Nature-based Solutions (NbS)”. NbS is a concept developed by international institutions and scientists aiming at strengthening this environmental turn by simultaneously reducing water related-risk, conserving biodiversity, and adapting to climate change (Cohen-Shacham et al. 2016, p. 5). NbS embeds measures such as river restoration, the conversion from impervious to pervious surfaces, or the use of green roofs.

A growing literature aims at developing and operationalizing NbS concept worldwide. However, to assess

whether, in practice, NbS keeps their promises to reconciliate risk protection with environmental stakes, we need to go beyond an evaluation of its “efficiency” or its “innovative nature”. Moreover, critical social science studies are underdeveloped regarding NbS, apart from scattered case studies analysis. The aim of the panel is to gather policy analysis scholars developing research on the way NbS are territorialized in practice, at multiple scales and in different policy-contexts. This panel will specifically address the territorialization of NbS by exploring the following topics:

1. Do nature-based solutions illustrate a new framing of water-related risks problems? What are the constructions of the problems these new solutions are supposed to tackle?

2. What are the governance and the socio-political effects of NbS implementation in practice? Has the concept of NbS, within water-related risks policies, enabled more participative and decentralized making of public policies?

3. To what extent the capacity of NbS in reconciliating risk protection with environmental concerns depend on State characteristics and policy-making traditions?

We welcome proposals from varied national contexts, deploying theoretically-informed analysis based on original empirical research. In addition to the objective of the paper presented, proposals will have to clarify time and space research contexts and focus on one of the three axes.

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Session 1 Implementing NbS in French policies: promises and limits - PM

Tuesday, July 6th 16:30 to 18:30 (006)

(Virtual) Implementation of NbS in the French context : from synergies to inegalities ?

Mathilde GRALEPOIS (University of Tours)

(Virtual) The Conservatoire du littoral experimentation on NbS : from a national public policy to a concrete territorial implementation

Myriam Cécile Anne Hilbert (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

Nature Based Solutions from practitioners' perspective: a paradigm shift. The example of bioengineering techniques for riverbank protection in urban context

Clémence MOREAU (CNRS)

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Session 2A contested turn towards nature in urban contexts - AM

Wednesday, July 7th 10:00 to 12:00 (006)

(Virtual) Eco-DRR gets political - contests over green cities

Jeroen Warner (Wageningen University)

Can “Nature-based Solutions” concept (NBS) help reduce inequalities in flood risk management policies? The case of La Bouillie, Blois (France)

Jérôme Cardinal (Université François Rabelais de Tours)

Grey solutions versus NbS: which infrastructures to prevent pollution in urban water bathing sites?

Gabrielle Bouleau (INRAE)

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Session 3Institutionnalizing the turn towards nature: policy changes or path dependency? PM

Thursday, July 8th 16:30 to 18:30 (006)

“Sustainable safety” for the Rhône plain in Switzerland? Political ecology of an apparent “nature-based solution”

Alexis Metzger (University of Lausanne)

Nature Based Solutions or Green Infrastructures? The case of the Maresme region

Andrea Noblega (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

(Virtual) The role of territorial decentralization and governance in the formation of NbS public policies: Payments for Water Ecosystem Services in Colombia

Leszly Torres (Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia)

Diego Zamudio Arenas (Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia)

Albaluz Ramos Franco (Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia)

Pedro Sanchez (Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia)