

Announcement: international, interdisciplinary conference
Environmental dynamics, public policies and local practices: how to deal with interactions?

Toulouse, 4-7 June 2013
First call for communications

Environmental crisis, global warming, sixth extinction, natural and technological hazards and disasters, collapse theory ... the notion of environment refers more and more to the increasing feeling of a global threat, with degrading interactions between society and nature. However, from this global but often reductive vision, research in natural and social sciences reveals the diversity and the complexity of relationships between societies and their environment. Literature shows that these relations, far from being fixed, evolve and should be considered at different scales and timelines; it also suggests discrepancies between processes inducing environmental changes and social perceptions of these changes.

The overall objective of this conference is to take stock of the way the links between environmental dynamics, public policies and local practices are worked out and constantly renewed: how do public policies and local practices have an impact on environmental dynamics? In return, how do environmental dynamics affect human environment-related perceptions, practices and policies? Environmental dynamics are here defined as all environmental processes and changes, regardless of their geographical scale, from global climate change to a field plot clearing. These dynamics are to be considered preferentially for recent periods (annual, decadal scales or centuries).

As these relationships between society and nature are in continual transformation, we consider that they deserve an in-depth analysis through different perspectives: resources, constraints, risks, landscapes, heritage, vulnerability, resilience, co-evolution of ecosystems and socio-systems will be the bedrock of this analysis. By this way, we tend to put into perspective the current and expected changes from both biophysical and social points of view.

The challenge is to bring together researchers from various disciplines in order to start building together methods and theoretical frameworks about interactions between environmental dynamics, public policies and local practices. The meeting wishes to reach mutual understanding and collective learning about the evolution of the "eco-socio-system". Hopefully, it will also questions stereotypes on this issue, especially the traditional south and north opposition.

Beyond a purely scientific dimension, the conference also aims to promote a better understanding between scientists and environmental practitioners. As stakeholders both in terms of environmental management and discourse construction regarding environmental dynamics, practitioners are invited to share their experiences and concepts on the matter. From an operational perspective, the stake of such processes is to draw the attention of public authorities on the unintended impacts of public policies on environmental dynamics but also on the gap that may exist between these dynamics and the discourses that seek to explain them.

THE SYMPOSIUM'S FIVE BIG OBJECTIVES:

1) Analyze the types of interactions between practices, politics and the environment

Depending on disciplines, the approach to society / nature relations through the triptych composed of practices / politics / environmental dynamics differs because the attention is generally turned to

only one of the triptych's elements or to unilateral relations between these elements. As the intention is to highlight interactions, we thus await here that **at least** two of the poles of the triptych be mobilized and that the following interactions be particularly approached:

- Local practices and environmental dynamics: how societies' actions influence the construction, the functioning or the evolution of the environment and of landscapes (ex: wetland-draining practices modify the functioning of hydrosystems), and how this evolution can in return influence and modify local resource exploitation practices, risk management, environment and landscape conservation (ex: climate change creates adaptation processes with regard to farmers' practices in Southern countries).

- Public policies and environmental dynamics: more or less directly (dedicated policies vs non-dedicated policies), and in a more or less expected manner, political choices towards standardization, regulation and framing of human interventions on the environment can modify its functioning (ex: support for irrigated agriculture in Europe engendered an increased pressure on hydrosystems); certain environmental modifications can of course in turn prompt new rules and new regulations (ex: the XIX century floods aroused reforestation policies in the European mountains).

- Environmental dynamics, local practices and public policies: these are in fact the three elements of the triptych with close interaction. Environmental amenities just as environmental risks can arouse certain management or conservation practices, which can put the resource in danger or generate conflicts and/or risks, threats which decision makers then try to regulate, by imposing new practices which can in turn generate a new environment and landscapes.

We shall keep in mind that these interactions must be considered in a context of "environmental crisis", affecting environmental dynamics but also the social game and stakeholders' strategies with regard to the environment. Consequently, these interactions evolve regarding resource exploitation, risk management or conservation of the environment and of landscapes. Finally, these interactions cannot be approached independently of the geopolitics, the culture and the political project of a society, and thus of its representations of the environment and of landscapes, of their patrimonial dimension, of the resources and the risks which they propose.

2) Understand how society / nature interactions can be approached by various disciplines

We bring into question the way the various disciplines conceive and study environmental dynamics as a result of nature / society interactions. Which problems are identified? Which theoretical approaches? Which methodologies? Are they the same all around the world? What does studying the interactions between practices, politics and the environment imply in term of interdisciplinarity? Do these various theoretical and methodological approaches favour the meeting between disciplines? This raises the question of the relevance and the modalities of the meeting of various disciplines around the same questioning.

3) Confront the views of researchers, practitioners and administrators

We suggest to investigate the diversity of actors' views, all considered legitimate, on the interactions between practices, politics and the environment. Objectives, ends or even ideologies, but also temporal and financial constraints, peculiar evaluation criteria and stakes are among the numerous potential sources of cleavage in observation or action. Particular attention will be granted to studies describing and clarifying the differences and the convergences of perceptions, analytical frames and steps for action between actors. The objectives here are to analyze the diversity of views on a problem, to strive for a mutual understanding between actors and to underline the synergy between researchers, practitioners and administrators' work and their necessary collaboration. We will also consider the pertinence of action research.

4) Comprehend the interweaving of spatial scales in the study of nature / society interactions

In the triptych studied here, one can perceive that the apprehension scales on interactions are not the same. The point is to identify at which geographical scales these interactions occur and which are the relevant scales to analyze them. Particular attention will be granted to the interweaving and the stacking of scales as well as in the adequacy between the institutional scales and the scales of the studied natural and social phenomena. In what measure does the increase in the number of scales (of natural processes, management policies, appropriation by societies, etc.) lead to create new geographical entities (environments, territories, landscapes)?

The diversity of spatial and temporal scales of the studied phenomena underlines their complexity. Which scales should one privilege for analysis? Is the study of interactions on a local scale relevant to understand the processes on smaller scales? Conversely, is the global scale relevant to understand society / nature interactions on a local scale? Can we and must we increase generalization in the analysis of these interactions? Is it relevant to reproduce on a local scale regulation devices or practices which have been validated on a smaller, national or regional scale?

5) Analyze the contributions of history and of long-term in the understanding of the current socio-environmental processes

Setting environmental interactions back in a historical perspective is necessary at several levels of research (theoretical or action oriented), particularly if one admits that the contemporary environment is a co-construction and the product of a co-evolution of biophysical and social systems. Estimating the contemporary “state” of the environment and understanding its dysfunctions, modelling its functioning, building evolutionary scenarios and elaborating environmental foresight, defining management or preservation policies: all these objectives build on the knowledge of past ecological trajectories and in particular of their timeframes. The historical and retrospective dimension, far from being the prerogative of historical sciences, underpins a series of concepts which have become fundamental in the scientific approach of the environment: co-evolution, co-construction, environmental crisis, adaptation of social systems and/or of natural systems, resilience and vulnerability of these systems. To what extent does a historical perspective throw light on the current dynamics and interactions between policies, practices and environment?

An interdisciplinary call for researchers and practitioners

This international conference wishes to be interdisciplinary and opened to researchers and practitioners. Scientists from biophysics and natural sciences may benefit from these interactions by better understanding the ways public policies and local practices impact environmental dynamics. For scholars from social sciences, the conference will provide new insights on the ways environmental dynamics, whatever their origin - natural or anthropogenic - affect perceptions and practices and generate public policies. Finally, practitioners will present practical case studies, highlighting the convergences and divergences with the scientific discourse.

Our specific objectives are to:

- Characterize the various types of interactions between policies, practices and environment at different timelines and scales;
- Analyze the diversity of scientific approaches adopted to study socio-environmental issues;
- Identify theoretical and methodological nexus where researchers from different disciplines can meet;
- Initiate debates among participants and identify the drivers and barriers of potential collaboration between researchers, and between researchers and practitioners.

To do so, each participant will have to adapt his/her discourse (oral and written) for it to be understandable by actors from other fields of study.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

- Mario BEDARD, Geographer, Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales (CRISES), Department of Geography, Québec University of Montréal, Montréal, Canada
 - Eric CHAUVET, Hydrobiologist, Ecolab, Paul Sabatier University, Toulouse, France
 - Robert CHENORKIAN, Prehistorian, DAS of the Ecology and Environment Institute of the CNRS, in charge of « Interactions Hommes-milieux », responsible for the « Observatoires Hommes-Milieux », France
 - Pascale DE ROBERT, Anthropologist, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, France
 - Jean-Nicolas HAAS, Paleoecologist, University of Innsbruck, Institute of Botany, Research Group Palynology and Archaeobotany, Autriche
 - Corinne LARRUE, Professor in Land use planning and urbanism, UMR CITERES CNRS, Université François Rabelais, Tours, France
 - Luis Daniel LLAMBI, Ecologist, Instituto de Ciencias Ambientales y Ecológicas, Universidad de Los Andes, Mérida, Venezuela
 - Sekhar MUDDU, Department of Civil Engineering, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Inde
 - Javier RAMIREZ JUAREZ, Rural sociologist, Colegio de Postgraduados, Puebla, Mexique
 - Allaoua SAADI, Geographer, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brésil
 - Denis SALLES, Sociologist, IRSTEA, Unité Aménités et Dynamiques des Espaces Ruraux, Bordeaux, France
 - Joëlle SMADJA, Geographer, Director of the Center of Himalayan studies, UPR 299 CNRS, Villejuif, France
 - François WALTER, Historian, University of Genève, Switzerland
- And the members of the organization committee.

ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

GEODE research center (CNRS) Research team on “Environment and landscape dynamics: current issues and stakes”:

- Alexandra ANGELIAUME-DESCAMPS, University of Toulouse II – le Mirail
- Jean-Marc ANTOINE, University of Toulouse II – le Mirail
- Philippe BERINGUIER, University of Toulouse II – le Mirail
- Frédérique BLOT, Jean-François Champollion University, Albi
- Gérard BRIANE, University of Toulouse II – le Mirail
- Didier GALOP, GEODE directory, CNRS
- Florence GERET, Jean-François Champollion University, Albi
- Sylvie GUILLERME, CNRS
- Eric MAIRE, CNRS
- Jean-Paul METAILIE, CNRS
- Anne PELTIER, University of Toulouse II – le Mirail
- Mehdi SAQALLI, CNRS
- Léa SEBASTIEN, University of Toulouse II – le Mirail

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Abstract submission - The abstract has to precise the theoretical approach, the methodology, the type of interaction studied and the main results. The abstract will be no longer than 2 pages and submitted in 2 languages: French (obligatory) and English or Spanish. Three lecturers will evaluate the abstract: one specialist of the discipline, a lecturer of another discipline and a member of the organization committee. The template is now on the congress website: <http://w3.geode.univ-tlse2.fr/interactions2013>

Please send the abstracts to this address: interactions2013@gmail.com

Posters - The proposals will be evaluated in the same way as the oral contributions. A template for the posters will be available online after the abstracts selection.

Languages - The congress will be held in three languages: French, English and Spanish. Each participant can choose his/her language, but the PowerPoint and the oral presentation must be in different languages, one of them being English.

Field trip - We propose a field trip on the site of the Society-Environment Observatory in the Pyrénées, Ariège, Haut-Videssos, on Friday 7th June (<http://w3.ohmpyr.univ-tlse2.fr/>). This investigation system of the Institute for Ecology and Environment of the CNRS is based on a strong collaboration between economical, political and institutional stakeholders and investigators. This field trip aims at observing concretely the way environmental dynamics, public policies and local practices interact at local scale.

Warning: the number of places is limited, please register early.

Publication - A selection of promising articles will be held, in order to publish them in a special issue of a journal or in a scientific book. Precisions on the type of publication will soon be communicated.

Registration fees - Registration fees include the compilation of abstracts and the lunches.

Participants: 60€

Students: 20€

Field trip: 30€

Important dates

June 2012: first call for communications

30th September 2012: deadline for the reception of the abstracts (oral communications and posters).

Mi-November 2012: answer to the authors

15 April 2013: deadline for the reception of the articles for peer-review.

3 May 2013: deadline for registration.

Contacts

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