



Community building in hydrology: need or luxury?

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Science is an enterprise driven by a shared interest in enquiry for broadly defined goals (why rivers flow? or the like). A scientific community is defined by its goals. When these are perceived as important for Society (or when the scientific community manages to convey their importance to Society), comradeship develops (it is nicer to work along with friends than on disperse problems that none cares for); lobbying and funding improve and, what is most important, science becomes more effective.

This is not occurring in Hydrology nowadays. The reasons are diverse: (1) too many scientific societies, (2) hydrologists tend to work on local problems with methodologies that are diverse, (3) ground and surface water hydrology are worlds apart, not only methodologically, (4) dilettantism plagues the field (transition or destiny?, as Klemes said). The result is that hydrology appears to be loosing the pace of scientific development and left behind. Yet, a number of grand questions are still to be answered. Certainly, water availability and quality are still among the foremost problems of humankind, and “Global Hydrology” is certainly the problems that Society perceives as important. This is paradoxical (certain passivity in a field that is viewed as important) and suggests that things must change. I argue that community building ranks high among them.

The question is how to achieve it. I discuss several. Among short term initiatives, I would mention the need for leadership in defining broadly accepted common goals (Unesco-Water Sciences Division?, too stake-holder driven?), the need for closer collaboration among scientific societies. Among long term initiatives, I would mention the need for Workshops “alla Gordon”, for common activities at EGU (parties), for working groups involving scientific leaders, or for more joint GW-SW sessions.