

Innovative Tools and Strategies to Conciliate Floodplain Restoration Projects and Spatial Planning in France: the “over-Flooding Easement”

Marie Fournier, Adèle Debray and Mathieu Bonnefond (France)

Key words: Land management; Spatial planning; flood risk management; floodplains restoration; governance

SUMMARY

In France, flood management policies have strongly evolved since the 1990s. Flood mitigation has become a key strategy in order to contribute to the diversification and sustainability of flood risk management policies (Larrue et al., 2016).

Flood mitigation measures aim at reducing the likelihood and magnitude of flooding and complement flood defenses. They are being put in place through actions that accommodate (rather than resist) water, such as natural flood management or adapted housing (Fournier et al., 2016). Among those actions, more and more French river management institutions launch and implement floodplain restoration and water retention projects. Like in most Western European countries, it is now taken for granted in France that flood management requires “making space” for water by increasing retention capacity of floodplains (Warner et al., 2013). However, floodplain restoration still proves to be a societal challenge (Moss, Monstadt, 2008) in many European countries.

In this context, our presentation focuses on a specific legal tool – the over-flooding easement (“servitude de sur-inondation”) – created in France in 2003 in order to facilitate the implementation of floodplain restoration and water retention projects. Our research shows that more and more river and flood management institutions choose to use this public utility easement in order to control land uses and activities in the floodplains and avoid land acquisition. However, this legal tool may have important consequences for local land uses and economic activities. We use the case of several projects on the Oudon river basin (Western France, (Mayenne/Maine-et-Loire)) and describe how river managers have succeeded, via various agreements and this "over-flooding" easement, in building synergies between their own objectives (the restoration of floodplains and water retention areas) and local farming activities. Eventually, we point out the advantages and limits of such procedure.

Innovative Tools and Strategies to Conciliate Floodplain Restoration Projects and Spatial Planning in France: the “over-Flooding Easement” (10731)

Marie Fournier, Adèle Debray and Mathieu Bonnefond (France)

FIG Working Week 2020

Smart surveyors for land and water management

Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 10–14 May 2020

This presentation is mainly based on some results of the FARMaine project (“Pour et Sur le Développement Régional” (PSDR4 Grand Ouest) Research Programme (www.psdrgo.org)). Via an extensive literature review, semi-structured interviews and participant observation, this project analyzes the consequences of environmental public policies on agricultural land and practices.

References

Fournier, M., C. Larrue, M. Alexander, D. Hegger, M. Bakker, M. Pettersson, A. Crabbé, H. Mees, and A. Chorynski. 2016. Flood risk mitigation in Europe: how far away are we from the aspired forms of adaptive governance? *Ecology and Society* 21(4):49. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-08991-210449>

Larrue, C., S. Bruzzone, L. Lévy, M. Gralepois, T. Schellenberger, J.B. Trémorin, M. Fournier, C. Manson and T. Thuillier. 2016. Analysing and evaluating flood risk governance in France: from state policy to local strategies. Tours, France: STAR-FLOOD Consortium.

Moss, T., J. Monstadt. 2008. Restoring Floodplains in Europe. Policy Contexts and Project Experiences, IWA Publishing.

Innovative Tools and Strategies to Conciliate Floodplain Restoration Projects and Spatial Planning in France: the “over-Flooding Easement” (10731)

Marie Fournier, Adèle Debray and Mathieu Bonnefond (France)

FIG Working Week 2020

Smart surveyors for land and water management

Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 10–14 May 2020