L. UBERTINI

HYDROLOGICAL SCIENCES Italian research activity (1991-1994) report to IAHS

FOUR YEARS OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY

The scientific activity of the Italian chapter of IAHS during the just concluded quadriennium has been characterised by the boost of the well established National Research Group for the Prevention of Hydro-Geological Hazards (GNDCI) and of the National Research Programs of the Ministry of Scientific Research and Technology (MURST).

The GNDCI Group is sponsored by the National Research Council (CNR), the Ministry of Scientific Research and Technology, the Ministry of Public Works and by the Civil Protection Department. The four general lines in which the activity of the Group is organised relate to the most important aspects of Hydrology tackled with appropriate approaches depending on the specific goal: surface and subsurface flow and transport of both water and contaminants, forecasting and prevention of extreme events and their mitigation through zoning and intervention strategies.

At least two of the MURST 40% Research Programs can be considered in the area of the Hydrology. The first of them, Fundamental Hydrological Processes, co-ordinated by Prof. R. Rosso of the Polytechnic of Milan, is essentially devoted to the analysis of the interaction between vegetation, soil and the atmosphere, of the precipitation processes and of the mechanism of hydrodynamic dispersion. The second one, Transport Processes in Water Bodies, co-ordinated by Prof. U. Maione of the Polytechnic of Milan, is mostly focused on diffusion and dispersion phenomena.

Furthermore, it must be stressed the activity of the section *Hydrology* of the National Group of Hydraulics (GNI), co-ordinated by Prof. P. Versace of the IRPI-CNR of Cosenza. In the last report of this section (Sept. '94), among other things, programs of all courses activated in the area of Hydrology are reported as well as a list of Italian Ph.D. thesis concerning Hydrology. Finally, Hydrology plays an important role in the activity of the Italian Section of *Commission Internationale du Génie Rural* (CIGR), co-ordinated by Prof. A. Santini of the University of Naples, that has contributed to the organisation of the XII World Congress in Milan.

Many other international conferences and short advanced schools in the general field of hydrology have been organised by the various Italian research institutions. It is worth noting the activity of Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, in Venice, co-ordinated by Prof. A. Rinaldo, of the University of Padua, and the one of the Water Resources Documentation Centre (WARREDOC), in Perugia, directed by Prof. F. Siccardi, of the University of Genoa. The most recent ones are listed later on.

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In the framework of the above outlined research programs, a large number of papers and scientific reports have been produced and published in national and international journals and conference proceedings. A non exhaustive list of them, as taken from GNI and GNDCI activity reports and restricted to international journals and conferences, is presented below, subdivided according to the topics which name the IAHS International Commissions.

ATMOSPHERE-SOIL-VEGETATION RELATIONS

The research activity on the complex relations between the soil, the vegetation and the atmosphere has recently assumed new perspectives. Together with the development and implementation of advanced study devoted to the modelling of the soil-vegetation system response to specific atmospheric fluxes, such as rainfall and energy in the various forms, more attention has been also focused on the active role of the soil-vegetation system in modifying its own forcing. In particular, a series of investigations have been initiated on the possible existence of a relevant feedback between the soil moisture and the precipitation able to induce persistent anomalies in continental climates. In particular, it is found that a significant correlation exists between the soil moisture state and the precipitation rate in subsequent times, which may be explained considering the active role of the soil hydrology in controlling the partitioning of the surface fluxes (sensible and latent heat) and hence the whole atmospheric dynamics.

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GROUNDWATER

Contributions have been developed with regard to the problem of density-dependent transport of salt in unconfined coastal aquifers. In such a context an unconditional stable numerical method has been proposed that allows to evaluate the effects of works, e.g. cut-off walls, on seawater intrusion phenomena.

For hydrologic application a simple and sufficiently accurate approach is needed which can represent on a continuous basis the successive processes of infiltration, redistribution of soil water in the no-rainfall period, and ponding and infiltration into the resulting very wet profile. Then of great interest are the relatively simple analytical/conceptual models for rainfall infiltration during complex storms that have been presented based on profile extension with shape similarity.

Three-dimensional numerical simulations concern the analysis of the significant land sinking in Rayenna caused by extensive groundwater withdraw as well as gas production from a number

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of deep reservoirs.

Numerical analysis of dispersion of passive solutes in two-dimensional heterogeneous porous formations as well as numerical solution of the contaminant transport equation in groundwater have been performed.

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REMOTE SENSING AND DATA TRANSMISSION

Due to the relevance of flash flood phenomena and the subsequent demand for the improvement of the commonly available flood forecasting systems, the application of remote sensing techniques for the measurement of precipitation has been a central issue in the recent research activities. A large effort has been devoted to the solution of several specific problems in the field of radar meteorology, such as the correction of the orographic influence and the interpretation of radar imagery through the stochastic modelling of the rainfall field. An even larger effort has been devoted to the study and testing of new algorithms for the rainfall field and cloud characteristics retrieval from space-born passive sensors acting in various bands, such as microwave, visible and infra-red, and on their integrated use, together with ground based information, in real-time flood forecasting systems. Finally, the possibility of using such

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remote sensor for short-term rainfall forecasting has been analysed and tested on specific case studies about hazardous convective complexes occurred over the Mediterranean region. Specific algorithms of cloud pattern recognition and tracking have been developed, having as main input the Meteosat imagery in both the infrared and visible bands.

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SURFACE WATER

The central issue in the Italian research activity in the hydrological field is represented by the forecasting and prevention of hydrological extremes and their control. Many specific topics have been addressed inside this broad area, also related to remote sensing technologies. The ones related to surface water dynamics may be subdivided into three main branches:

- statistical approaches for the evaluation of the hydrological risk, including zoning strategies and regionalizations of the statistical analysis of floods and rainfall extremes;
- development of hydrological flood forecasting models, both on stochastic and on physical basis through the use of the distributed representation of the basin response;
- analysis of specific hydrological physical processes related to the flood formation and propagation, such as rainfall dynamics in hilly regions, infiltration processes in heterogeneous soils, structure of natural river networks.

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WATER QUALITY

Prediction of transport of reactive solutes as well as simulation of dispersion in heterogeneous porous media is strictly related to the analysis of water quality and contributions to the solution of these problems may be found also in the section Groundwater. One of the links with aquifer analysis is represented by the drawing of the vulnerability maps. The effects of control works in rivers, and the definition of a proper value of the minimum discharge for the preservation of the aquatic species are also examined in some of the following papers.

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