



Case River 21

Workshop Sustainability in Higher Education

Overview

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 - Analysis
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Short history

- Initiated in 1999 (pioneer)
- Collaboration of French, Dutch and Belgian universities
- Organised by the Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development (IMDO) at UAntwerpen
- Received EU funding until 2007
- Continued without funding and 3 remaining partners
- Current partners: University of Lille (Prof. Masson), Ghent University (Prof. Troch), University of Antwerp (Prof. Meire & Prof. Van Damme
- Student backgrounds: Ma Environmental science, Adv Ma Techology for Integrated Water Management, Ma Geography, Ba Civil Engineering

Objectives

- RIVER21 - envisioning the future of the world's river basins in the 21st century
- Intensive course with the River Scheldt as study case
- **Future-oriented, international and interdisciplinary**
- **Integration** of different disciplinary perspectives
- Overcome **barriers of languages and cultures**
- **System analysis and strategic thinking to develop sustainable solutions for water management**



Practical approach

- 2 weeks in trans-boundary river basin of the Scheldt
- interdisciplinary and international groups
- Phase 1:
 - Getting acquainted
 - Excursions source to mouth
 - Lectures from stakeholders (critical questions!)
 - Identify management issues & contrasting viewpoints



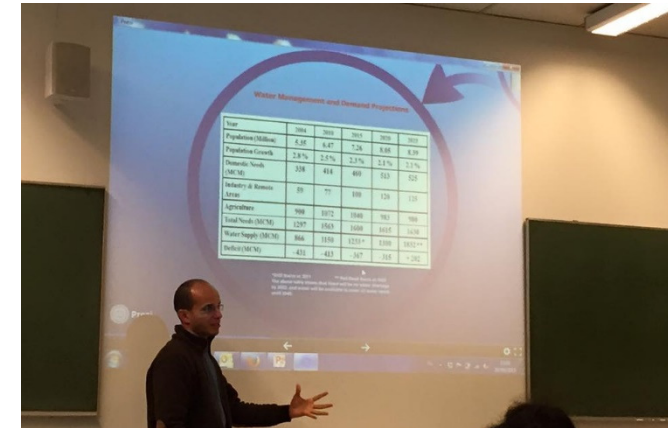
Practical approach

- Phase 2:
 - System analysis (e.g. DPSIR)
 - Integrated, well-thought solutions
 - Win-win-win's
 - Bridge gap between disciplines and nationalities
 - Negotiate shared understanding
 - Vision building



Practical approach

- Phase 3:
 - Students present vision on a desirable future
 - Integrated solutions for different users/stakeholders
 - Considering the physical environment, socio-economic aspects and institutional systems
 - Stakeholders are invited (communities of practice, feed forward)
- **Develop trans-disciplinary language**

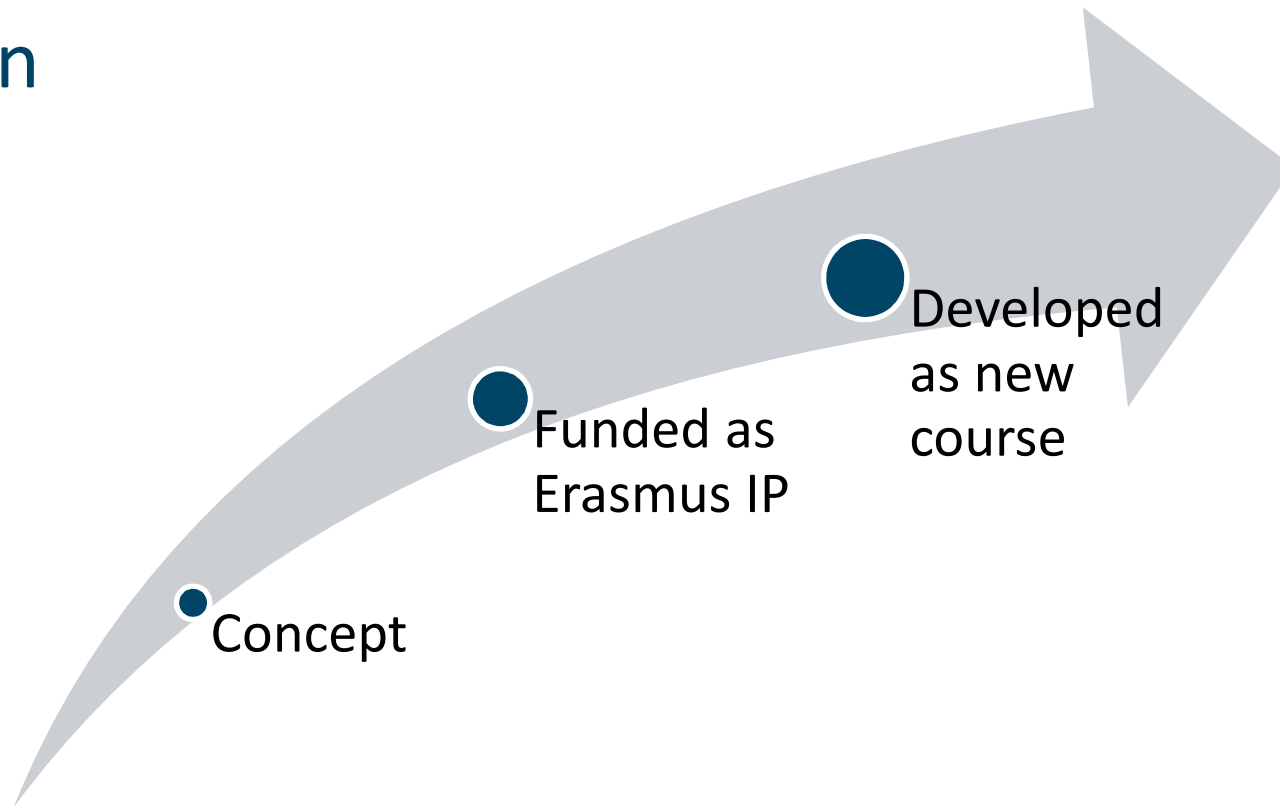


Course development: Analysis

- EU WFD 2000:
management plans
at basin scale +
integrated approach
 - Chair Integrated
Management Prof.
Meire
 - Research network:
key persons F, B NL
- Idea for an innovative interdisciplinary course about IWM, explore novel teaching methods.



Course development: Design



- EU subsidy for interuniversity cooperation provides the impulse
- IMDO offers administrative support such that UAntwerpen can coordinate the project

Course development: Development

- Didactical methods:
 - Pioneer course: learning by doing
 - Starting point: system thinking in IWM
 - Yearly evaluation: SWOT (improve interdisciplinary aspects, field excursions, group assignment)
 - Gradually evolved into the course that exists today
- Skills of lecturers:
 - Long and broad experience – not for starters
 - Experience with interdisciplinary research/ sectors
 - Rely on a diverse network of stakeholders
 - No professionalization traject existed: long-term coaching by senior staff members

Course development: Implementation

- Interdisciplinary skills of River 21
- Systems thinking:

Students learn that the river is a water system with various functions (eg. shipping, recreation, ESS). They are confronted with management plans at different scales. They learn to see the the river basin as an integrated system.

- Ethical thinking:

The course makes students aware of the underlying values and standards of policy visions and management practices. Students learn to make conscious choices in developing their strategy for a sustainable management plan.



- Anticipatory functioning:

This competence is an essential element of the concept of the course. Students have to develop a future-oriented vision for sustainable management based on real data, predictive models (e.g. the consequence of climate change).

- Strategic functioning:

Students have to think about strategic choices and change strategies to realise the different phases of the interventions they propose.

- Interpersonal competence:

Students work in international interdisciplinary groups and learn together and from each other. They improve their communication skills, learn to discuss and negotiate, defend and support viewpoints, and collaborate with mutual respect.

Course development: Evaluation - pitfalls

- Only 3 partners remaining
- Drop in student numbers
- Loss of financial support in 2007 (cost 5000-6000€)
- Not incorporated into curriculum (BaMa)
- Key persons have a new function – no longer involved
- Change in the organisation of involved educational programmes
- Difficulty of Faculty boundaries

