



## CREATION

December 2010

## SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

More than a century and a half of human pressures on the Rhône river (*e.g.*, dykes, breakwaters, bank protection, hydroelectric facilities) altering the ecological potential.

## DISRUPTING EVENT

The 2003 flood and signature of Rhône Masterplan in 2004 to modify the management practices of the river.

## KEY TOPICS

- Geo-historical trajectory of the river and ruptures
- Territorial applications of sustainable development
- Functioning of the fluvial socio-ecosystem
- Environmental risks (floods, contaminants, water resources)
- Restoration and renaturation of aquatic and riparian environments
- Experimentation and application of innovative scientific tools



## TERRITORY

The Rhone Valley OHM corresponds with the riverscape that extends from Geneva to the Mediterranean, including the main channel and all surrounding water bodies and riparian areas, some of which are prone to flooding. The study area is subject to the influence of numerous alterations all along the river course. These are the result of two key factors: construction of the navigable channel (1840-1910) and the installation of hydroelectric facilities (1948-1986). These determine the dynamics of the contemporary landscape, and the distribution of human activities. A particular type of landscape, characterised by a by-passed section of the Rhône, a canal and all the associated facilities, is a repeated territorial pattern at each hydroelectric facility. These repetitions allow geographical comparisons and help to identify the causes of change.



## SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

The river corridor is not only an economic and touristic area, a transport infrastructure, and a source of renewable energy, it is also a natural environment. The different uses, exploitation of its resources and the wider relationship between humans and this environment cause tension between stake-holders and produce choices regarding organisation of the landscape. The immediate consequence of the flood of 2003 was the signing of the Rhone Masterplan by the French state and key river managers in 2004. This interregional agreement constitutes a major event; it is now a matter of reconciling the different expectations while achieving “sustainable development”. The OHM proposes studying this new period to provide knowledge to fuel the public debate. The OHM will therefore focus on the dynamics of water flow, sediment and pollutants in the Rhône corridor and the coastal delta to highlight the effect of the constructions, and also of the management practices on the shape of the river and the offshore bar in addition to their impact on society and the environment. The OHM will also analyse the environmental benefits arising from restoration activities, the development of social representations and the role of the actors.

## CONTACTS

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