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Title: Flood policy in Spain: Continuities and changes during the last three decades (1983-2013)

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**Abstract** (500 words max):

Flood episodes mutate and change obeying to both the operation of a highly dynamic physical environment and also a highly dynamic social system. The principle of “hydraulic intensification” by which flood control works are left with the main task of avoiding flooding, appears to have reached its limits. In contrast alternatives emphasizing the concept of “living with floods” are gaining momentum and nonstructural actions (land use planning, flood warning and emergency measures, public awareness, insurance, etc.) become the backbone of integrated flood management. The assessment of national policies towards this goal may be a useful exercise for correcting errors and designing actions more attuned to current views not only on floods but on the whole of the fluvial environment.

In Spain, flood policy has undergone remarkable changes during the last three decades. After trend also found in other developed countries and even in most developing countries, deaths have diminished but people affected and especially economic losses have increased quite dramatically. These trends indicate that policies emphasizing flood control works and the removal of precarious buildings in dangerous flood plains have somehow succeeded in limiting the number of victims but that, for a variety of reasons including above all the accumulation of wealth in flood prone areas, have failed in reversing the trend towards increasing losses. One key question in assessing the successes and failures of flood policies remains therefore whether increasing economic losses are truly “manageable” or, on the contrary, must be seen in the light of the overall costs and benefits of floodplain development. Our objective in this paper is to assess the main changes regarding flood policy in Spain for the period 1983-2013. We first document the main flood episodes occurred in the country since 1980. Second, we focus on the processes that have influenced in the mounting exposure to floods and particularly on the intense urbanization of the Mediterranean coast during the 1990s and 2000s up to the crisis that began in 2008. Third, we shift our attention to the central theme of the paper, that is, the implementation and operation of specific flood policies both structural and nonstructural. In this case we highlight especially the

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development of flood warning and emergency actions (after the creation of the Spanish Civil Defense service in 1982) as well as all the normative arsenal from both the central government but also by the European Union and the Autonomous Communities (regions) regarding land use planning in flood prone areas. Finally, we offer an overall assessment of management actions pointing at partial successes but also failures that indicate the still missing integrated view in flood management.