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Reply to Reviewers' comments on **Determinants of modelling choices for 1-D free-surface flow and erosion issues in hydrology: a review** by Bruno Cheviron and Roger Moussa.

This document details our responses to Reviewer#1 and #2. The line numbers noted **LXXX-YYY** refer to the change-tracking version of the revised manuscript. The new version of the manuscript has been uploaded separately.

## Response to Reviewer #1

### General Comment

Overall, I liked reading this critical review of existing models that can be used for the coupled modeling of water flow and sediment transport in hydrology. I'm not a big fan of review articles in general, but in this case – provided that review articles are allowed by the journal – I express appreciation for the work and limit myself to specific comments about the manuscript. The paper is clear and well written and the review of the methods presented (at least to my knowledge) is quite complete. The English usage is correct, and the presentation of good quality. I have only a few minor comments about the manuscript:

Response (R): We thank Reviewer #1 for his positive evaluation and encouragements. We totally agree with his comments and will introduce responses in the revised version as shown below.

- I see that while the "flow" parts are discussed based on specific equations, the "sediment transport" sections are a bit more qualitative, and there are no equations there. I'm wondering if this is a deliberate choice of the authors and if they could comment a bit on this choice, maybe even in the manuscript;

R: This was indeed a deliberate choice, searching for the determinants of modelling strategies in the refinement of the flow and erosion models, then in flow typologies, then in the dimensionless numbers used.

Regarding erosion, the default/starting hypothesis was that the complexity of erosion models roughly tended to match that of the flow models to which they were associated (Section 2). However, the search for determinants of erosion modelling goes through several other stages, as announced now in Section 2.1.2. An explanation will be added **L168-175**.

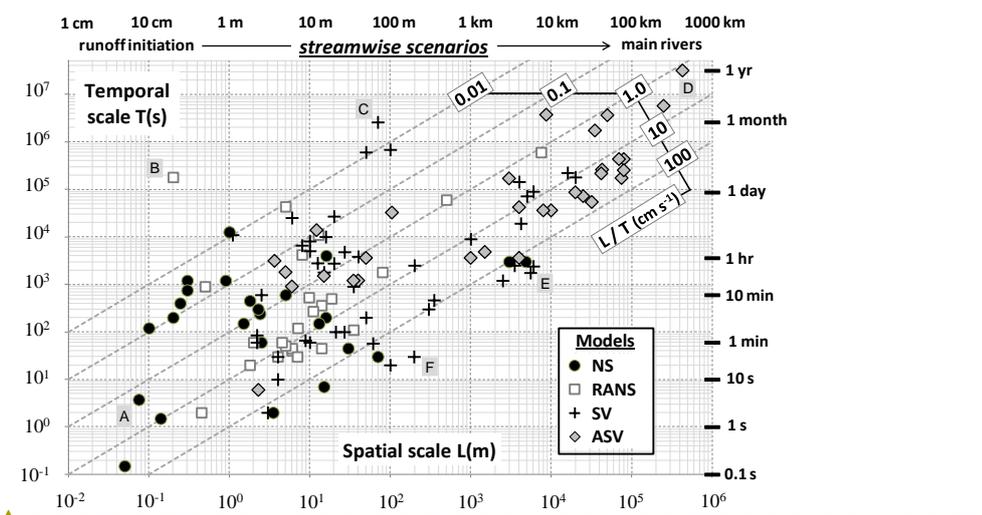
*"On the one hand, this advocates the examination of erosion issues from the angle of decreasing refinements of the "flow and erosion" models seen as a whole (e.g. expecting the most complicated erosion processes to be out of reach of the simplest combined models). On the other hand, there might be a certain disconnection between the refinement of the flow model and that of the chosen friction and erosion models, so the determinants of modelling choices should also be sought elsewhere: in flow typologies dictated by friction and flow retardation processes but also in "erosion types", seen through a dimensionless descriptor (Section 3)."*

- Most of the paper's figures are quite dense, and I suggest to comment on these plots more broadly to guide the reader across them;

R: We agree. To do so, we will focus on a few "textbook cases", i.e. 6 cases now explicitly referred to in Fig.2, 3, 6a and 7a, shown by letters A to F, detailed in the new Table 1 and in

the associated paragraph added in the corpus L507-523. The legends of the cited figures have been slightly modified to mention these textbook cases.

The new Fig.2 (L464) is hereunder and only the last sentence of its legend has been modified to mention the A to F sketches.



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Figure 2 – How increasing (L, T) spatiotemporal scales of the flow domain tend to be associated with decreasing complexity in the choice of flow models, sorted here into four levels of refinement: Navier-Stokes (NS), Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes (RANS), Saint-Venant (SV) or Approximations to Saint-Venant (ASV). A transverse analysis involves forming L/T ratios, searching for clues to model selection according to these "system evolution velocities" or governed by flow typologies that would exhibit specific L/T ratios. This figure was assembled from information available in the studies cited in Appendix A, selecting six textbook cases (sketches A to F, Table 1) for illustration.

The new Table 1 is the following.

Case	Context	Authors	Model refinement	Spatiotemporal scales					Flow typology <sup>‡</sup>	Dimensionless numbers <sup>§</sup>					
				L (m)	T (s)	H (m)	L/T (m s <sup>-1</sup> )	H/L <sup>†</sup> (-)		T*	Re	Fr	S (%)	Λ <sub>z</sub>	θ
A	Film flow	Charpin & Myers (2005)	NS	0.075	3.75	0.003	0.02	0.04	O	5	300	0.11	10	8.0	-
B	Laminar dynamics	Charru et al. (2004)	RANS	0.2	1.8 10 <sup>5</sup>	0.007	1.1 10 <sup>-5</sup>	0.035	O	6428	50	0.02	<0.01	12.1	0.14
C	Pool-riffles	Rathburn & Wohl (2003)	SV	70	2.6 10 <sup>6</sup>	0.47	3.5 10 <sup>-3</sup>	6.7 10 <sup>-3</sup>	B	7.8 10 <sup>3</sup>	7.1 10 <sup>3</sup>	0.69	1.1	5108	34.1
D	Amazon River	Trigg et al. (2009)	ASV	4.3 10 <sup>7</sup>	3.15 10 <sup>6</sup>	10	1.4 10 <sup>-3</sup>	2.3 10 <sup>-3</sup>	F	58.5	8 10 <sup>7</sup>	0.05	<0.01	6600	-
E	Step-pools	Grant et al. (1990)	SV	5530	1755	0.87	3.15	1.5 10 <sup>-4</sup>	Hg	1.0	2.7 10 <sup>6</sup>	1.03	4.5	1.25	-
F	Step-pools	Chin (1999)	SV	197.25	30	0.50	6.58	0.025	Hg	1.21	4.0 10 <sup>3</sup>	3.58	6.25	1.22	-

<sup>†</sup> See section 3.1.2 - H/L is the fineness ratio of the flow

<sup>‡</sup> See Section 3.2 - O: Overland, Hg: High-gradient, B: Bedforms, F: Fluvial

<sup>§</sup> See Section 3.3 - T\*: dimensionless period, Re: Reynolds number, Fr: Froude number, S: slope, Λ<sub>z</sub> inundation ratio, θ Shields number

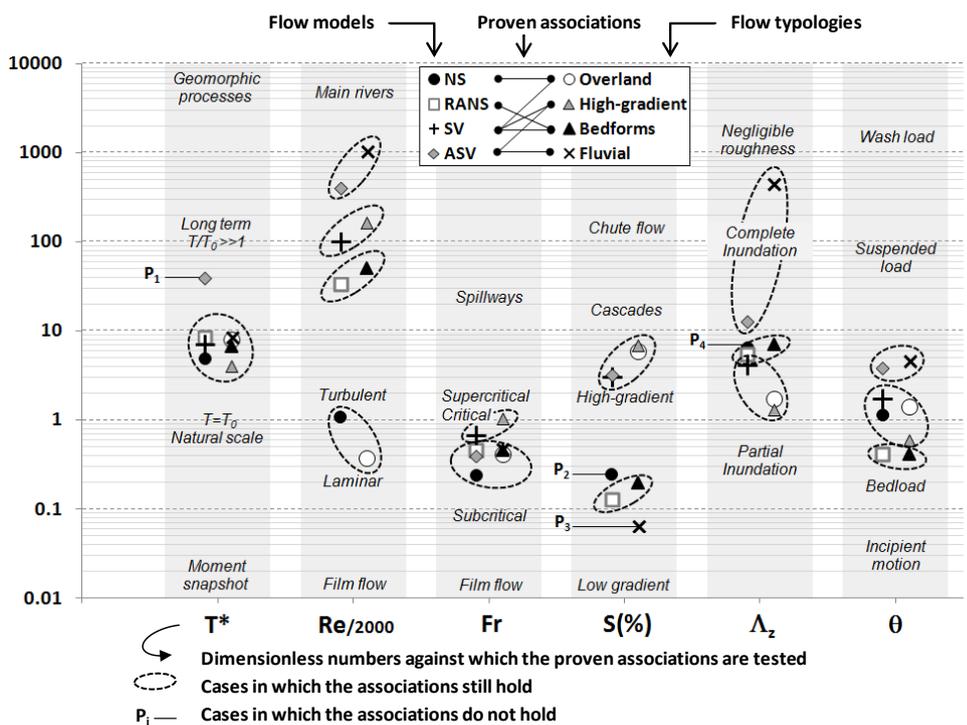
Table 1 - Six textbook cases representing an approximate envelope of all the tested cases in the L-T plane of Fig.2, where L is the spatial scale (length of the flow domain) and T the temporal scale (duration of the process studied). Spatiotemporal scales are the determinants of modelling choices discussed in Section 3.1. The additional influence of flow typology and dimensionless numbers are discussed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

The added paragraph is:

"To take a few examples and guide the reader through the arguments and the figures of this paper, Table 1 gathers the information available for the six textbook cases outlined by sketches A to F in Fig.2. The selected studies represent a wide variety of cases (drawing an approximate envelop of cases in the L-T plane of Fig.2) followed in the forthcoming stages of the analysis and associated figures in Section 3.1.2 (determinants of modelling choices in the L-H plane, Fig.3), Section 3.2 (determinants sought in flow typology, Fig.6a and 7a) and Section 3.3 (determinants sought in the values of dimensionless numbers attached to the flow)." (L507-513)

- In particular, the last figure of the paper is the most interesting result of the entire manuscript, and I suggest the authors to expand the description/comment on this very interesting result. I do not think the interpretation of this plot is trivial at all, so I believe its significance should be better emphasized in the paper text.

R: We agree. However, instead adding more elements in the text, we opted for some modifications of the old Fig.9 (now Fig.10, L865) to make it more self-explanatory, keeping its legend unchanged.



I do not have other specific comments, as the paper seems to be very accurate. The Figures are of good quality, referencing is appropriate and the discussion is clear and concise. Therefore, I congratulate the authors for the overall quality of the manuscript.

R: Thank you.

## Response to Reviewer #2

The paper presents an interesting attempt to draw links between different modelling approaches and to find appropriate time and length scales for different types of models. The approach adopted in the paper intends to be a general approach considering very different types of flows, from runoff to flows in large rivers.

R: We thank Reviewer #2 for his positive comments. We totally agree with his comments, and in the revised version we will introduce responses to all points raised by Reviewer #2 as shown below.

However, it must be stressed that this generalization still remains in the field of hydrology, with a point of view that is not as general as it could be. In particular, the Navier-Stokes (NS) equations are mentioned, but without being considered in their general fluid mechanics framework. So, the NS model is presented as the most general one, which is certainly the case, but turbulence is not discussed. However, considering that the flow velocity is the sum of a mean velocity and a fluctuating component, the NS equations can be solved to resolve as many as possible of the turbulence scales in DNS type simulations, also in flows with significant water depths. These DNS simulations are not discussed here, and NS models always appear in the “runoff” range of applications, which is quite limiting. Of course, if one remembers that the general review concerns hydrological modelling, then it becomes acceptable. But if this is the intention of the authors, then it should be stated much more clearly in the objectives of the paper.

R: The paper is indeed turned towards applications in the field of hydraulics and hydrology. The word "hydrology" was mentioned in the title for disambiguation, especially for readers' specialists in fluid mechanics who would expect the usual analytical framework. This "hydrological" option will be recalled for clarity, in one word or two, at several places in the introductory parts of the manuscript (abstract [L21](#), introduction [L85](#) and [L142-143](#)).

However, high-precision hydraulics (for example) requires the NS models and may involve various (turbulence) scales and flow structures. We have thus followed the recommendation to mention the possible context-dependent strategies (DNS, LES, RANS) to solve these equations, which hopefully restore a bit more genericity. An additional comment will be added ([L196-205](#)).

*“There are many turbulence models (e.g. DNS-Direct Numerical Simulations, LES-Large Eddy Simulations and RANS-Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes) suitable for free-surface flow modelling (Katopodes & Bradford 1999). Direct Numerical Simulations explicitly resolve all turbulence scales at the cost of more than  $Re^3$  calculations (Härtel 1996) while Large Eddy Simulations (Smagorinsky 1963, Leonard 1974) filter out the smallest scales and resolve only the larger ones. The RANS equations (Smith & McLean 1977, Rödi 1988) do not resolve any scale but the stress terms used for their closure have proven useful for the modelling of near-bed turbulent patterns (see next subsection). The general trend is that improvements in efficiency of the algorithms have approximately kept pace with exponential improvements in computer power over the past 50 years (Moore 1965, Mavriplis 1998, Koomey et al. 2010) which tends to push the limitations of DNS and LES further away.”*

In a similar way, it then appears quite strange to read the word “turbulence” only when RANS models are discussed.

R: The term will be added [L159](#), Section 2.1.1: "(RANS: Reynolds 1895, for turbulent flows)"

Indeed, RANS models were developed because performing DNS simulations to resolve all turbulence scales is impossible in practice due to excessive computational cost. Current research tends to push this limitation of NS still further away because of increasing available computational power using e.g. parallel computing. This is also an issue that deserves to be discussed.

R: These points will be mentioned [L196-200](#).

*"There are many turbulence models (e.g. DNS-Direct Numerical Simulations, LES-Large Eddy Simulations and RANS-Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes) suitable for free-surface flow modelling (Katopodes & Bradford 1999). Direct Numerical Simulations explicitly resolve all turbulence scales at the cost of more than  $Re^3$  calculations (Härtel 1996) while Large Eddy Simulations (Smagorinsky 1963, Leonard 1974) filter out the smallest scales and resolve only the larger ones."*

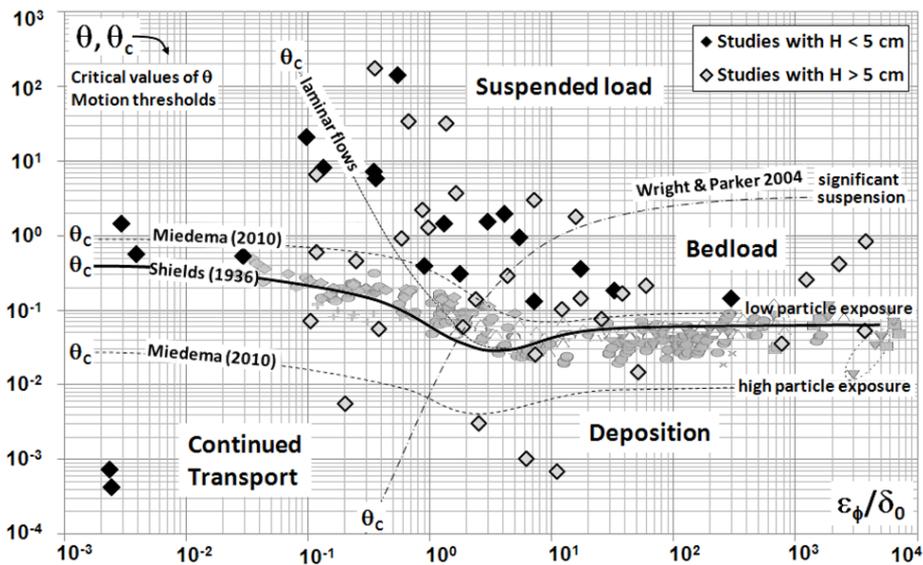
On the way erosion processes are handled, there can also be some debate. The references used by the authors are certainly pertinent in the field. However, the attempt of classifying the different approaches for erosion and grain movement at the same level as the NS, RANS, SV and ASV models is questionable. The distinction is not so clear, and a different classification, not directly linked to the flow models, but rather to the type of grain movement considered would maybe have been more appropriate.

R: We agree that erosion issues are not fully addressed with such a "parallel" strategy in terms of decreasing model refinements, which only provides a trend. Section 2.1.2 will be modified to clarify this point [\(L168-175\)](#) and to indicate that complementary indications on the determinants of modelling choices regarding erosion will be found in Section 3.

*"or at the scale of the erodible bed asperities. On the one hand, this advocates the examination of erosion issues from the angle of decreasing refinements of the "flow and erosion" models seen as a whole (e.g. expecting the most complicated erosion processes to be out of reach of the simplest combined models). On the other hand, there might be a certain disconnection between the refinement of the flow model and that of the chosen friction and erosion models, so the determinants of modelling choices should also be sought elsewhere: in flow typologies dictated by friction and flow retardation processes but also in "erosion types", seen through a dimensionless descriptor (Section 3)."*

These new lines [\(L168-175\)](#) mention a dimensionless descriptor for erosion (which will be the Shields number) which refers to phenomenologies that are not directly related to the NS, RANS, SV or ASV level, but rather to friction, bedforms and flow retardation processes as "proxys" for particle pick-up. What we intend to do is to introduce a new figure that shows a generalized Shields diagram. This would first offer an alternative to the reasoning in terms of refinement levels and second explicitly refer to the different erosion-transportation-deposition modes. This new Fig.9 comes at the end of Section 3.3.1 and is introduced by modifications in the text [L826-834](#).

*" This number seems appropriate for most erosion issues because it has been widely applied and debated in the literature (Coleman 1967, Ikeda 1982, Wiberg & Smith 1987, Zanke 2003, Lamb et al. 2008) and also because of its numerous possible adaptations (Neill 1968, Ouriemi et al. 2007, Miedema 2010) to various flow typologies and non-uniform or poorly-known bed conditions. An impressive review on the use of the Shields number to determine incipient motion conditions, over eight decades of experimental studies, may be found in Buffington & Montgomery (1997). Finally, Fig.9 provides a generalized Shields diagram that includes motion threshold criteria under the effects of high or low particle exposure (Miedema 2010) or for laminar flows, also indicating the conditions of significant suspension (Wright & Parker 2004)."*



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Figure 9 - Generalized dimensionless Shields diagram that summarizes the conditions and regimes of sediment transport or deposition, from the relative values of the Shields parameter ( $\theta$ ) and incipient motion criterion ( $\theta_c$ ). The X-axis bears the values of the ratio of particle size ( $\epsilon_\phi$ ) on the depth of the laminar sublayer ( $\delta_0$ ). The diamonds refer to the studies cited in Appendix A that deal with erosion issues: black diamonds for studies in which flow depth is  $H < 5$  cm, grey diamonds otherwise. Data in the background show the critical  $\theta_c$  values reported in the wide Buffington & Montgomery (1993) review of incipient motion conditions for varied flow regimes, particle forms and exposures.

In particular, the authors mention that the SV framework offers a wide field for innovative research about sediment transport, which is certainly the case. But in these recent researches, many different types of sediment transport models are considered, depending also on the necessary level of simplification of the reality that is required. Indeed, the detailed composition of the soli to be eroded is not always known, or it is not possible to include that level of detail in the representation. So it is necessary to resort to averaging concepts, such as a representative grain diameter, then some factors to account for the non-uniformity of the grain-size distribution.

R: This is now explicitly mentioned in the responses to the previous comments.

The concentration of sediment in the flow could also be discussed: debris flows or mud flows are not handled in the same way as clear-water flows with sediment transport, and this distinction does not really appear here.

R: We fully agree again and your request incites us to reintroduce several elements that we had previously discarded from our working versions (as the Shields diagram) in an attempt to make the manuscript shorter.

In the discussion paper, we only mentioned hyperconcentrated flows and stratification (i.e. density) effects for sediment laden flows, not really addressing the effect of flow density (water+sediments mixture) on modelling options.

As far as we know, the trend is to use higher-level models when the water-sediment couplings become stronger. Again, the SV level allows many adaptations and strategies, but we feel there was a lack regarding the applications of the NS and RANS to dense, debris or avalanche flows, for example. A few lines on the subject were already present in Sections 2.2.2 and 2.4.2 but we will add some more literature elements in Section 2.2.2. (L216-220)

“Such couplings may be sorted by increasing sediment loads, from dispersed multiphase flows (Parker & Coleman 1986, Davies et al. 1997) to density currents (Parker et al. 1986), hyperconcentrated flows (Mulder & Alexander 2001) and up to debris flows (e.g. Bouchut et al. 2003, Bouchut & Westdickenberg 2004), the latter derived as mathematical generalizations of the well-known Savage & Hütter (1989, 1991) avalanche models over explicit, pronounced topographies.”

Minor comments and detailed suggestions for improvement will be submitted later as an attached file.

R: Thank you.

However, it must be stressed that this generalization still remains in the field of hydrology, with a point of view that is not as general as it could be.

R: Let us return to this phrase in the second comment of Reviewer#2 which pushed us to reconsider the conclusion of the paper, thus to formulate its concluding message in a quite different way. First, we split the conclusion in two and the previously existing part becomes Section 4.1 "Outcomes of this review" (L880). Second, the added part is Section 4.2 "Research challenges in hydrology and philosophy of modelling" (L957-1021) including a new Fig.11 that summarizes what has been done and what should be done in complement. Figure 11 finds itself at the tilting point between Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

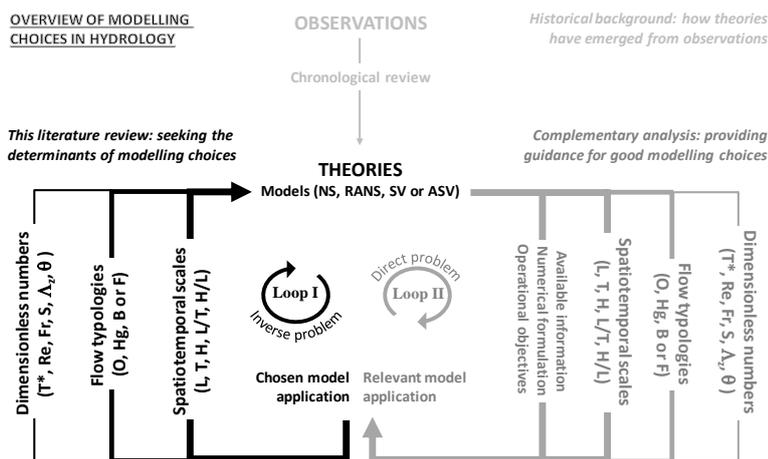


Figure 11 – This figure provides a simplified overview of the available modelling choices in hydrology, in three distinct colours associated with specific research purposes or disciplines, showing the position of the present review relative to the others. The pale grey section aims at understanding how the available flow models have emerged from observations and early formulations of the flow equations, focusing on their conditions of validity i.e. the successive hypotheses made during their derivation. The black section recalls the procedure followed in this review paper (Loop I, "inverse problem"). Literature sources are processed through a procedure that analyses how the spatiotemporal scales (spatial scale L, time scale T, flow depth H, L/T and H/L ratios), then flow typology (Overland O, High-gradient Hg, Bedforms B or Fluvial F) and dimensionless numbers (dimensionless period  $T^*$ , Reynolds number  $Re$ , Froude number  $Fr$ , bed slope S, inundation ratio  $\square_z$ , Shields parameter  $\square$ ) determine the choice of a flow model (Navier-Stokes NS, Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes RANS, Saint-Venant SV or approximations ASV). Suggested in medium grey on the right are the scope and principles of future research challenges that would address the "what should be done?" (Loop II, "direct problem") question in echo to the current "what has been done?" concern (Loop I).

On the one hand, the added section 4.2 discusses pending challenges and possible approaches quite specific to the fields of hydrology and hydraulics. On the other hand, it reintroduces very generic concepts and decision rules (hence the title "philosophy of modelling") in suggesting to select the approaches that respect the principle of parsimony.

*"This review has sought the determinants of modelling choices in hydrology (Figure 11, Loop I) from the basis provided by literature sources, without any intention to provide recommendations. However, for most practical applications, the starting point is the definition of a scope and the endpoint is the evaluation of the objective function to evaluate the success or the failure of the chosen modelling strategy. A question thus arises on how to guide the modeller in the choice of an adequate model, in function of given, approximately known spatiotemporal scales, flow typology and dimensionless numbers (Figure 11, Loop II). According to the principle of parsimony, modellers should seek the simplest modelling strategy capable of (i) a realistic representation of the physical processes, (ii) matching the performances of more complex models and (iii) providing the right answers for the right reasons.*

- (i) Throughout the last decades, an important change of the scope of free-surface flow modelling applications has taken place, with subsequent changes in the objective functions resorted to. The development of hydrological and hydraulic sciences has been directly linked to the progresses in understanding processes, in theoretical model development (e.g. computational facilities: numerical techniques, data assimilation, thorough model exploration, inverse calculus) and in data acquisition (new devices, remote sensing, LiDAR). "It may seem strange to end a review of modelling with an observation that future progress is very strongly linked to the acquisition of new data and to new experimental work but that, in our opinion, is the state of the science" (Hornberger & Boyer 1995).

- (ii) However, there remains an important need for research on classical free-surface flow (hydrological or hydraulic) modelling for engineering applications in predicting floods, designing water supply infrastructures and for water resources management, from the headwater catchment to the regional scale. More recently, free-surface flow modelling has become an indispensable tool for many interdisciplinary projects, such as predicting pollution and/or erosion incidents, the impact of anthropogenic and climate change on environmental variables such as water, soil, biology, ecology, or socio-economy and ecosystemic services. The direct consequence is a significant increase of the complexity of the objective function, from simple mono-site (e.g. one-point), mono-variable (e.g. the water depth) and mono-criterion (e.g. the error on peakflow) to complex multi-site (e.g. large number of points within a catchment), multi-variable (e.g. water depth, hydrograph, water table, concentrations,

ecological indicators, economic impact) and multi-criteria (e.g. errors on peakflow, volume, RMSE) objective functions.

- (iii) There is often a mismatch between model types, site data and objective functions. First, models were developed independently from the specificities of the study site and available data, prior to the definition of any objective function. In using free-surface flow models, the context of their original purpose and development is often lost, so that they may be applied to situations beyond their validity or capabilities. Second, site data are often collected independently of the objectives of the study. Third, the objective function must be specific to the application but also meet standard practices in evaluating model performance, in order to compare modelling results between sites and to communicate the results to other scientists or stakeholders. The known danger is to use flow and erosion equations outside their domains of validity (i.e., breaking the assumptions made during their derivation) then to rely on the calibration of model parameters as for technical compensations of theoretical flaws, at the risk of losing the physical sense of model parameters, creating equifinality and obtaining the "right results for the wrong reason" (Klemeš 1986). Choosing the right model for the right reason is crucial but the identification of the optimal data-model couple to reach a predefined objective is not straightforward. We need a framework to seek the optimum balance between the model, data and the objective function as a solution for a hydrological or hydraulic problem, on the basis of the principle of parsimony. The latter follows a famous quote often attributed to Einstein, that "everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler" which somehow originates in the philosophy of William of Ockham (1317) (*Numquam ponenda est pluralitas sine necessitate* [Plurality must never be posited without necessity]) or may even be traced back to Aristotle's (~350 BCE) *Analytica Posteriora* that already advocated demonstrations relying on the fewest possible number of conjectures, i.e. the dominant determinisms.

Finally, analytical procedures for free-surface flows and erosion issues necessitates a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between models (assumptions, accuracy, validity), data requirements and all contextual information available, encompassed in the "signature" of any given application: model refinement, spatiotemporal scales, flow typology and scale-independent description by dimensionless numbers. This review helps the modeller positioning his (or her) case study with respect to the modelling practices most encountered in the literature, without providing any recommendation. A complementary step and future research challenge is to decipher relevant modelling strategies from the available theoretical and practical material, resorting to the same objects, the previously defined signatures. Its purpose clearly is to address the "which model, for which scales and objectives?" question. A complete analytical framework, comprised of both loops, would provide references and guidelines for modelling strategies. Its normative structure in classifying theoretical knowledge (the mathematics world, equations and models) and contextual descriptions (real-life physical processes, scales and typologies) hopefully makes it also relevant for other Earth Sciences."

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3 **Determinants of modelling choices for 1-D free-surface flow and**  
4 **erosion issues in hydrology: a review**

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18     **Abstract**

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20     This review paper investigates the determinants of modelling choices, for numerous applications of  
21 1-D free-surface flow and erosion equations [in hydrology](#), across multiple spatiotemporal scales. We  
22 aim to characterize each case study by its signature composed of model refinement (Navier-Stokes:  
23 NS, Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes: RANS, Saint-Venant: SV or Approximations of Saint-  
24 Venant: ASV), spatiotemporal scales (domain length: L from 1 cm to 1000 km; temporal scale: T from  
25 1 second to 1 year; Flow depth: H from 1 mm to 10 m), flow typology (Overland: O, High gradient:  
26 Hg, Bedforms: B, Fluvial: F) and dimensionless numbers (Dimensionless time period  $T^*$ , Reynolds  
27 number  $Re$ , Froude number  $Fr$ , Slope  $S$ , Inundation ratio  $\Lambda_z$ , Shields number  $\theta$ ). The determinants of  
28 modelling choices are therefore sought in the interplay between flow characteristics, cross-scale and  
29 scale-independent views. The influence of spatiotemporal scales on modelling choices is first  
30 quantified through the expected correlation between increasing scales and decreasing model  
31 refinements, identifying then flow typology a secondary but mattering determinant in the choice of  
32 model refinement. This finding is confirmed by the discriminating values of several dimensionless  
33 numbers, that prove preferential associations between model refinements and flow typologies. This  
34 review is intended to help each modeller positioning his (her) choices with respect to the most frequent  
35 practices, within a generic, normative procedure possibly enriched by the community for a larger,  
36 comprehensive and updated image of modelling strategies.

37

38     **Keywords**

39     Free-surface flow, modelling strategy, cross-scale analysis, flow typology, dimensionless numbers.

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42	<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
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78 **1 Introduction**

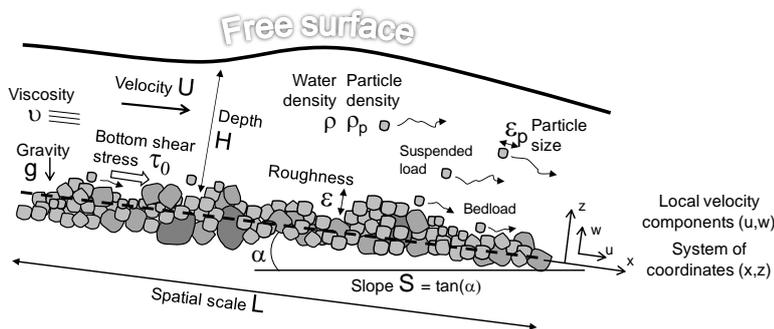
79 Free-surface flow models cover a wide range of environmental and engineering applications, across  
80 multiple spatiotemporal scales, through successive flow aggregations over various bed topographies:  
81 these govern both the qualitative (flow typology) and quantitative (dimensionless numbers) flow  
82 characteristics. Each case study may thus be positioned along "streamwise scenarios" (from runoff  
83 initiation to the main rivers) from unequivocal indications of the spatiotemporal scales, flow typology  
84 and associated dimensionless numbers. This literature review investigates the determinants of choices  
85 made for 1-D free-surface flow and erosion modelling in hydrology, seeking links between contextual  
86 information (spatiotemporal scales, flow typologies, dimensionless numbers) and conceptual  
87 descriptions (refinement of the flow equations or, equivalently, richness of the physical basis). The  
88 entire set of descriptors, i.e. model refinement, spatiotemporal scales, flow typology and  
89 dimensionless numbers, constitutes the signature of a study, which is the open normative procedure  
90 designed to allow comparisons between studies and to be fed by the community.

91  
92 For the sake of genericity, this review addresses a wide range of spatiotemporal scales, starting at  
93 the smallest plot scales (spatial scale: domain length  $L < 10$  m; time scale: duration of the process  
94  $T < 10$  s; flow depth:  $H < 1$  cm, Fig. 1), those of runoff genesis, overland flow hydraulics and detailed  
95 particle-scale physics (Horton 1945, Emmett 1970, Feng & Michaelides 2002, Schmeeckle & Nelson  
96 2003). The intermediate scales of catchment and hillslope processes are these expected to exhibit the  
97 widest variety of flow typologies thus modelling strategies (Croke & Mockler 2001, Parsons et al.  
98 2003, Aksoy & Kavvas 2005). The larger river basin scales ( $L > 100$  km;  $T > 10$  days;  $H > 1$  m) are also  
99 handled here, relevant for river flow modelling, flood prediction and water resources management  
100 (Nash & Sutcliffe 1970, Rosgen 1994, Loucks & van Beek 2005) with regional surface-subsurface  
101 interactions (De Marsily 1986), non-point pollution, fluvial sediment budgets and global  
102 biogeochemical cycles (Walling 1983, Milliman & Syvitski 1992, Syvitski & Milliman 2007).

103

104 On the Earth's surface, flow aggregation in the streamwise direction occurs across several  
 105 geomorphic thresholds (Kirkby 1980, Milliman & Sivitsky 1992, Church 2002, Paola et al. 2009),  
 106 through a succession of flow typologies (Emmett 1970, Grant et al. 1990, Rosgen 1994, Montgomery  
 107 & Buffington 1997). Flow aggregation in space and time is described, through the width function and  
 108 geomorphological unit hydrograph concepts (Kirkby 1976, Robinson et al. 1995, Agnese et al. 1998),  
 109 under the angle of connecting-scale hydrological and sedimentological pathways (see the review by  
 110 Bracken et al. 2013) or debating the merits of similitude laws versus upscaling issues in the  
 111 description of hydrological processes (Strahler 1956, Blöschl and Sivapalan 1995, Slaymaker 2006).  
 112 An alternative consists in examining the scale matching between available data and modelling aims  
 113 (Lilburne 2002). This raises technical (contextual) as well as strategic (conceptual) issues, handled  
 114 here from an overview on the most popular modelling practices, confronting the theoretical refinement  
 115 of flow models to the specific nominal scales of the processes at play.

116



117

118 **Figure 1 - Quantities most often used in the literature of free-surface flow and erosion modelling, with**  
 119 **explicit reference to the (L, T, H) spatiotemporal scales of interest. This review is limited to 1D (x) spatial**  
 120 **representations for simplicity, focusing on the streamwise (x) component of the mass and momentum**  
 121 **conservation equations. The streamwise length (L) and velocity (U) suggest a natural time scale  $T_0=L/U$**   
 122 **for the propagation of information, waves or perturbations, to be compared with the time scales (T) opted**  
 123 **for in the literature.**

124

125 Many papers or handbooks have summarised free-surface flow modelling and numerical  
126 techniques in hydraulics (King & Brater 1963, Abbott 1979, Cunge et al. 1980, Carlier 1980, French  
127 1985) or hydrology (Chow 1959, Kirkby 1978, Beven 2000) for various contexts, purposes and flow  
128 typologies. Less works have discussed the concern of *ad hoc* friction laws (Leopold et al. 1960,  
129 Gerbeau & Perthame 2001, Nikora et al. 2001, Roche 2006, Burguete et al. 2008), at the microscopic  
130 or macroscopic scales (Richardson 1973, Jansons 1988, Priezjev & Troian 2006, Smith et al. 2007,  
131 Powell 2014) although friction, flow retardation and energy dissipation processes are closely related to  
132 bedforms, thus plausibly govern flow typologies then, possibly, modelling choices. Often outside any  
133 focus on friction, numerous works have provided wide overviews on erosion modelling (Ritchie &  
134 McHenry 1990, Lafren et al. 1991, Merritt et al. 2003, Aksoy and Kavvas 2005, Boardman 2006).  
135 Erosion models that lean on the most sophisticated flow models calculate explicit particle detachment,  
136 transport and deposition from velocity fields or flow energetics (Vanoni 1946, Hino 1963, Lyn et al.  
137 1992, Mendoza & Zhou 1997) while reduced complexity models either assume the "transport  
138 capacity" (Foster & Meyer 1972, Bennett 1974) or "transport distance" schools of thoughts (see details  
139 in Wainwright et al. 2008).

140  
141 This multidisciplinary review (hydrology, hydraulics, fluid mechanics and erosion science)  
142 searches for the determinants of modelling choices. It focuses on hydrology but borrows from  
143 hydraulics and fluid mechanics, also when addressing erosion issues. The methodology consists in  
144 defining the "signature" of each case study as the chosen model refinement and the given flow  
145 typology, spatiotemporal scales and dimensionless numbers, hypothesizing the conceptual element  
146 (model refinement) is the consequence of the contextual elements. The paper is organized as follows:  
147 section 2 sorts the flow equations into four levels of refinement, section 3 plots these refinements  
148 versus the spatiotemporal scales of the studies, also depicting the influence of flow typologies and  
149 dimensionless numbers. Section 4 discusses the results and future research leads. Some of the best  
150 documented references among the cited literature have been gathered in Appendix A: most figures in  
151 this manuscript were plotted from this database.

152

## 153 **2 Flow models**

### 154 **2.1 List of flow models**

#### 155 *2.1.1 Water flow*

156 Free-surface flow equations in the literature may roughly be sorted into four levels of decreasing  
157 refinement, from the richness of their physical basis. The choice made here includes the Navier-Stokes  
158 equations (noted NS: Navier 1822, Stokes 1845), their average in time termed Reynolds-Averaged  
159 Navier-Stokes equations (RANS: Reynolds 1895, [for turbulent flows](#)), the depth-averaged Saint-  
160 Venant equations (SV: Saint-Venant 1871) and further approximations (referred to as ASV), among  
161 which the Diffusive Wave (DWE: Hayami 1951) and Kinematic Wave Equations (KWE: Iwagaki  
162 1955, Lighthill & Whitham 1955).

#### 163 *2.1.2 Erosion*

164 The associated erosion equations (not shown) are based on a representation of detachment and  
165 transport on hillslopes (Bennett 1974, Van Rijn 1984a, b, Wainwright et al. 2008), in streams (Einstein  
166 1950) or through the channel network (Du Boys 1879, Exner 1925, Hjulström 1935, Shields 1936,  
167 Bagnold 1956). Friction is the link between water flow and erosion issues in terms of physical  
168 processes at play at the particle scale, or at the scale of the erodible bed asperities. [On the one hand,](#)  
169 [this advocates the examination of erosion issues from the angle of decreasing refinements of the "flow](#)  
170 [and erosion" models seen as a whole \(e.g. expecting the most complicated erosion processes to be out](#)  
171 [of reach of the simplest combined models\). On the other hand, there might be a certain disconnection](#)  
172 [between the refinement of the flow model and that of the chosen friction and erosion models, so the](#)  
173 [determinants of modelling choices should also be sought elsewhere: in flow typologies dictated by](#)  
174 [friction and flow retardation processes but also in "erosion types", seen through a dimensionless](#)  
175 [descriptor \(Section 3\). ~~However, the scope here is not to review the choices made for friction~~](#)

176 ~~modelling; friction phenomena, with the associated flow retardation and energy dissipation processes,~~  
177 ~~are rather considered for their influence on flow typologies, as discussed later in the manuscript.~~  
178

## 179 **2.2 Navier-Stokes**

### 180 *2.2.1 Water flow*

181 The Navier-Stokes (NS) equations have suitable simplifications for the shallow water cases  
182 ( $L \gg H$ ) commonly used to describe free-surface flows. The three-dimensional fluid motion problem is  
183 reduced here to a two-dimensional description, whose projection along the streamwise axis writes:

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} + u \frac{\partial u}{\partial x} + w \frac{\partial u}{\partial z} + \frac{1}{\rho} \frac{\partial p}{\partial x} = g_x + \frac{1}{\rho} \frac{\partial \tau}{\partial x} \quad (1)$$

184 where  $x$  is the longitudinal distance [L],  $z$  the vertical coordinate [L],  $t$  is time [T],  $u$  is the local water  
185 velocity in  $x$  [ $LT^{-1}$ ],  $\rho$  is water density [ $ML^{-3}$ ],  $g_x$  is the projection of gravity  $g$  on  $x$  [ $LT^{-2}$ ] and  $\tau$  is the  
186 tangential stress due to water [ $ML^{-1}T^{-2}$ ] noted  $\tau_0$  on the bed in Fig. 1.

187

188 The Navier-Stokes equations stay valid throughout the full range of flow regimes, scales and  
189 contexts. They are preferentially used where much complexity is needed, often when relevant  
190 simplified flow descriptions could not be derived, for example for particle-scale applications (Chen &  
191 Wu 2000, Wu & Lee 2001, Feng & Michaelides 2002), overland flow (Dunkerley 2003, 2004) or  
192 flows over pronounced bedforms (Booker et al. 2001, Schmeeckle & Nelson 2003). A very wide  
193 review of numerical methods and applications for the NS equations is provided by Gresho & Sani  
194 (1998) and a benchmark of numerous solvers by Turek (1999).

195

196 There are many turbulence models (e.g. DNS-Direct Numerical Simulations, LES-Large Eddy  
197 Simulations and RANS-Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes) suitable for free-surface flow modelling  
198 (Katopodes & Bradford 1999). Direct Numerical Simulations explicitly resolve all turbulence scales at  
199 the cost of more than  $Re^3$  calculations (Härtel 1996) while Large Eddy Simulations (Smagorinsky

200 | 1963, Leonard 1974) filter out the smallest scales and resolve only the larger ones. The RANS  
201 | equations (Smith & McLean 1977, Rödi 1988) do not resolve any scale but the stress terms used for  
202 | their closure have proven useful for the modelling of near-bed turbulent patterns (see next subsection).  
203 | The general trend is that improvements in efficiency of the algorithms have approximately kept pace  
204 | with exponential improvements in computer power over the past 50 years (Moore 1965, Mavriplis  
205 | 1998, Koomey et al. 2010) which tends to push the limitations of DNS and LES further away.

206

### 207 | 2.2.2 Erosion

208 | Several types of practical applications dictate the use of high-level formalisms in the description of  
209 | particle detachment and transport, typically to handle explicit bed geometries and alterations, for  
210 | example jet scours and regressive erosion (Stein et al. 1993, Bennett et al. 2000, Alonso et al. 2002),  
211 | diverging sediment fluxes in canals (Belaud & Paquier 2001) or incipient motion conditions,  
212 | calculated from grain size, shape and weight (Stevenson et al. 2002). The NS formalism is also needed  
213 | to describe strong water-sediment, *i.e.* couplings in which the solid phase exerts an influence on the  
214 | liquid phase, acting upon velocity fields, flow rheology and erosive properties (Sundaresan et al.  
215 | 2003), ~~Parker & Coleman 1986, Parker et al. 1986, Davies et al. 1997, Mulder & Alexander 2001~~.  
216 | Such couplings may be sorted by increasing sediment loads, from dispersed multiphase flows (Parker  
217 | & Coleman 1986, Davies et al. 1997) to density currents (Parker et al. 1986), hyperconcentrated flows  
218 | (Mulder & Alexander 2001) and up to debris flows (Bouchut et al. 2003, Bouchut & Westdickenberg  
219 | 2004), the latter derived as mathematical generalisations of the well-known Savage & Hütter (1989,  
220 | 1991) avalanche models over explicit, pronounced topographies. Moreover, the NS formalism offers  
221 | the possibility to work on the energy equations: the erosive power and transport capacity of sediment-  
222 | laden flows may be estimated from the energy of the flow, debating the case of turbulence damping  
223 | (or not) with increasing sediment loads (Vanoni 1946, Hino 1963, Lyn et al. 1992, Mendoza & Zhou  
224 | 1997). The matter is not free from doubt today (Kneller & Buckee 2001) and frictional drag, abrasion

225 due to impacts of the travelling particles and increased flow viscosity have been described prone to  
226 enhance the detachment capacities of loaded flows (Alavian et al. 1992, Garcia & Parker 1993).

227

## 228 **2.3 Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes**

### 229 *2.3.1 Water flow*

230 The Reynolds-Averaged Navier–Stokes (RANS) equations are a turbulence model, using time-  
231 averaged equations of fluid motion, less generic than the NS formalism. The hypothesis behind these  
232 equations is that instantaneous pressure and velocities may be decomposed into time-averaged and  
233 randomly fluctuating turbulent parts, which finally yields:

$$\frac{\partial \bar{u}}{\partial t} + \bar{u} \frac{\partial \bar{u}}{\partial x} + \bar{w} \frac{\partial \bar{u}}{\partial z} + g \frac{\partial H}{\partial x} = gS + \frac{1}{\rho} \frac{\partial \tau}{\partial z} \quad (2)$$

234 where  $\bar{u}$  [ $LT^{-1}$ ] and  $\bar{w}$  [ $LT^{-1}$ ] are the time-averaged local water velocities in x and z, H is the flow  
235 depth [L] and S is the bed slope [-].

236

237 In this formulation, the "Reynolds stress" term  $\tau$  is of crucial importance for free-surface flow,  
238 friction and erosion modelling, especially for shallow flows, first because it is the closure term (  
239  $\tau = -\rho \overline{u'w'}$ ) and second because the Reynolds stresses have been closely related, in magnitude and  
240 direction, to the size and arrangement of bed asperities. The combined analysis of the relative  
241 magnitude of the u' and w' terms has become the purpose of "quadrant analysis" (Kline et al. 1967,  
242 Raupach 1981, Kim et al. 1987) that identifies the four cases of outward interactions (quadrant I:  $u'>0$ ,  
243  $w'>0$ ), ejections (quadrant II:  $u'<0$ ,  $w'>0$ ), inward interactions (quadrant III:  $u'<0$ ,  $w'<0$ ) and sweeps  
244 (quadrant IV:  $u'>0$ ,  $w'<0$ ). Depending on the submergence and geometry of bed asperities, the  
245 maximal Reynolds stresses, those with significant effects on flow structure, have most often been  
246 reported to occur near or just above the roughness crests (see Nikora et al. 2001, Pokrajac et al. 2007  
247 and the review by Lamb et al. 2008a).

248

249 **2.3.2 Erosion**

250 In their paper on movable river beds, Engelund & Fredsoe (1976) judiciously reformulated and  
251 exploited the existing hypotheses (Einstein & Banks 1950, Bagnold 1954, Fernandez Luque & van  
252 Beek 1976) of a partition between “tractive” destabilizing shear stresses and “dispersive” equalizing  
253 drags. The vertical concentration profiles of bedload and suspended load were calculated from  
254 incipient sediment motion conditions, relating stresses on the particles to the values and variations of  
255 near-bed velocities. One step further, the physical explanation, mathematical definition, point of  
256 application, main direction and erosive efficiency of the turbulent near-bed stresses have become  
257 private hunting grounds of the RANS models throughout the years (Nikora et al. 2001, Nino et al.  
258 2003).

259

260 The maximal Reynolds stresses are located near the crests of the submerged bed asperities, where  
261 turbulent velocity fluctuations reach several times the average near-bed velocity values, which greatly  
262 enhances particle detachment (Raupach et al. 1991, Nikora & Goring 2000, Lamb et al. 2008a). Very  
263 few studies deal with the magnitude and point of application of the Reynolds stresses for partial  
264 inundation cases (Bayazit 1976, Dittrich & Koll 1997, Carollo et al. 2005) although turbulent flows  
265 between emergent obstacles often occur in natural settings. Particle detachment is generally attributed  
266 to “sweeps” (quadrant IV:  $u' > 0, w' < 0$ ) (Sutherland 1967, Drake et al. 1988, Best 1992) or “outward  
267 interactions” ( $u' > 0, w' > 0$ ) (Nelson et al. 1995, Papanicolaou et al. 2001) but depends on bed  
268 geometries and bed packing conditions. Finally, the RANS equations allow explicit calculations of  
269 shear stresses and particle-scale pick-up forces, thus incipient motion conditions (Nino et al. 2003,  
270 Afzalimehr et al. 2007). They may handle the movements of detached particles in weak transportation  
271 stages (Bounvilay 2003, Julien & Bounvilay 2013) down to near-laminar regimes (Charru et al. 2004).

272 **2.4 Saint-Venant**

273 **2.4.1 Water flow**

274 The Saint-Venant (SV) equations are obtained by depth-integrating the Navier–Stokes equations,  
275 neglecting thus the vertical velocities as well as vertical stratifications in the streamwise velocity  
276 (Stoker 1958, Johnson 1998, Whitham 1999). The integration process (Chow 1959, Abbott 1979)  
277 incorporates an explicit bottom friction term  $\tau_0$  that previously appeared only as a boundary condition  
278 in the NS and RANS equation:

$$\frac{\partial U}{\partial t} + U \frac{\partial U}{\partial x} + g \frac{\partial H}{\partial x} = gS + \frac{\tau_0}{\rho H} \quad (3)$$

279

280 Recent attempts have been made in the field of fluid mechanics to derive specific expressions for  $\tau_0$   
281 (laminar flows: Gerbeau & Perthame 2001, macro-roughness: Roche 2006, thin flows: Devauchelle et  
282 al. 2007, turbulent flows: Marche 2007, multi-layer SV model: Audusse et al. 2008). However, the  
283 common practice in hydraulics and hydrology is rather to approximate steady-state equilibrium  
284 between bottom friction  $\tau_0$  and the streamwise stress exerted at the bottom of a water column  
285 ( $\tau_0 = \rho g H S_f$ ) to reach the popular formulation:

$$\frac{\partial U}{\partial t} + U \frac{\partial U}{\partial x} + g \frac{\partial H}{\partial x} = g(S - S_f) \quad (4)$$

(i) (ii) (iii) (iv) (v)

286 where (i) is the unsteadiness term, (ii) the convective acceleration term, (iii) the pressure gradient  
287 term, while (iv) and (v) form the diffusive wave approximation (later discussed).

288

289 In the above,  $S_f (-)$  is the “friction slope” whose expression depends on flow velocity and on the  
290 chosen friction law, often one of the Chézy, Darcy-Weisbach or Manning formulations (e.g.  
291  $S_f = nU^2/8gH$  with Manning’s  $n$  friction coefficient). The derivation of the SV equations by Boussinesq  
292 (1877) involved a momentum correction coefficient  $\beta [-]$  in the advection term (King & Brater 1963,

293 Chen 1992) to account for stratification effects in the vertical distribution of velocities, especially  
294 plausible in sediment-laden flows or in presence of density currents.

295

296 The SV equations may account for flows of variable widths and depths, for example in floodplains  
297 (Bates & De Roo 2000, Beltaos et al. 2012), rivers (Guinot & Cappelaere 2009), overland flow  
298 (Berger & Stockstill 1995, Ghavasieh et al. 2006), overpressure in drainage systems (Henine et al.  
299 2014), man-made channels (Zhou 1995, Sen & Garg 2002, Sau et al. 2010), vegetation flushing (Fovet  
300 et al. 2013), channel networks (Choi & Molinas 1993, Camacho & Lees 1999) or natural settings  
301 (Moussa & Bocquillon 1996a, Wang & Chen 2003, Roux & Dartus 2006, Burguete et al. 2008, Bates  
302 et al. 2010), including these with curved boundaries (Sivakumaran & Yevjevich 1987). Discharge and  
303 cross-sectional area may conveniently be used instead of velocity and water depth, and the two  
304 equations describing mass and momentum in the Saint-Venant system now write (Sivapalan et al.  
305 1997):

$$\frac{\partial A}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial Q}{\partial x} = q_a \quad (5)$$

$$\frac{1}{gA} \frac{\partial Q}{\partial t} + \frac{1}{gA} \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \left( \beta \frac{Q^2}{A} \right) + \frac{\partial H}{\partial x} + S_f - S = 0 \quad (6)$$

306 where  $A$  is the cross-sectional area [ $L^2$ ],  $Q$  is the discharge [ $L^3T^{-1}$ ],  $q_a$  is the lateral flow per unit  
307 channel length [ $L^2T^{-1}$ ]. The magnitudes of the various terms in equations (5) and (6) are given in the  
308 literature (e.g. Henderson 1966, Kuchment 1972).

309

#### 310 2.4.2 Erosion

311 In the hydrology-erosion community, the SV level is that of the *Concepts of mathematical*  
312 *modelling of sediment yield* by Bennett (1974). This landmark paper extended Exner's (1925)  
313 conservation of sediment mass, adding the possibility to handle different fluid and particle velocities,  
314 also accounting for particle dispersion *via* a diffusion term. Unfortunately, most citing papers discard  
315 this term, taking particle velocity equal to water velocity. The assumption seems false if transport

316 occurs as bedload or saltation load, questionable for suspended load trapped into turbulent motions,  
317 exact only for very small particles borne by laminar flows. Although warning against the capability of  
318 first-order laws to “*represent the response of sediment load to changes in transport and detachment*  
319 *capacity*” (Bennett 1974, p.491), the author recommended the use of such a model (Foster and Meyer  
320 1972). The proposed simplification writes  $e/D_c=1-c/T_c$ , where the net erosion rate ( $e$ ) is normalised by  
321 the maximal detachment capacity ( $D_c$ ) while sediment load ( $c$ ) is normalised by the maximal transport  
322 capacity of the flow ( $T_c$ ). An additional (uncertain) hypothesis was that of maximal detachment  
323 capacity for minimal sediment load, *i.e.*, clear water. See the controversial comments around the  
324 Wainwright et al. (2008) paper: the areas of disagreement revolve around the ability of models to  
325 handle unsteady flow conditions, to deal with suspended and/or bedload transport, to consider particles  
326 of different sizes and to stay valid over realistic ranges of sediment concentration.

327

328 Those questions directly address the possibilities of SV-level approaches. Higher-level models  
329 (NS, RANS) better address the dynamics of incipient motion (Dey & Papanicolaou 2008), especially  
330 in shallow laminar flows (Charpin & Myers 2005) or focusing on granular flows (Parker 1978a, b,  
331 Charru et al. 2004, Charru 2006). Refined models are also needed to explicitly handle specific particle  
332 velocities (Bounvilay 2003), to describe particle diffusion in secondary currents (Sharifi et al. 2009),  
333 to account for the spatial heterogeneity of “neither laminar nor turbulent” overland flows (Lajeunesse  
334 et al. 2010) or to introduce modifications in flow rheology (Sundaresan et al. 2003). On the other  
335 hand, slope effects (Polyakov & Nearing 2003), particle-size effects (Van Rijn 1984a, Hairsine &  
336 Rose 1992a, Sander et al. 2007, Wainwright et al. 2008), flow stratification effects (van Maren 2007),  
337 the effects of hyperconcentrated flows (Hessel 2006) and the bedload transport (Van Rijn 1984b,  
338 Julien & Simmons 1985, Hairsine & Rose 1992b, Wainwright et al. 2008) have received much  
339 attention within the SV or ASV formalisms.

340

341 Whatever the liquid-solid coupling opted for, the SV level covers the widest variety of contexts,  
342 from overland erosion models (Simpson & Castelltort 2006, Nord & Esteves 2010) to dam-break

343 hydraulics over erodible beds (Cao et al. 2004) and the analysis of channel inception driven by the  
344 variations of the Froude number (Izumi & Parker 1995) or the impact of travelling particles (Sklar &  
345 Dietrich 2004, Lamb et al. 2008b). Sediment detachment and transport over plane beds (Williams  
346 1970), rough beds (Afzalimehr & Ancil 1999, 2000, Gao & Abrahams 2004), step-pools (Lamarre &  
347 Roy 2008) or pool-riffle sequences (Sear 1996, Rathburn & Wohl 2003) have yielded often-cited  
348 studies, while sediment flushing in reservoirs (Campisano et al. 2004) and vegetation flushing in  
349 canals (Fovet et al. 2013) constitute more specific applications. Cited limitations of the SV approaches  
350 are their inability to explicitly describe the near-bed velocity fluctuations, especially the local  
351 accelerations responsible for particle entrainment but also the vertical gradients of the streamwise  
352 velocity, for bedload transport in the laminar layer. This lack of accuracy in the description of flow  
353 characteristics also endangers the possibility to predict the formation, transformation and migration of  
354 geometrical bed patterns, which in turn requires the full set of 3D (x, y, z) NS equations in several  
355 cases (Lagrée 2003, Charu 2006, Devauchelle et al. 2010).

356  
357 There seems to exist a dedicated "NS-SV Morphodynamics" research lead that uses rather simple  
358 bedload transport formulae (Du Boys 1890, Meyer-Peter & Müller 1948, Einstein & Banks 1950,  
359 Bagnold 1966, Yalin 1977) to calculate sediment fluxes from excess bed shear stresses, in studies of  
360 long-term system evolutions. These low "system evolution velocities" appear under the "quasi-static"  
361 flow hypothesis: particle velocity may be neglected before water velocity, which allows neglecting the  
362 unsteadiness term in the momentum equation but on no account in the continuity equation (Exner law)  
363 that describes bed modifications (Parker 1976). Moreover, shear stresses are generally calculated from  
364 near-bed laminar or near-laminar velocity profiles, sometimes with the regularising hypothesis that  
365 detachment and transport occur just above the criterion for incipient motion (see the review by  
366 Lajeunesse et al 2010). Various applications address rivers with mobile bed and banks (Parker 1978a,  
367 b), focus on self-channelling (Métivier & Meunier 2003, Mangeney et al. 2007) and often resort to  
368 formulations at complexity levels between these of the NS and the SV approaches (Devauchelle et al.  
369 2007, Lobkovsky et al. 2008).

370

## 371 **2.5 Approximations to Saint-Venant**

### 372 **2.5.1 Water flow**

373 When the full Saint-Venant equations are not needed or impossible to apply due to a lack of data,  
374 an option is to neglect one or several terms of the momentum equation (Ponce and Simons 1977,  
375 Romanowicz et al. 1988, Moussa & Bocquillon 1996a, Moussa & Bocquillon 2000). In most practical  
376 applications for flood routing, the unsteadiness (i) and convective acceleration (ii) terms in (4) may be  
377 neglected, suppressing the first two terms from (6). Combining the remaining terms in (5) and (6), we  
378 obtain the Diffusive Wave equation (Moussa, 1996):

$$\frac{\partial Q}{\partial t} + C \left( \frac{\partial Q}{\partial x} - q_a \right) - D \left( \frac{\partial^2 Q}{\partial x^2} - \frac{\partial q_a}{\partial x} \right) = 0 \quad (7)$$

379 where  $C [LT^{-1}]$  and  $D [L^2T^{-1}]$  are non-linear functions of the discharge  $Q$  (and consequently the flow  
380 depth  $H$ ) known as the celerity and diffusivity, respectively.

381

382 In cases where the pressure-gradient term (iii) in (4) can also be neglected, the third term of (6)  
383 also vanishes and the Diffusive Wave becomes the Kinematic Wave equation, with  $D=0$  in (7). The  
384 Diffusive Wave (Cunge 1969, Akan & Yen 1981, Rutschmann & Hager 1996, Wang et al. 2006,  
385 Wang et al. 2014) can thus be considered a higher order approximation than the Kinematic Wave  
386 approximation (Katopodes 1982, Zoppou & O'Neill 1982, Daluz Vieira 1983, Ferrick 1985, Ponce  
387 1990). Both have proven very useful for canal control algorithms (Rodellar et al. 1993) or flood  
388 routing procedures, with lateral inflow (Fan & Li 2006), in rectangular channels (Keskin &  
389 Agiraliloglu 1997), for real time forecast (Todini & Bossi 1986), in lowland catchments (Tiemeyer et  
390 al. 2007), for small catchments (Moussa et al. 2002, Chahinian et al. 2005, Charlier et al. 2007), for  
391 mountainous catchments (Moussa et al. 2007) or tropical catchments (Charlier et al. 2009), at the  
392 largest scale of the Amazon basin (Trigg et al. 2009, Paiva et al. 2013), for anthropogenic hillslopes  
393 (Hallema & Moussa 2013), to address backwater effects (Munier et al. 2008), stormwater runoff on

394 impervious surfaces (Blandford & Meadows 1990, Parsons et al. 1997), stream-aquifer interactions  
395 (Perkins & Koussis 1996) or volume and mass conservation issues (Perumal & Price 2013). Given  
396 their "nominal" scales of application, the ASV models are sometimes fed by airborne (remote sensing)  
397 data acquisition (Jain & Singh 2005, Reddy et al. 2007). In addition, predictive uncertainties (Elhanafy  
398 et al. 2008) or the applicability of the kinematic and diffusive wave equations are the main scope of  
399 several studies (Liggett & Woolhiser 1967, Ponce & Simons 1977, Ponce et al. 1978, Moussa &  
400 Bocquillon 1996b, Bajracharya & Barry 1997), the evaluation of modelling strategies is that of Horritt  
401 & Bates (2002), while parameter estimation is addressed, among others, by Koussis et al. (1978).

402

### 403 2.5.2 Erosion

404 Whereas common practices in fluid mechanics and hydraulics are rather to seek context-specific  
405 strategies in erosion modelling, two simplifying and unifying trends, if not paradigms, have developed  
406 in the field of hydrology. The first one is the transport capacity concept (Foster & Meyer 1972) in  
407 which the erosive strength of the flow decreases with increasing suspended sediment load, until a  
408 switch occurs from detachment- to transport-limited flows. The second one is the stream power  
409 concept (Bagnold 1956) that *slope times discharge* is the explicative quantity for erosion, with  
410 adaptations that mentioned unit stream power (*slope times velocity*, Yang 1974, Govers 1992) or fitted  
411 exponents to the slope and discharge terms (Julien & Simmons 1985). Many catchment-scale  
412 hydrology-erosion models (e.g. ANSWERS: Beasley et al. 1980, CREAMS: Knisel 1980, KINEROS:  
413 Smith et al. 1995, LISEM: De Roo et al. 1996, WEPP: Ascough et al. 1997, EUROSEM: Morgan et  
414 al. 1998, MAHLERAN: Wainwright et al. 2008, MHYDAS-Erosion: Gumiere et al. 2011) adopt the  
415 1D Diffusive or Kinematic Wave Equations to route water fluxes, possibly through vegetated strips  
416 (Muñoz-Carpena et al. 1999), together with the simplest possible couplings between water and  
417 sediment fluxes (Aksoy & Kavvas 2005).

418

419 A known difficulty when embracing larger scales with simplified models is to describe the  
420 spatially-distributed sources and sinks of sediments (Jetten et al. 1999, 2003) with or without explicit  
421 descriptions of the permanent or temporary connectivity lines, for water and sediment movements  
422 (Prosser & Rustomji 2000, Croke & Mockler 2001, Pickup & Marks 2001, Bracken et al. 2013). What  
423 tends to force reduced complexity approaches in erosion models is the necessity to handle distinct  
424 detachment, transport and deposition processes (from the very shallow diffuse flows formed during  
425 runoff initiation to the regional-scale basin outlets) with only sparse data on flow structure and soil  
426 characteristics (cohesion, distribution of particle sizes, bed packing). Parsons & Abrahams (1992)  
427 have established how the agronomical, engineering and fluvial families of approaches have converged  
428 into similar modelling techniques, especially on the subject of erosion in overland flows (Prosser &  
429 Rustomji 2000). The ASV formalism also allows fitting bedload transport formulae against mean  
430 discharge values as a surrogate to the overcomplicated explicit descriptions of erosion figures in high-  
431 gradient streams with macro-roughness elements (Smart 1984, Aziz & Scott 1989, Weichert 2006,  
432 Chiari 2008). ASV-level couplings have also been applied to study the slope independence of stream  
433 velocity in eroding rills (Gimenez & Govers 2001) and the appearance of bed patterns in silt-laden  
434 rivers (van Maren 2007).

435

### 436 **3 Determinants of modelling choices**

437 This section aims at the construction of a signature for each case study, relating the "conceptual"  
438 choice of a model refinement (Navier-Stokes: NS, Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes: RANS, Saint-  
439 Venant: SV or Approximations to Saint-Venant ASV) to the "contextual" descriptors, i.e. the  
440 spatiotemporal scales (section 3.1), spatiotemporal scales and flow typologies (section 3.2),  
441 spatiotemporal scales, flow typologies and dimensionless numbers (section 3.3). Figures 2, 3, 5, 6 and  
442 7 in this section were drawn from the 158 studies listed in Appendix A.

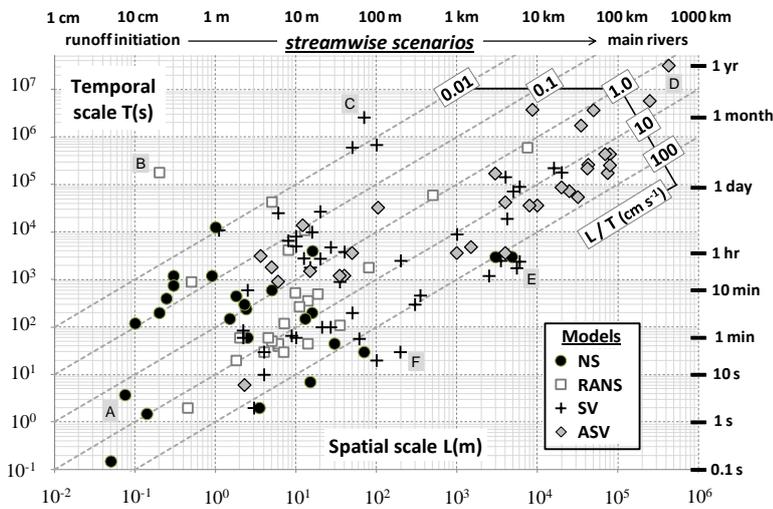
443 **3.1 Spatiotemporal scales**

444 **3.1.1 Influence of domain length ( $L$ ) and time scale ( $T$ )**

445 A cross-disciplinary analysis of the cited literature indicates a clear correlation between the ( $L$ ,  $T$ )  
446 scales and the chosen model refinement (NS, RANS, SV or ASV). In this ( $L$ ,  $T$ ) plane, Fig. 2  
447 quantifies the expected trend that sophisticated (NS, RANS) models are required to represent rapidly-  
448 varying small-scale phenomena (lower left) while simplified approaches (ASV) pertain to increased  
449 durations and spatial extensions (upper right). Typical scales of application may be identified for each  
450 model refinement: NS ( $10\text{ cm} < L < 100\text{ m}$ ,  $10\text{ s} < T < 1\text{ hr}$ ), RANS ( $1\text{ m} < L < 100\text{ m}$ ,  $10\text{ s} < T < 1\text{ hr}$ ), SV  
451 ( $10\text{ m} < L < 20\text{ km}$ ,  $1\text{ min} < T < 5\text{ days}$ ) and ASV ( $10\text{ m} < L < 1000\text{ km}$ ,  $30\text{ min} < T < 1\text{ yr}$ ). However, some  
452 studies consider larger spatial or temporal scales, for example Charru et al. (2004) for overland  
453 granular flows (RANS,  $L \sim 20\text{ cm}$ ,  $T \sim 2\text{ days}$ ) or Rathburn & Wohl (2003) for pool-riffle sequences  
454 (SV,  $L \sim 70\text{ m}$ ,  $T \sim 30\text{ days}$ ). Nevertheless, the existence of overlap regions suggests that the ( $L$ ,  $T$ )  
455 spatiotemporal scales are not the only factor governing the choice of flow models.

456  
457 The influence of flow typologies is discussed later in details but could the modelling choices be  
458 dictated by the scientific background of the modeller? A striking example is that of the SV models,  
459 responsible for the largest overlaps in Fig. 2. They may for example be used by physicists, as an  
460 upgraded alternative to the NS equations, in the field of environmental fluid mechanics (for limited  
461 scales). They may as well be convenient for soil scientists interested in high-resolution hydrology or  
462 for civil engineers who may need to cope with flow unsteadiness to handle erosion issues or to allow  
463 correct sizing of the man-made structures (for somewhat wider scales).

464



465  
 466 **Figure 2 – How increasing (L, T) spatiotemporal scales of the flow domain tend to be associated with**  
 467 **decreasing complexity in the choice of flow models, sorted here into four levels of refinement: Navier-**  
 468 **Stokes (NS), Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes (RANS), Saint-Venant (SV) or Approximations to Saint-**  
 469 **Venant (ASV). A transverse analysis involves forming L/T ratios, searching for clues to model selection**  
 470 **according to these "system evolution velocities" or governed by flow typologies that would exhibit specific**  
 471 **L/T ratios. This figure was assembled from information available in the studies cited in Appendix A,**  
 472 **selecting six textbook cases (sketches A to F, Table 1) for illustration.**

473  
 474 Figure 2 bears another type of information than the trend to decreasing model refinement with  
 475 increasing spatiotemporal scales. As the x-ordinate indicates the spatial scale L and the y-ordinate the  
 476 time scale T, then the L/T ratio has dimensions of a velocity. However, this quantity should not be  
 477 interpreted as a flow velocity. It rather indicates which of the temporal (long-term, low L/T ratio) or  
 478 spatial (short-term, high L/T ratio) aspects are predominant in the study. Hence, the five dotted  
 479 diagonals ( $L/T=10^{-4}$ ,  $10^{-3}$ ,  $10^{-2}$ ,  $0.1$  and  $1 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ) establish the numerical link between the spatial and  
 480 temporal scales of the cited experiments. They also show the dispersion with respect to the expected  
 481 (say "natural") correlation between increasing L and T values. This dispersion contains a lot of  
 482 information. Judging from the plotted literature, the lowest L/T ratios (e. g.  $10^{-4} \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ) tend to indicate  
 483 systems with low "evolution velocities", possibly associated with long-term changes or effects (high T

484 values, low L values) obtained from repeated phenomena, multiple cycles and progressive  
485 modifications. By contrast, high L/T ratios (e.g.  $1 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ) rather refer to single-event situations, more  
486 associated with quick modifications of flow patterns or bed morphologies.

487

488 If rules of thumb in problem dimensioning were to be drawn from Fig. 2, geomorphological  
489 concerns (dune migration, basin sedimentation, long-term bed modifications) probably require  
490 stretching up the temporal scale so that low "system evolution velocities" would fall beneath  $L/T=10^{-2}$   
491  $\text{m s}^{-1}$  while event-based modelling (dam breaks, formative discharges, flash floods) should be able to  
492 handle high "system evolution velocities" near or beyond  $L/T=1 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . This "fixed-L, chosen-T"  
493 description of system evolution and characteristic time scales also refers to Fig. 1 in which the choice  
494 of T is somehow left at the modeller's discretion, as a degree of freedom: how different from  $T_0$   
495 should T be? These points are the subject of detailed investigations in the field of morphodynamics  
496 (Paola et al. 1992, Howard 1994, Van Heijst et al. 2001, Allen 2008, Paola et al. 2009). Indicators of  
497 "system evolution velocities" with units of a velocity but different definitions may for example be  
498 found in Sheets et al. (2002), who took the channel depth (H) divided by the average deposition rate to  
499 obtain a relevant, characteristic time scale (T). For the same purpose, Wang et al. (2011) took the  
500 characteristic bed roughness ( $\epsilon$ ) instead of channel depth. The objective is often to discriminate what  
501 Allen (2008) called the "reactive" (high L/T) and "buffer" (low L/T) systems. With or without erosion  
502 issues, a reasonable hypothesis here seems that the dispersion in L/T ratios arises from the variety of  
503 flow contexts, which may necessitate different modelling strategies. In other terms, it is deemed in this  
504 study that this secondary trend, associated with flow typologies, is also a determinant in the choice of  
505 the flow model.

506

507 To take a few examples and guide the reader through the arguments and the figures of this paper,  
508 Table 1 gathers the information available for the six textbook cases outlined by sketches A to F in  
509 Fig.2. The selected studies represent a wide variety of cases (drawing an approximate envelop of cases  
510 in the L-T plane of Fig.2) followed in the forthcoming stages of the analysis and associated figures in

511 Section 3.1.2 (determinants of modelling choices in the L-H plane, Fig.3), Section 3.2 (determinants  
 512 sought in flow typology, Fig.6a and 7a) and Section 3.3 (determinants sought in the values of  
 513 dimensionless numbers attached to the flow).

514

Case	Context	Authors	Model refinement	Spatiotemporal scales					Flow typology <sup>†</sup>	Dimensionless numbers <sup>§</sup>					
				L (m)	T (s)	H (m)	L/T (m s <sup>-1</sup> )	H/L <sup>†</sup> (-)		T*	Re	Fr	S (%)	$\Lambda_z$	$\theta$
A	Film flow	Charpin & Myers (2005)	NS	0.075	3.75	0.003	0.02	0.04	O	5	300	0.11	10	8.0	-
B	Laminar dynamics	Charru et al. (2004)	RANS	0.2	$1.8 \cdot 10^3$	0.007	$1.1 \cdot 10^{-6}$	0.035	O	6428	50	0.02	<0.01	12.1	0.14
C	Pool-riffles	Rathburn & Wohl (2003)	SV	70	$2.6 \cdot 10^6$	0.47	$3.5 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$6.7 \cdot 10^{-3}$	B	$7.8 \cdot 10^3$	$7.1 \cdot 10^3$	0.69	1.1	5108	34.1
D	Amazon River	Trigg et al. (2009)	ASV	$4.3 \cdot 10^3$	$3.15 \cdot 10^8$	10	$1.4 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$2.3 \cdot 10^{-3}$	F	58.5	$8 \cdot 10^3$	0.05	<0.01	6600	-
E	Step-pools	Grant et al. (1990)	SV	5530	1755	0.87	3.15	$1.5 \cdot 10^{-4}$	Hg	1.0	$2.7 \cdot 10^3$	1.03	4.5	1.25	-
F	Step-pools	Chin (1999)	SV	197.25	30	0.50	6.58	0.025	Hg	1.21	$4.0 \cdot 10^3$	3.58	6.25	1.22	-

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† See section 3.1.2 - H/L is the fineness ratio of the flow comparing flow depth (H) to the length of the flow domain (L)

‡ See Section 3.2 - O: Overland, Hg: High-gradient, B: Bedforms, F: Fluvial

§ See Section 3.3 - T\*: dimensionless period, Re: Reynolds number, Fr: Froude number, S: slope,  $\Lambda_z$  inundation ratio,  $\theta$  Shields number

**Table 1 - Six textbook cases representing an approximate envelope of all the tested cases in the L-T plane of Fig.2, where L is the spatial scale (length of the flow domain) and T the temporal scale (duration of the process studied). Spatiotemporal scales are the determinants of modelling choices discussed in Section 3.1. The additional influence of flow typology and dimensionless numbers are discussed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.**

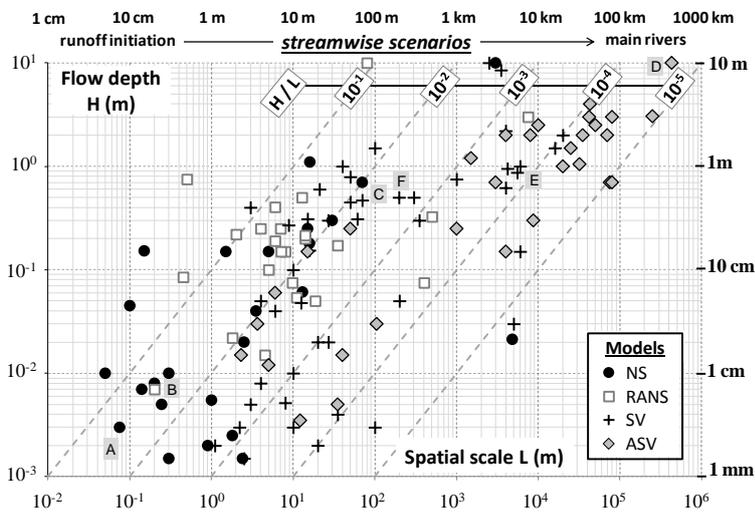
525

### 526 3.1.2 Influence of domain length (L) and flow depth (H)

527 The NS, RANS, SV and ASV equations are now positioned with respect to the spatial scale (L) and  
 528 flow depth (H) of the reported experiments (Fig. 3), showing patterns and trends very similar to those  
 529 of the (L, T) plane, though less pronounced. The global trend stays a decrease in refinement of the  
 530 flow models from the smallest to the largest (L, H) values and typical scales of application may again  
 531 be identified for each model refinement, NS ( $10 \text{ cm} < L < 100 \text{ m}$ ,  $1 \text{ mm} < H < 30 \text{ cm}$ ), RANS  
 532 ( $1 \text{ m} < L < 100 \text{ m}$ ,  $5 \text{ cm} < H < 50 \text{ cm}$ ), SV ( $10 \text{ m} < L < 20 \text{ km}$ ,  $1 \text{ cm} < H < 2 \text{ m}$ ) and ASV ( $10 \text{ m} < L < 1000 \text{ km}$ ,  
 533  $10 \text{ cm} < H < 10 \text{ m}$ ). Some studies provide outliers for example Gejadze & Copeland (2006) for canal  
 534 control purposes (NS,  $L \sim 3 \text{ km}$ ,  $H \sim 10 \text{ m}$ ) or Cassan et al. (2012) for flows in lined channels (RANS,  
 535  $L \sim 50 \text{ cm}$ ,  $H \sim 75 \text{ cm}$ ). In an overview, wider overlaps and more dispersion occur in the (L, H) than in  
 536 the (L, T) plane, especially for low to medium scales: flow depth (H) seems less discriminating than  
 537 the time scale (T) in the choice of a flow model.

538

539 The transverse analysis of H/L "fineness ratios" (dotted diagonals  $H/L=10^{-1}$ ,  $10^{-2}$ ,  $10^{-3}$ ,  $10^{-4}$  and  $10^{-5}$ ) provides additional information, or rather a complementary reading grid on the information already  
 540 plotted. First, only the NS and RANS models allow 2D (x, z) flow descriptions, which explains why  
 541 these models have many of the largest H/L ratios (which, in most cases, stay within the  $H \ll L$  shallow  
 542 water hypothesis). Second, low H/L ratios provide justifications to discard 2D (x, z) descriptions at the  
 543 benefit of 1D (x) descriptions within but also without the NS and RANS formalisms, so that the  
 544 second diagonal of Fig. 3 (roughly from the upper right to the lower left) also shows a decrease in  
 545 model refinement, towards SV and ASV points.  
 546 model refinement, towards SV and ASV points.



547  
 548 **Figure 3 – How increasing (L, H) spatiotemporal scales of the flow domain tend to be associated with**  
 549 **decreasing complexity in the choice of flow models, sorted here into four levels of refinement: Navier-**  
 550 **Stokes (NS), Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes (RANS), Saint-Venant (SV) and Approximations to Saint-**  
 551 **Venant (ASV). A transverse analysis involves forming H/L ratios, searching for clues to model selection**  
 552 **according to the "fineness" of the flow or governed by flow typologies that would exhibit specific H/L**  
 553 **ratios. This figure was assembled from information available in the studies cited in Appendix A, selecting**  
 554 **six textbook cases (sketches A to F, Table 1) for illustration.**

555

556 **3.1.3 Influence of domain length ( $L$ ), time scale ( $T$ ) and flow depth ( $H$ )**

557 The links between model refinements (NS, RANS, SV or ASV) and spatiotemporal scales ( $L$ ,  $T$ ,  $H$ )  
558 were shown in the ( $L$ ,  $T$ ) and ( $L$ ,  $H$ ) planes (Fig. 2 and 3). There was first the expected correlation  
559 between increasing scales and decreasing model refinements. Then the transverse analyses involved  
560 re-examining the same dataset from the values of the  $L/T$  and  $H/L$  ratios, also seeking the  
561 determinants of modelling choices in the "system evolution velocity" ( $L/T$ ) and "fineness" of the flow  
562 ( $H/L$ ).

563 - The values of the  $L/T$  ratios indicate that modelling choices owe much to the long-term (low  $L/T$ )  
564 or short-term (high  $L/T$ ) objectives associated with the target variables (velocity, discharge, particle  
565 transport, bed modifications) thus influencing the choice of  $T$  values. However, this choice is not  
566 totally free: it is likely constrained by flow characteristics and typologies.

567 - The values of the  $H/L$  ratios also indicate that flow typology (here, only its "fineness" is explicit)  
568 may be a mattering determinant for the choice of a modelling strategy. This idea is explored in far  
569 more details hereafter. The next section outlines the influence of friction, flow retardation and energy  
570 dissipation processes on flow typology. It advocates thus the definition of flow typologies from  
571 quantities related to the different types and/or magnitudes of flow retardation processes, provided  
572 these quantities are easily accessible (e.g. bed geometry, water depth, bed slope, size of the roughness  
573 elements).

574

575 **3.2 Flow typology**

576 **3.2.1 From friction laws and bed topography to flow characteristics**

577 Early insights on fluid friction and the definition of shear stress proportional to local velocity  
578 gradients came together with the action-reaction law (Newton 1687): friction exerted on the flow was  
579 of equal magnitude as the erosive drag, originally termed "critical tractive force" (Du Buat 1779) and  
580 held responsible for particle detachment. The friction laws mostly resorted to in present-day modelling

581 do not often involve adaptations or generalisations of their famous empirical predecessors in civil  
582 engineering (Chézy 1775, Weisbach 1845, Darcy 1857, Manning 1871) even if practitioners and  
583 modellers are now confronted to far less controlled bed topographies and flow conditions, thus to a  
584 wider variety of flow typologies. The theoretical derivation (or justification) of contextually relevant  
585 friction laws seems therefore crucial, for water flow modelling at the microscopic (Richardson 1973,  
586 Jansons 1988, Priezjev & Troian 2006) or macroscopic scales (Smith et al. 2007, Powell 2014), and  
587 even more for erosion issues. In the literature, the modelling choices to account for friction  
588 phenomena are most often correlated with the refinement of the flow models used (NS, RANS, SV,  
589 ASV) but also constrained by bed topographies and flow typologies in numerous cases.

590

591 Several studies at the NS level of refinement advocate the use of the "partial slip" (Navier 1827)  
592 condition or parented formulations in which the near-bed slip velocity is either proportional to the  
593 shear stress (Jäger & Mikelic 2001, Basson & Gerard-Varet 2008) or depends on it in a non-linear way  
594 (Achdou et al. 1998, Jäger & Mikelic 2003). Other works plead for "no-slip" conditions (Panton 1984,  
595 Casado & Diaz 2003, Myers 2003, Bucur et al. 2008, 2010) or suggest the separation of flow domains  
596 within or outside bed asperities, with a complete slip condition (non-zero tangential velocity) at the  
597 interface (Gerard-Varet & Masmoudi 2010). A wider consensus exists at the RANS level, calculating  
598 bottom friction as the local grain-scale values of the "Reynolds stresses" (Kline et al. 1967, Nezu &  
599 Nekagawa 1993, Keshavarzy & Ball 1997), which has proven especially relevant for flows in small  
600 streams over large asperities (Lawless & Robert 2001, Nikora et al. 2001, Pokrajac et al. 2007,  
601 Schmeeckle et al. 2007). However, he who can do more, can do less, and it is still possible to use the  
602 simplest empirical friction coefficients (Chézy, Manning) within sophisticated flow descriptions (NS:  
603 Lane et al. 1994, RANS: Métivier & Meunier 2003). In the literature, the SV level of refinement is a  
604 tilting point in complexity, that allows fundamental research, deriving ad hoc shear stress formulae  
605 from the local fluid-solid interactions (Gerbeau & Perthame 2001, Roche 2006, Devauchelle et al.  
606 2007, Marche 2007) or applied research, adjusting parameter values in existing expressions, for  
607 specific contexts (e.g. boulder streams: Bathurst 1985, 2006, step-pool sequences: Zimmermann &

608 Church 2001, irrigation channels: Hauke 2002, gravel-bed channels: Ferro 2003). This trend holds for  
609 most studies at the ASV level of refinement, though theoretical justifications of Manning's empirical  
610 formula were recently derived (Gioia & Bombardelli 2002) and a recent mathematical study of the  
611 diffusive wave equation (Alonso et al. 2008) introduces generalized friction laws for flows over non-  
612 negligible topographic obstacles. The event-based variability of the friction coefficient in ASV models  
613 has been investigated by Gaur & Mathur (2002).

614

615 If not decided from the level of refinement of the flow model, the friction coefficient ( $f$ ) is chosen  
616 in accordance with flow typology and bed topography, the former often described by the Reynolds  
617 number ( $Re$ ), the latter by the inundation ratio ( $\Lambda_z = H/\epsilon$  where  $\epsilon$  is the size of bed asperities, to which  
618 flow depth  $H$  is compared). Such arguments were already present in the works of Keulegan (1938) and  
619 Moody (1944) on flow retardation in open-channel and pipe flows, relating values of the friction  
620 coefficient to the relative roughness ( $\epsilon/H = 1/\Lambda_z$ ) of the flow, across several flow regimes (laminar,  
621 transitional, turbulent) but only for small relative roughness (high inundation ratios). The existence of  
622 implicit relations between  $f$ ,  $Re$  and  $\Lambda_z$  has somehow triggered the search for contextual alternatives to  
623 the sole  $f$ - $Re$  relation for turbulent flows. Progressively lower inundation ratios were investigated  
624 (Smith et al. 2007) until the real cases of emergent obstacles received attention (Bayazit 1976,  
625 Abrahams & Parsons 1994, Bathurst 2006, Meile 2007, Mügler et al. 2010) including for non-  
626 submerged vegetation (Prosser et al. 1995, Nepf 1999, Järvelä 2005, Nikora et al. 2008). For site-  
627 specific friction laws, the default  $f$ - $Re$  relation is sometimes complemented by  $f$ - $Fr$  trends (Grant 1997,  
628 Gimenez et al. 2004, Tatard et al. 2008) or  $f$ - $\Lambda_z$  relations (Peyras et al. 1992, Chin 1999, Chartrand &  
629 Whiting 2000, Church & Zimmermann 2007) in steep bed morphologies, where  $Fr$  is the Froude  
630 number (Froude 1868).

631

632 Knowledge gained on flow retardation processes lead to the identification of key dimensionless  
633 groups, to be included in any comprehensive analysis, formed from the "obvious", available elements  
634 of bed geometry previously mentioned (Julien & Simons 1985, Lawrence 2000, Ferro 2003, Yager et

635 al. 2007). In numerous practical cases though, explicit bed geometries cannot be handled by the flow  
636 models. A crucial surrogate becomes then to include as many geometrical effects as possible in the  
637 chosen friction laws, for example these obtained from composite roughness experiments (Schlichting  
638 1936, Colebrook & White 1937, Einstein & Banks 1950). A crucial advance was due to Smith &  
639 McLean (1977) who attributed distinct retardation effects to bed particles, particle aggregates and  
640 bedforms, corresponding to “grain spill”, “obstructions” and “long-wave form resistance” in the  
641 subsequent literature. From then on, friction forces exerted by multiple roughness elements or scales  
642 have often been described as additive-by-default, in shallow overland flows (Rauws 1980, Abrahams  
643 et al. 1986), gravel-bed streams (Bathurst 1985, Lawless & Robert 2001, Ferro 2003), natural step-  
644 pool formations (Chin & Wohl 2005, Canovaro & Solari 2007, Church & Zimmermann 2007) and  
645 man-made spillways or weirs (Peyras et al. 1992, Chinnarasri & Wongwise 2006).

646

### 647 3.2.2 *From flow characteristics to flow typologies*

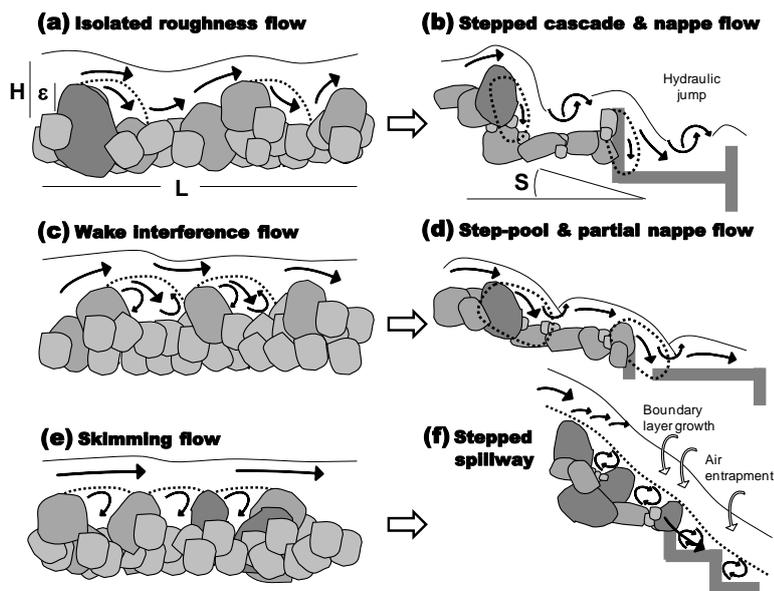
648 Several authors have put forward the existence of a scale-independent link between bed geometry,  
649 flow retardation and flow structure, through the existence of three distinct flow regimes, from  
650 geometrical arguments: "isolated roughness", "wake interference" and "skimming" flow (Morris 1955,  
651 1959, Leopold et al. 1960, Fig. 4a, c and e). These flow descriptions were later applied in very  
652 different contexts (Abrahams & Parsons 1994, Chanson 1994a, Papanicolaou et al. 2001,  
653 Zimmermann & Church 2001), which suggests that analogies in energy dissipation and flow  
654 retardation may exist across scales, from similar geometries and flow characteristics. This makes the  
655 description somewhat generic, possibly used to constitute a set of flow typologies.

656

657 In Fig. 4a, the isolated roughness flow is laminar or weakly turbulent and the shade (streamline  
658 diversion) of an obstacle does not reach the next. This setting ensures maximum energy dissipation,  
659 which also holds for stepped cascades of natural or man-made nature in Fig. 4b: "nappe flows" loose  
660 strength through energy-consuming fully-developed hydraulic jumps, isolated behind the major

661 obstacles (Peyras et al. 1992, Chanson 1994b, Wu & Rajaratnam 1996, 1998). In Fig. 4c the wake-  
 662 interference flow is transitional or turbulent. The drag reduction and partial sheltering between  
 663 obstacles depend on their spatial distribution and arrangements, as in Fig. 4d that shows "partial nappe  
 664 flow" in relatively flat step-pool formations, with incomplete hydraulic jumps between obstacles of  
 665 irregular sizes and spacing (Wu & Rajaratnam 1996, 1998, Chanson 2001). In Fig. 4e, the turbulent  
 666 skimming flow exhibits a coherent stream cushioned by the recirculating fluid trapped between  
 667 obstacles and responsible for friction losses. Similar characteristics appear in Fig. 4f, for submerged  
 668 cascades or large discharges on stepped spillways. Air entrapment begins where the boundary layer  
 669 reaches the free surface and flow aeration triggers subscale energy dissipation (Rajaratnam 1990,  
 670 Chanson 1994b).

671



672

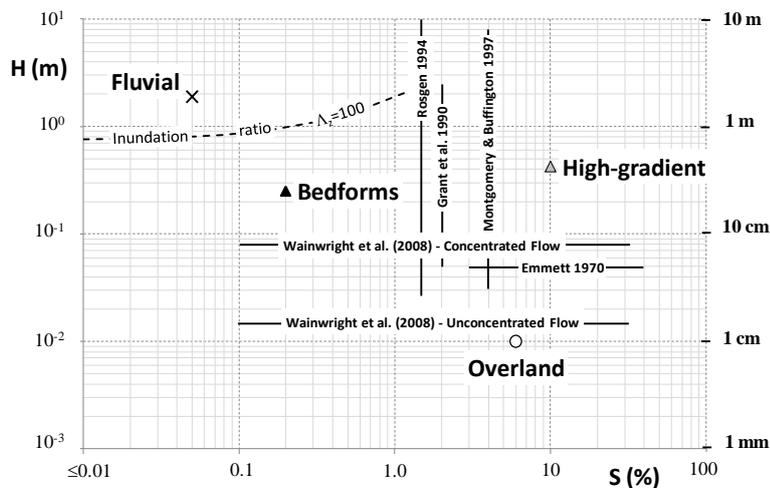
673 **Figure 4 – Analogies in flow characteristics, retardation processes and energy dissipation structures for**  
 674 **very different flow typologies: streams (a, c, e) and high-gradient natural or man-made stepped flows (b,**  
 675 **d, f). The combined values of flow depth (H), slope (S) and inundation ratio ( $\Lambda_x=H/\epsilon$ , where  $\epsilon$  is the**  
 676 **roughness size) appear as strong geometrical controls over flow characteristics and typologies.**

677

678

679 At this point, our set of flow typologies should be obtained from the geometrical arguments  
 680 available in Fig. 4 (water depth  $H$ , bed slope  $S$ , inundation ratio  $\Lambda_z=H/\epsilon$ ). The simplest way to proceed  
 681 is to work in the  $(S, H)$  plane, then to add a criterion on  $\Lambda_z$  if the values of  $S$  and  $H$  are not  
 682 discriminating enough. The first two flow typologies (Overland flow, noted O, and High-gradient  
 683 flow, noted Hg) may be identified by a single criterion on  $H$  only ( $H < H_{LIM}$ , Emmett 1970, Wainwright  
 684 et al. 2008) or on  $S$  only ( $S > S_{LIM}$ , Grant et al. 1990, Rosgen 1994, Montgomery & Buffington 1997).  
 685 At least two flow typologies remained to be distinguished, Fluvial flows (F) and flows over significant  
 686 bedforms (e.g. rough plane bed, dune-ripples or pool riffles, as suggested by Montgomery &  
 687 Buffington 1997), referred to as Bedforms (B) in the following. Though Fluvial flows are expected to  
 688 have the highest flow depths, an additional criterion on  $\Lambda_z$  may be used to make the difference  
 689 between these last two typologies. Figure 5 positions the selected (O, Hg, B, F) flow typologies in the  
 690  $(S, H)$  plane.

691



692

693 **Figure 5 – Median position of the studies belonging to the "Overland", "High-gradient", "Bedforms" and**  
 694 **"Fluvial" flow typologies, plotted on the  $(S, H)$  plane, also tracing an approximate**  
 695 **additional criterion on the inundation ratio ( $\Lambda_z=H/\epsilon$ , where  $\epsilon$  is the size of the bed asperities) to separate**

696 **the Fluvial and Bedforms types of flow. This figure was assembled from information available in the**  
697 **studies cited in Appendix A.**

698

699 Moreover, there is a strong link between Fig. 4 and 5, which tends to ensure the genericity (if not  
700 uniqueness) of the selected set of typologies. The Overland typology corresponds to Fig. 4a or c, the  
701 Bedforms typology likely appears in Fig. 4c, the Fluvial typology in Fig. 4 and the High-gradient  
702 typology in Fig. 4b, d or f. In coherence with Fig. 5, an increase in bed slope changes the Bedforms  
703 and Fluvial typologies into the High-gradient typology, while an increase in both water depth and bed  
704 slope is needed to do the same from the Overland typology.

705

### 706 *3.2.3 Influence of flow typologies on modelling choices*

707 Figures 6 and 7 provide a comprehensive picture of the most used associations between models  
708 (NS, RANS, SV or ASV), scales (L, T, H) and flow typologies (O, Hg, B or F) just added to the  
709 analysis. These figures seem to indicate preferential [NS, O], [RANS, B] and [SV, Hg] associations, in  
710 addition to the obvious [ASV, F] pair. The (L, H) plot of Fig. 6 seems more discriminating than the (L,  
711 T) plot of Fig. 7 though identical trends appear.

712

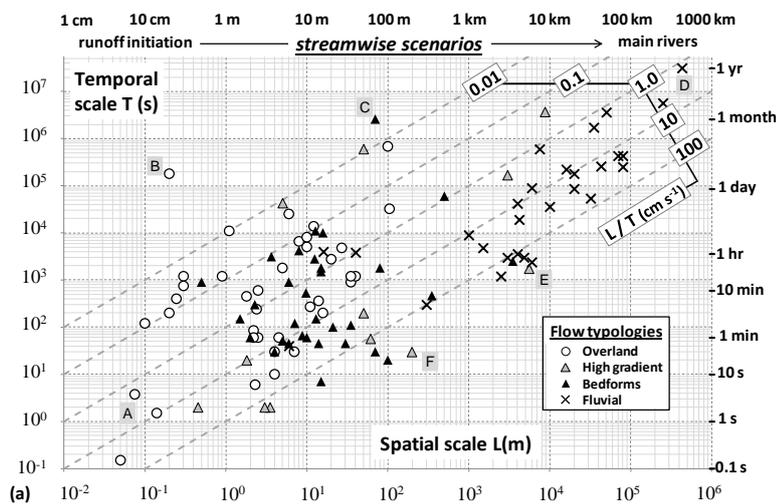
713 The [NS, O] association arises from the fact that several Overland studies involve very shallow  
714 laminar flows and low sediment transport rates, best handled by adapted formulations of the NS  
715 equations (nearly at the SV level), made suitable for low "system evolution velocities" ( $L/T \approx 0.01 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ,  
716 Fig. 6). At somewhat larger spatial scales, the widely-used and multipurpose SV model has rather  
717 low median  $L/T \approx 0.02 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  values, mainly because many of its applications concern laminar flow  
718 modelling and granular transport, as an alternative to the NS system or in formulations at complexity  
719 levels intermediate between the NS and SV descriptions. These are clues that the [SV, O] association  
720 may also be of special interest, despite the closest median positions of the NS and O points in the (L,  
721 T) and (L, H) plots.

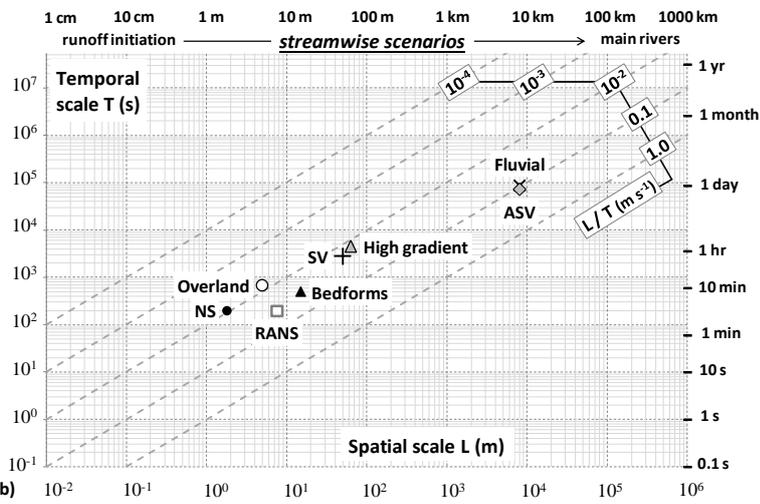
722

723 The RANS model (median  $L/T \approx 0.07 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ) and the ASV models (median  $L/T \approx 0.1 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ ) tend to  
724 involve higher "system evolution velocities". The former typically targets the description of numerous  
725 short-term, high-frequency events (quadrant analysis for fluctuations in near-bed velocity, particle  
726 pick-up by turbulent bursts). The latter is often associated with Fluvial flows: low H/L ratios with high  
727 enough H and  $\Lambda_z$  values with weak friction, often resulting in very turbulent, high-velocity flow.  
728 Moreover, studies handling erosion issues within the ASV formalism often hypothesize particle  
729 transport to occur as suspended load only, equating particle and flow velocities, thus typically not  
730 extending the time scale of the study to address the long-term, low velocity bedload transport involved  
731 in morphodynamics, for example.

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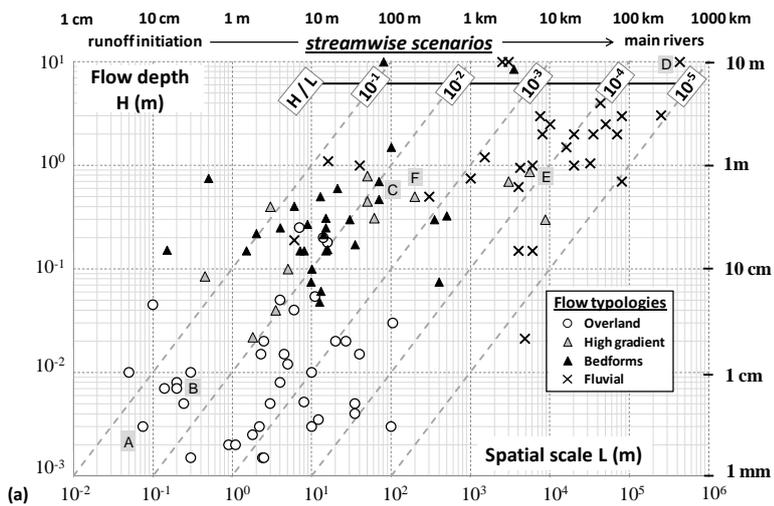




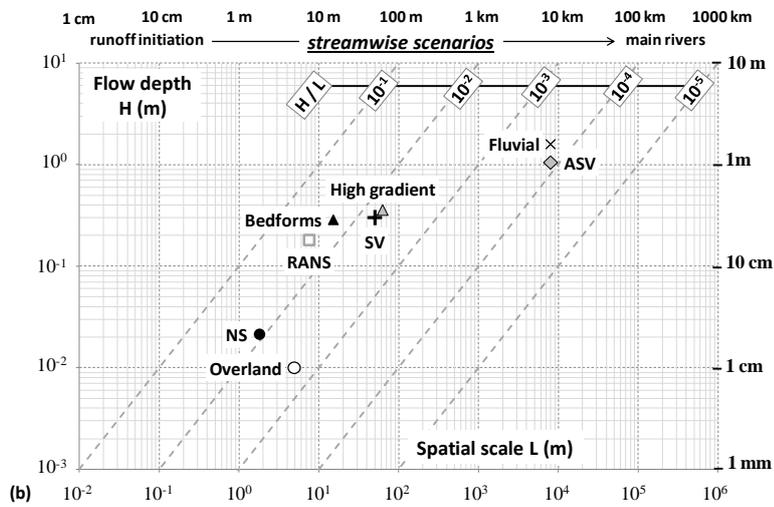
733 (b)

734 Figure 6 – Position of the flow typologies in the (L, T) plane for the studies listed in Appendix A, selecting  
 735 six textbook cases (sketches A to F, Table 1) for illustration (a). Median positions for the choice of free-  
 736 surface flow models (Navier-Stokes: NS, Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes: RANS, Saint-Venant: SV or  
 737 Approximations to Saint-Venant: ASV) and the study of flow typologies (Overland, High-gradient,  
 738 Bedforms or Fluvial) across scales in the (L, T) plane (b). A transverse analysis involves forming L/T  
 739 ratios, searching for clues to model selection according to these "system evolution velocities" or governed  
 740 by flow typologies that would exhibit specific L/T ratios.

741



742 (a)



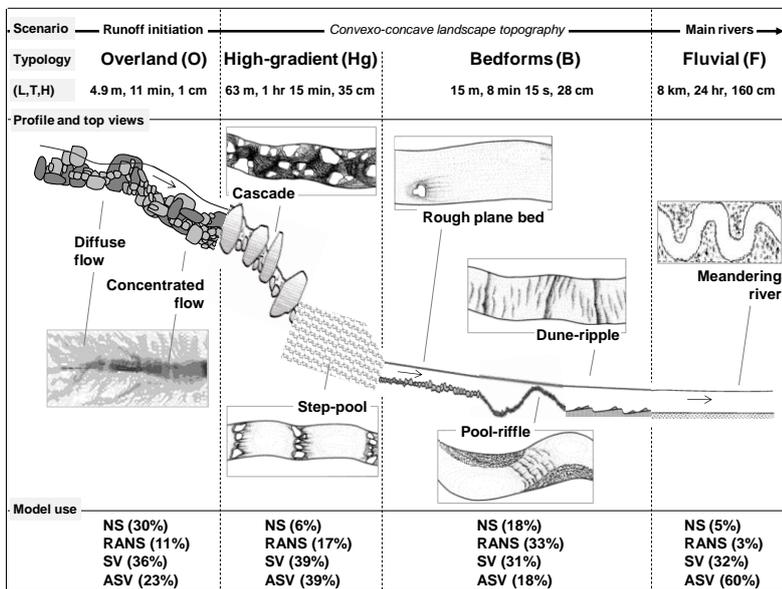
743 (b)  $10^{-2}$   $10^{-1}$   $10^0$   $10^1$   $10^2$   $10^3$   $10^4$   $10^5$   $10^6$

744 Figure 7 – Position of the flow typologies in the (L, H) plane for the studies listed in Appendix A, selecting  
 745 six textbook cases (sketches A to F, Table 1) for illustration (a). Median positions for the choice of free-  
 746 surface flow models (Navier-Stokes: NS, Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes: RANS, Saint-Venant: SV or  
 747 Approximations to Saint-Venant: ASV) and the study of flow typologies (Overland, High-gradient,  
 748 Bedforms or Fluvial) across scales in the (L, H) plane (b). A transverse analysis involves forming H/L  
 749 ratios, searching for clues to model selection according to these "finenesses" of the flow domain or  
 750 governed by flow typologies that would exhibit specific H/L ratios.

751  
 752

753 Several principles of organization between flow typologies may be inferred from reference studies  
 754 (Grant et al. 1990, Montgomery & Buffington 1997, Church 2002) that discuss their succession in  
 755 space (along longitudinal profiles) but also in time (which flow typologies are "experienced" by the  
 756 flowing water during its course and which are the associated time scales). Plausible "streamwise  
 757 scenarios" may therefore be assembled (Fig. 8), routing flow aggregations across increasing  
 758 spatiotemporal scales and through several flow typologies, from the narrow-scale upland flows (runoff  
 759 initiation) to the regional scales of the main rivers.

760



761

762 **Figure 8 – Streamwise scenario for a convexo-concave landscape topography, from runoff initiation to the**  
 763 **main rivers, across flow typologies (Overland O, High-gradient Hg, Bedforms B or Fluvial F) and**  
 764 **spatiotemporal scales (L, T, H). The indicated L, T and H values are the median values for the spatial**  
 765 **scale, time scale and water depth, respectively, from the literature cited in Appendix A (Fig. 6 and 7). All**  
 766 **sketches and drawings for the High-gradient and Bedforms typologies were taken from Montgomery &**  
 767 **Buffington (1997). The top view for Overland flow is from Tatard et al. (2008) and that of a meandering**  
 768 **river from Rosgen (1994). The "model use" panel indicates the model refinement most used (Navier-**  
 769 **Stokes NS, Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes RANS, Saint-Venant SV or Approximations to Saint-**  
 770 **Venant ASV) to describe a given flow typology in the literature.**

771

### 772 **3.3 Dimensionless numbers**

#### 773 **3.3.1 Contextual dimensionless numbers**

774 An angle of attack for the establishment of modelling strategies is provided by dimensional  
775 analysis, to delineate the domains of validity of the selected flow models (NS, RANS, SV or ASV),  
776 across their multiple spatiotemporal scales of application but in a powerful scale-independent analysis.  
777 Justifications for the use of dimensionless numbers may be sought in the developments of similitude  
778 laws (Fourier 1822, Rayleigh 1877, Bertrand 1878, Vaschy 1892, Riabouchinsky 1911), later extended  
779 to dimensional analysis, providing guidance for the sizing of experimental facilities used in reduced-  
780 scale modelling as well as more general arguments for the choice of adequate sets of dimensionless  
781 quantities (Buckingham's 1914  $\pi$ -theorem, Bridgman 1922, Langhaar 1951, Bridgman 1963,  
782 Barenblatt 1987). Throughout history, the establishment of dimensionless numbers has led to the  
783 recognition of contextually dominant terms in the flow equations, rendering them prone to dedicated  
784 simplifications, provided these would not be used outside their conditions of validity, following  
785 successive hypotheses made during their derivation.

786

787 From a wide overview of free-surface flow and erosion studies, a few dimensionless numbers stood  
788 out and will be used in the procedure presented in the following. Some have already been mentioned  
789 (Reynolds number  $Re$ , Froude number  $Fr$ ) and some others have even been used to define flow  
790 typologies (bed slope  $S$ , inundation ratio  $\Lambda_z$ ). As all dimensionless numbers aim to describe flow  
791 typology, the introduction of two more dimensionless numbers may be seen as an attempt to re-  
792 examine the influence of flow typologies on modelling choices, from a different, more complete  
793 perspective (especially if the dimensionless numbers not used in the definition of flow typologies  
794 prove discriminating for the modelling choices).

795 - The dimensionless period  $T^*=T/T_0$  handles temporal aspects by comparing the chosen time scale  
796 ( $T$ ) to the natural time scale ( $T_0$ ) of the system, the latter obtained from the spatial scale of the system

797 and the average flow velocity as  $T_0=L/U$  (Fig. 1). This dimensionless group or equivalent formulations  
798 are used to model wave celerity in flood propagation issues (Ponce & Simons 1977, Moussa &  
799 Bocquillon 1996a, Julien 2010) or to quantify the long characteristic times ( $T^*\gg 1$ ) of basin-scale  
800 sedimentation. In the latter, particle transport (and significant bed modifications) typically involve  
801 lower velocities (and larger time scales) than these of water flow (Paola et al. 1992, Howard 1994,  
802 Van Heijst et al. 2001) and the chosen  $T$  value witnesses this discrepancy.

803 - The Reynolds number  $Re=UH/\nu$  compares flow inertia (velocity  $U$  times depth  $H$ ) with the  
804 adverse action of (kinematic) viscosity ( $\nu$  [ $L T^{-2}$ ]). In natural setting, over very rough boundaries, fully  
805 turbulent flows are often reported for  $Re>2000$ , while the onset of turbulence within transitional  
806 regimes occurs at  $Re\sim 500$ . Laminar overland flows, especially thin film flows, may have  $Re$  values as  
807 low as  $Re<100$ .

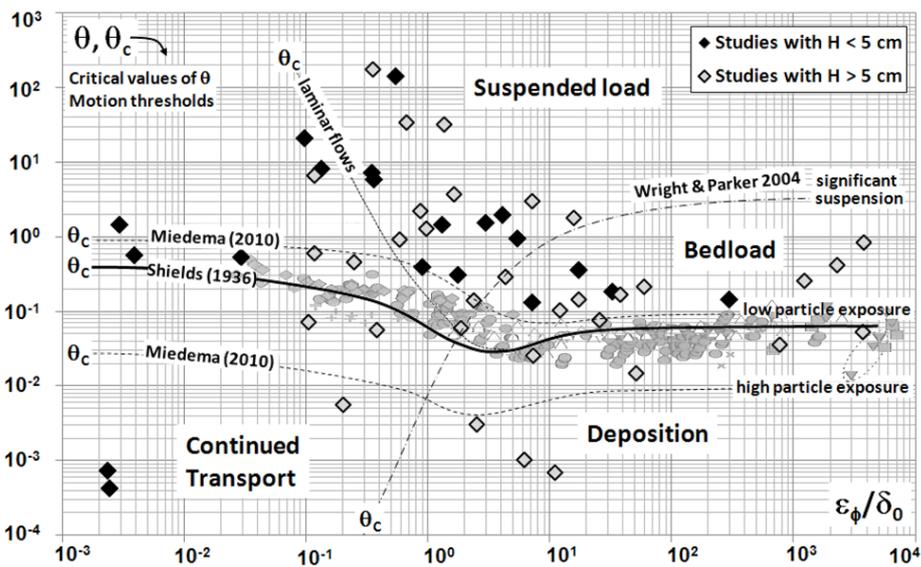
808 - The Froude number  $Fr=U/(gH)^{0.5}$  denotes the influence of gravity ( $g$ ) on fluid motion.  
809 Supercritical  $Fr>1$  values indicate torrential flows, accelerated by pressure effects, in which waves  
810 propagate only downstream, also compatible with the appearance of localised energy dissipation  
811 patterns (white waters, hydraulic jumps). Subcritical  $Fr<1$  values indicate tranquil flows with  
812 downstream controls.

813 - Topographical effects on flow phenomenology are almost always explicitly accounted for through  
814 the average bed slope  $S$ , typically ranging from nearly zero ( $S<0.01\%$ ) for large rivers to extremely  
815 high values ( $S\approx 100\%$ ) for gabion weirs, chutes or very steep cascades.

816 - Topography also appears through the inundation ratio  $\Lambda_z=H/\varepsilon$  which allows a direct, model-  
817 independent analysis of friction phenomena (Lawrence 1997, 2000, Ferguson 2007, Smith et al. 2007)  
818 possibly dealing with large-size obstacles and form-induced stresses (Kramer & Papanicolaou 2005,  
819 Manes et al. 2007, Cooper et al. 2013). The encountered values of  $\Lambda_z$  are very high for rivers flowing  
820 on smooth, cohesive, fine-grained beds ( $\Lambda_z>100$ ) and very low for all types of flows between emergent  
821 obstacles ( $\Lambda_z<1$ ).

822 - The dimensionless Shields number  $\theta = \tau_0 / g \varepsilon_p (\rho_p - \rho)$  compares the drag force exerted on bed  
 823 particles to their immersed weight, where  $\varepsilon_p$  and  $\rho_p$  account for the size and density of erodible  
 824 particles.. The ratio between the current  $\theta$  and the critical  $\theta_c$  values indicates local flow conditions of  
 825 deposition ( $\theta < \theta_c$ ), incipient motion ( $\theta \approx \theta_c$ ), transportation as bedload ( $\theta > \theta_c$ ) or into suspension ( $\theta \gg \theta_c$ )  
 826 (Shields 1936). This number seems appropriate for most erosion issues because it has been widely  
 827 applied and debated in the literature (Coleman 1967, Ikeda 1982, Wiberg & Smith 1987, Zanke 2003,  
 828 Lamb et al. 2008) and also because of its numerous possible adaptations (Neill 1968, ~~Parker et al.~~  
 829 ~~2003~~, Ouriemi et al. 2007, Miedema 2010) to various flow typologies and non-uniform or poorly-  
 830 known bed conditions. An impressive review on the use of the Shields number to determine incipient  
 831 motion conditions, over eight decades of experimental studies, may be found in Buffington &  
 832 Montgomery (1997). Finally, Fig.9 provides a generalized Shields diagram that includes motion  
 833 threshold criteria under the effects of high or low particle exposure (Miedema 2010) or for laminar  
 834 flows, also indicating the conditions of significant suspension (Wright & Parker 2004).

835



836

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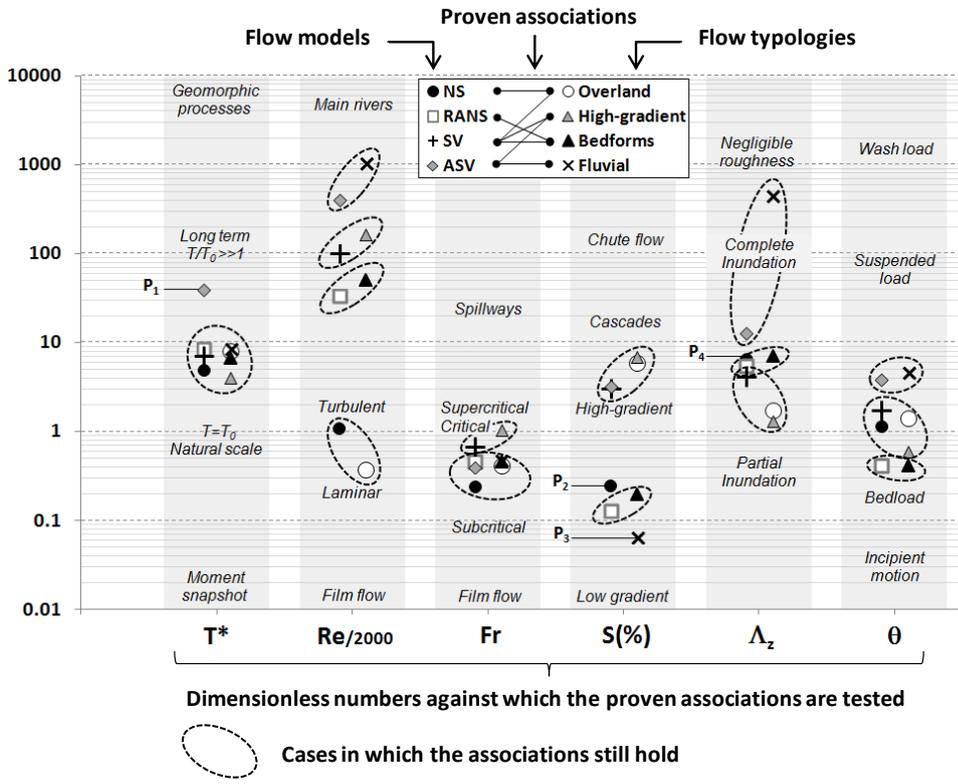
837 **Figure 9 - Generalized dimensionless Shields diagram that summarizes the conditions and regimes of**  
838 **sediment transport or deposition, from the relative values of the Shields parameter ( $\theta$ ) and incipient**  
839 **motion criterion ( $\theta_c$ ). The X-axis bears the values of the ratio of particle size ( $\epsilon_p$ ) on the depth of the**  
840 **laminar sublayer ( $\delta_0$ ). The diamonds refer to the studies cited in Appendix A that deal with erosion issues:**  
841 **black diamonds for studies in which flow depth is  $H < 5$  cm, grey diamonds otherwise. Data in the**  
842 **background show the critical  $\theta_c$  values reported in the wide Buffington & Montgomery (1993) review of**  
843 **incipient motion conditions for varied flow regimes, particle forms and exposures.**  
844

### 845 3.3.2 Influence of the dimensionless numbers

846 As the purpose here is to re-examine the influence of flow typologies from the angle of the  
847 dimensionless numbers, the chosen representation (Fig. 109) discards the (L, T, H) spatiotemporal  
848 scales. It first recalls the preferential associations between models and flow typologies (see the "model  
849 use" panel of Fig. 8) by tracing connecting dotted lines between flow typologies and the models most  
850 used to handle them, in the legend of Fig. 109. It then examines whether these associations still hold,  
851 for each of the six dimensionless numbers, by plotting and comparing the median values of  $T^*$ , Re, Fr,  
852 S,  $\Lambda_z$  and  $\theta$  for model uses (NS, RANS, SV or ASV) and flow typologies (O, Hg, B, F). The dotted  
853 ellipses are "confirmations" (e.g. no additional information may likely be obtained from Re, Fr and  $\theta$ ).  
854 Conversely, the presence of "non-associated" points ( $P_1$  for  $T^*$ ,  $P_2$  and  $P_3$  for S,  $P_4$  for  $\Lambda_z$ ) signals  
855 something new: an influence not yet accounted for.

856  
857 For example, the isolated  $P_1$  point indicates the expected ASV-F association does not appear on the  
858  $T^*$  values, as the ASV applications exhibit higher median  $T^*$  values than the F typologies. The  
859 suggested interpretation is that large (L, T, H) scales and Fluvial flows likely trigger the use of the  
860 ASV model, though the necessity to handle large dimensionless periods makes the typological  
861 argument less conclusive. The  $P_2$  and  $P_3$  points indicate the break of the NS-O and ASV-F associations  
862 when examined from the angle of the bed slopes. This reinforces the use of bed slopes in the search for  
863 determinants of modelling choices, either in the definition of flow typologies in the (S, H) plane or as

864 such. The  $P_4$  point indicates the break of the NS-O association when considering the values of the  
 865 inundation ratio, with the same conclusion as above.



866  
 867 **Figure 109** - Comparative overview of the median values of the six selected dimensionless numbers  
 868 (dimensionless period  $T^*=T/T_0$ , ratio of the chosen time scale on the "natural" time scale of the flow,  
 869 Reynolds number  $Re$ , Froude number  $Fr$ , slope  $S$ , inundation ratio  $\Lambda_z$  and Shields parameter  $\theta$ ) obtained  
 870 for the use of systems of equations (NS, RANS, SV and ASV) and the description of flow typologies (O,  
 871 Hg, B and F) in the cited literature. The expected associations are indicated by dotted connecting lines in  
 872 the legend box. The confirmed associations are indicated by dotted ellipses. Broken associations (isolated  
 873 points  $P_1$  to  $P_4$ ) are discussed in the text. The typical and extreme ranges of the mentioned dimensionless  
 874 numbers have been added for indication. This figure was assembled from information available in the  
 875 studies cited in Appendix A.

876  
 877



## 879 4 Conclusion

### 880 4.1 Outcomes of this review

881 In a free opinion on the use of models in hydrology, De Marsily (1994) elegantly argued that the  
882 modelling of observable phenomena should obey “*serious working constraints, well-known from*  
883 *classical tragedy: unity of place, unity of time, unity of action*”. This review paper investigates how  
884 known spatial scales, temporal scales and flow typologies constrain the choice of a modelling strategy.  
885 A normative procedure was built to facilitate the search for determinants of the modelling choices in  
886 the cited literature.

887 - Each free surface flow model was placed in one of the NS, RANS, SV or ASV categories, whose  
888 decreasing levels of refinement account for "Navier-Stokes", "Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes",  
889 "Saint-Venant" or "Approximations to Saint-Venant" types of approaches.

890 - The explored (L, T, H) spatiotemporal scales cover multiple orders of magnitude in the  
891 streamwise direction ( $5\text{ cm} < L < 1000\text{ km}$ ), the time duration ( $0.1\text{ s} < T < 1\text{ yr}$ ) and flow depth ( $1$   
892  $\text{mm} < H < 10\text{ m}$ ).

893 - This study also encompasses a wide variety of free-surface flows, reduced to four typologies from  
894 arguments on bed geometry, friction, flow retardation and energy dissipation processes. These  
895 typologies are Overland flow (O: diffuse or concentrated), High-gradient flow (Hg: cascades, step-  
896 pools), flows over significant Bedforms (B: rough plane beds, dune ripples, pool riffles) and Fluvial  
897 flows (F: rivers, canals). Overland flows have the shallowest depths, High-gradient flows the highest  
898 bed slopes, Fluvial flows have high flow depths and negligible bed roughness while Bedforms flows  
899 may have any flow depth, over pronounced, non-negligible bedforms.

900 - In addition to the spatiotemporal scales and flow typologies, the determinants of modelling  
901 choices are also sought in a series of six popular dimensionless numbers: the dimensionless period  
902 ( $T^*$ ), Reynolds and Froude numbers ( $Re$ ,  $Fr$ ), the bed slope ( $S$ ), the inundation ratio ( $\Lambda_z = H/\varepsilon$  where  $\varepsilon$   
903 is the size of bed asperities) and the Shields number ( $\theta$ ) that compares drag forces to particle weight.

904

905 In summary, each case-study may be defined by its signature, comprised of the chosen model (NS,  
906 RANS, SV or ASV), the given spatiotemporal scales (L, T, H), flow typology (O, H, B or F) and  
907 dimensionless numbers ( $T^*$ , Re, Fr, S,  $\Lambda_z$ ,  $\theta$ ). Though non-unique, this signature is a generic and  
908 normative classification of studies interested in free-surface flow modelling, with or without erosion  
909 issues.

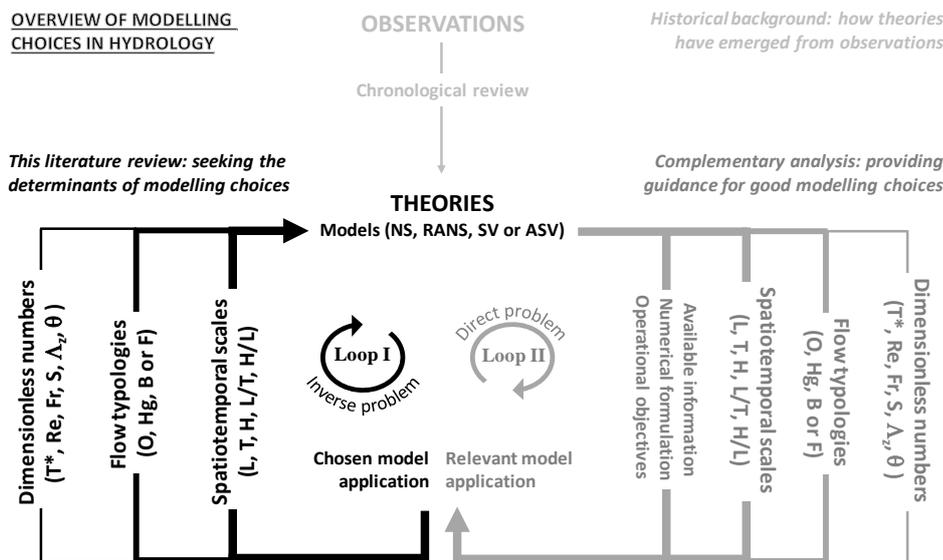
910 - The present review first illustrated the expected dominant trend of decreasing model refinement  
911 with increasing (L, T, H) spatiotemporal scales. It appeared then that model uses could also be sorted  
912 by their L/T and H/L ratios, though less clearly, which nevertheless provided indications that the  
913 spatiotemporal scales were not the only determinant of modelling choices. This result suggested that  
914 flow typologies (reduced here to the L/T "system evolution velocity" and H/L "fineness of the flow")  
915 were also influential factors.

916 - A more exhaustive set of flow typologies was then derived from simple geometrical arguments,  
917 combining criteria on S, H and  $\Lambda_z$ , represented in the (S, H) plane. This allowed quantifying the  
918 median scales associated with studies interested in the Overland (O), Bedforms (B), High-gradient  
919 (Hg) and Fluvial (F) typologies, sorted here by increasing spatiotemporal scales. Then came the  
920 identification of preferential associations between flow models, scales and typologies: [NS, O] or [SV,  
921 O], [RANS, B] or [SV, B], [SV, Hg] or [ASV, Hg] and [ASV, F] for increasing spatiotemporal scales.

922 - The final step was to re-examine the previous associations from the values of the dimensionless  
923 numbers, thought here as more detailed, scale-independent descriptors of flow typologies. Several  
924 associations were confirmed by the median values of the associated dimensionless numbers but the  $T^*$   
925 (dimensionless period), S (bed slope) and  $\Lambda_z$  (inundation ratio) introduced additional information., i.e.  
926 correcting trends.

927  
928 All arguments prevailing in the identification and sorting of flow models, scales, typologies and  
929 dimensionless numbers may easily be debated and adapted, within the hydrology-erosion community  
930 or for other research purposes. For example, multiple flow models, scales, typologies and  
931 dimensionless numbers also intervene in the fields of pesticide fate modelling and groundwater

932 contamination issues, so the same procedure could be applied. Finally, this procedure offers the  
 933 possibility to enrich the database of signatures if each modeller records his (or her) conceptual choices  
 934 (flow models) in the proposed reading grid, together with the contextual elements (scales, typologies,  
 935 dimensionless numbers) handled, for present and past studies. This would first help forming a  
 936 comprehensive view of modelling choices, thus seeking guidance from "what has been done in similar  
 937 cases", which however does not provide any critical analysis. Complementary investigations could  
 938 certainly address the question of "what should be done", this time deciding the "model" part of the  
 939 signatures from recommendations based on the scales, typologies and dimensionless numbers, as well  
 940 as from additional elements, typically the modelling objectives (Figure 11).



942  
 943  
 944 **Figure 11 – This figure provides a simplified overview of the available modelling choices in hydrology, in three**  
 945 **distinct colours associated with specific research purposes or disciplines, showing the position of the present review**  
 946 **relative to the others. The pale grey section aims at understanding how the available flow models have emerged from**  
 947 **observations and early formulations of the flow equations, focusing on their conditions of validity i.e. the successive**  
 948 **hypotheses made during their derivation. The black section recalls the procedure followed in this review paper (Loop**  
 949 **I, "inverse problem"). Literature sources are processed through a procedure that analyses how the spatiotemporal**

950 scales (spatial scale  $L$ , time scale  $T$ , flow depth  $H$ ,  $L/T$  and  $H/L$  ratios), then flow typology (Overland  $O$ , High-gradient  
951  $Hg$ , Bedforms  $B$  or Fluvial  $F$ ) and dimensionless numbers (dimensionless period  $T^*$ , Reynolds number  $Re$ , Froude  
952 number  $Fr$ , bed slope  $S$ , inundation ratio  $A_2$ , Shields parameter  $\theta$ ) determine the choice of a flow model (Navier-  
953 Stokes  $NS$ , Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes  $RANS$ , Saint-Venant  $SV$  or approximations  $ASV$ ). Suggested in  
954 medium grey on the right are the scope and principles of future research challenges that would address the "*what*  
955 *should be done?*" (Loop II, "direct problem") question in echo to the current "*what has been done?*" concern (Loop I).

956

#### 957 **4.2 Research challenges in hydrology and philosophy of modelling**

958 This review has sought the determinants of modelling choices in hydrology (Figure 11, Loop I)  
959 from the basis provided by literature sources, without any intention to provide recommendations.  
960 However, for most practical applications, the starting point is the definition of a scope and the  
961 endpoint is the evaluation of the objective function to evaluate the success or the failure of the chosen  
962 modelling strategy. A question thus arises on how to guide the modeller in the choice of an adequate  
963 model, in function of given, approximately known spatiotemporal scales, flow typology and  
964 dimensionless numbers (Figure 11, Loop II). According to the principle of parsimony, modellers  
965 should seek the simplest modelling strategy capable of (i) a realistic representation of the physical  
966 processes, (ii) matching the performances of more complex models and (iii) providing the right  
967 answers for the right reasons.

968 - (i) Throughout the last decades, an important change of the scope of free-surface flow modelling  
969 applications has taken place, with subsequent changes in the objective functions resorted to. The  
970 development of hydrological and hydraulic sciences has been directly linked to the progresses in  
971 understanding processes, in theoretical model development (e.g. computational facilities: numerical  
972 techniques, data assimilation, thorough model exploration, inverse calculus) and in data acquisition  
973 (new devices, remote sensing, LiDAR). "*It may seem strange to end a review of modelling with an*  
974 *observation that future progress is very strongly linked to the acquisition of new data and to new*  
975 *experimental work but that, in our opinion, is the state of the science*" (Hornberger & Boyer 1995).

976 - (ii) However, there remains an important need for research on classical free-surface flow  
977 (hydrological or hydraulic) modelling for engineering applications in predicting floods, designing  
978 water supply infrastructures and for water resources management, from the headwater catchment to  
979 the regional scale. More recently, free-surface flow modelling has become an indispensable tool for  
980 many interdisciplinary projects, such as predicting pollution and/or erosion incidents, the impact of  
981 anthropogenic and climate change on environmental variables such as water, soil, biology, ecology, or  
982 socio-economy and ecosystemic services. The direct consequence is a significant increase of the  
983 complexity of the objective function, from simple mono-site (e.g. one-point), mono-variable (e.g. the  
984 water depth) and mono-criterion (e.g. the error on peakflow) to complex multi-site (e.g. large number  
985 of points within a catchment), multi-variable (e.g. water depth, hydrograph, water table,  
986 concentrations, ecological indicators, economic impact) and multi-criteria (e.g. errors on peakflow,  
987 volume, RMSE) objective functions.

988 - (iii) There is often a mismatch between model types, site data and objective functions. First,  
989 models were developed independently from the specificities of the study site and available data, prior  
990 to the definition of any objective function. In using free-surface flow models, the context of their  
991 original purpose and development is often lost, so that they may be applied to situations beyond their  
992 validity or capabilities. Second, site data are often collected independently of the objectives of the  
993 study. Third, the objective function must be specific to the application but also meet standard practices  
994 in evaluating model performance, in order to compare modelling results between sites and to  
995 communicate the results to other scientists or stakeholders. The known danger is to use flow and  
996 erosion equations outside their domains of validity (*i.e.*, breaking the assumptions made during their  
997 derivation) then to rely on the calibration of model parameters as for technical compensations of  
998 theoretical flaws, at the risk of losing the physical sense of model parameters, creating equifinality and  
999 obtaining the “*right results for the wrong reason*” (Klemeš 1986). Choosing the right model for the  
1000 right reason is crucial but the identification of the optimal data-model couple to reach a predefined  
1001 objective is not straightforward. We need a framework to seek the optimum balance between the  
1002 model, data and the objective function as a solution for a hydrological or hydraulic problem, on the

1003 basis of the principle of parsimony. The latter follows a famous quote often attributed to Einstein, that  
1004 "*everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler*" which somehow originates in the  
1005 philosophy of William of Ockham (1317) (*Numquam ponenda est pluralitas sine necessitate*  
1006 [*Plurality must never be posited without necessity*]) or may even be traced back to Aristotle's (~350  
1007 BCE) *Analytica Posteriora* that already advocated demonstrations relying on the fewest possible  
1008 number of conjectures, i.e. the dominant determinisms.

1009 Finally, analytical procedures for free-surface flows and erosion issues necessitates a  
1010 comprehensive analysis of the interplay between models (assumptions, accuracy, validity), data  
1011 requirements and all contextual information available, encompassed in the "signature" of any given  
1012 application: model refinement, spatiotemporal scales, flow typology and scale-independent description  
1013 by dimensionless numbers. This review helps the modeller positioning his (or her) case study with  
1014 respect to the modelling practices most encountered in the literature, without providing any  
1015 recommendation. A complementary step and future research challenge is to decipher relevant  
1016 modelling strategies from the available theoretical and practical material, resorting to the same objects,  
1017 the previously defined signatures. Its purpose clearly is to address the "*which model, for which scales*  
1018 *and objectives?*" question. A complete analytical framework, comprised of both loops, would provide  
1019 references and guidelines for modelling strategies. Its normative structure in classifying theoretical  
1020 knowledge (the mathematics world, equations and models) and contextual descriptions (real-life  
1021 physical processes, scales and typologies) hopefully makes it also relevant for other Earth Sciences.

1022

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1024

1025 **Appendix A. References used in the Figures.**

1026

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