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Spatial analysis and modeling – an interview with Catherine Pfeiffer

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Terraces - a possible application for spatial analysis and modeling (Photo credit: ILRI/Ewen Le Borgne)

What does hydrological modeling offer when analyzed together with human land and landscape interventions? Where does it lead and how practical can it be? This was the focus of a podcast on spatial analysis and modeling work undertaken mainly in the [Nile Basin Development Challenge](#).

As part of the [Challenge Programme for Water and Food](#), Peter Casier interviewed [Catherine Pfeiffer](#), a post-doctoral scientist working for the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the **International Water Management Institute (IWMI)** in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In this [podcast](#) (3'42''), Catherine explains that, as compared with Geographic Information Systems (GIS), spatial analysis and modeling (SAM) work does not limit itself to being a useful tool – it actually focuses on what is planned with the data collected and how to analyze it for what purpose. In addition, it is not just hydrological modeling but it works in combination with emergent understanding of how human systems define and shape their landscape and land interventions. The combination of biophysical and human perspectives adds the richness to the work of the SAM topic working group.

In practice, this work can prove very useful for predicting the impact of a given landscape intervention to its hydrology. Pfeiffer mentions the case of terraces where spatial analysis and modeling helps estimate how

terraces might impact water flow and the potential benefits to the farmers in the future (improved productivity, reduced erosion etc.).

In other settings too, spatial analysis and modeling should help inform extension services and farmers about the potential benefits and drawbacks of different interventions for water and land management, placing the work of the CPWF [SAM group](#) at the centre of the rationale behind the Challenge Programme for Water and Food.

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