

Early-career paleoscientists meet in the mountains of Aragon

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PAGES Morillo de Tou 2017
3rd Young Scientists Meeting

Global Challenges for our Common Future:
a paleoscience perspective

Three days prior to the 5th PAGES Open Science Meeting (OSM), 80 ambitious early-career scientists (PhD students and postdoctoral researchers) met in the restored village of Morillo de Tou, Spain. The remote setting in the Pyrenees, the old style buildings constructed of turbidites, and the clear and sunny weather made this place an inspiring location to discuss past climate, environment and human interactions. Despite some grumblings about cold coffee served in small cups, the conference was a high-energy affair that promoted connections.

The YSM meeting featured a tightly packed schedule, including two poster sessions, three oral sessions, workshops, and breakout group discussions. Poster and oral sessions displayed a great variety of topics including geology, oceanography, paleoclimate reconstructions, vegetation dynamics, human-climate interaction, and modeling. The quality of both the research and the presentations were excellent. Several workshops, led by more experienced/senior scientists and experts in the field, provided valuable insights to the topics that are near and dear to early-career researchers, including funding, scientific communication, and data sharing. Breakout groups split off for discussions on seven different topics, including how to advocate for the relevance of paleo-research, career opportunities outside academia, and our perspective of future challenges in our discipline.

Within the PAGES framework, working groups are sustained by a bottom-up approach. One of the key outcomes of this meeting is the desire to create an early-career scientists' working group within the framework of PAGES. The main idea of this group will be to assist early-career scientists to develop multi-disciplinary approaches to research and build collaborations and skills needed for career enhancement. This working group could provide training in soft skills, such as science communication, as well as technical skills, such as data-handling and the use of specific software. It could also provide a platform to gather, share and discuss information on a variety of subjects. Additional benefits of creating an early-career scientists group will also be to facilitate connections and networking with other international scientific organizations that already have early-career researcher sections established, such as the Future Earth Early Career Researchers Network of Networks or the Young Earth System Scientists (YESS) community.

Although the meeting was full of science, there was also time to relax and enjoy what Morillo de Tou and the surrounding area had to offer. On the first night, clear skies allowed stargazing with guidance and high-powered telescopes provided by the Huesca Astronomical Association. The event on the second night included traditional Aragonese music and dancing, which showed that we were not only skilled at science, but also at polka! Before heading back to Zaragoza for the OSM, we stopped at the nearby town of Ainsa to learn about the local geology (Fig. 1). The town was built upon a Marine Isotope Stage 4 (MIS4) river terrace, which formed during the peak extent of Quaternary glaciers in the region, overlying Paleogene turbidites.

Finally, attending the YSM provided a valuable opportunity for people at a similar career stage to meet and share their experiences, and also concerns, about being an

early-career researcher. Furthermore, the participation of senior scientists at the YSM provided valuable insight into the different possibilities available within a research career. This networking opportunity – with researchers from different fields, institutions, and countries – built important links within a welcoming community immediately prior to the OSM and offered a foundation for long-lasting collaborations.

AFFILIATIONS

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Figure 1: Blas L. Valero Garcés explains the geological setting of Ainsa, a small town near Morillo de Tou. It was built upon a MIS4 aged river terrace, which formed during the local maximum glacial extent. Image: Niina Kuosmanen.