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A tribute to Bruno Wilhelm's legacy in reading the geological record of lakes

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On April 7th 2022 we learnt the devastating news: our friend and colleague, Bruno Wilhelm, had passed in the mountain while ascending a steep slope in the aim of skiing it. One year after, our group, within which he came and grew to science up to the defence of his PhD thesis in 2012, is still grieving. In that context, we are grateful to the organisers of this session for offering us the opportunity of reminding our scientific community the multiple advancements it owes to Bruno.

Bruno Wilhelm indeed did a hard and innovative work in the aim of reading the geological record of lakes. He focused himself on the recording of extreme events in lake sediments. In this keynote, we will emphasize how Bruno proposed original ways of characterising what we call “instant deposits”, mostly in the early stages of his too short career. He then particularly worked the question of distinguishing among triggering factors of those “alien” layers that often interbed within lake sediment calm sedimentation. Bruno also proposed a detailed reflexion aiming at quantifying or, at least, ranking the intensity of those triggering events. He hence proposed several ways of assessing past floods intensity. In the same spirit, he explicitly proposed a procedure to assess the “recordability” of past earthquake events within a given lake system, based on historical chronicles. He also led a common reflexion about the ability of lake sediment to record a regional flood signal. After his PhD he committed himself in the scientific animation of the PAGES’ “Floods” working group which led him to coordinate the establishment of a comprehensive database and to participate in the redefinition of a collaborative work to better understand past flood patterns in the aim of anticipating future changes due to global warming.

It is undeniable that Bruno Wilhelm had a brilliant and far too short career. However, with this speech we hope that the community will be even more aware about the important legacy he left us.

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