

International symposium
“Water and sustainable development: actors, challenges
and international cooperation”

25-26-27 September 2007 at Saint Martin Vésubie

Organised by the University Laboratory:

CIRCLES EA 3159 : « Centre Interdisciplinaire, Récits, Cultures, Langues et Sociétés »

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The question of water is of increasing actuality worldwide as the stakes are huge in terms of resource supply, distribution, and management. The inadequacy between supply and demand, the competition between the sectors of consumption (agriculture, industry, drinking water supply and tourism), the inter and extra territorial conflicts, water pollution, the increase of water-related diseases ... These are the concerns escalating, not only in the emerging countries but also in the developed countries. Besides, the issue of water has several consequences: environmental, technical, economic, political and socio-cultural. This is why the current challenges must be looked into with a multidisciplinary approach, i.e. not restricted to the boundaries of each discipline.

Water as an ecological issue is nonetheless a social issue. Social sciences have been attempting for several years to account for the extreme complexity of the problem of water and its consequences, taking into consideration the logics and strategies of the social actors. Rational water management is often presented by the decision makers as a prerequisite for sustainable development. However many research studies tend to prefer the environmental, economic and technical approaches of water management, and to reduce or ignore the social, cultural and political implications of water. Water management in the field of the rural hydraulics as in the field of urban hydraulics cannot do without an anthropological approach, as technical and economic water management is meaningful only in the context of a social management of the resource taking into account the social organisation of the communities in presence: **The question of water is first of all a social question.**

Indeed, we need to make a distinction between a governmental management largely authoritarian, a private management where the companies look forward to making their equipments profitable for the treatment and distribution of the resource and a community management presenting a diversity of the social habits and where access and distribution of water are in conformity with the legal, traditional habits often in harmony with the environmental potential. This does not mean that the traditional societies are more respectful of their environment, but that their social, political, and legal organisation is largely taking into account the disparity between supply and resources.

The results of different research studies carried out on these questions at the University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis, and in different countries (North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and also in the countryside just inland from Nice), prompt us to compare the different approaches relating to the hydraulic question with a special attention to the social and institutional changes which affect our societies. This is why the contributions to this symposium are likely to propose models of management where the ecological, socio-economical and political factors are taken in their **closest interaction, warranting a good and sustainable management of this resource.**

The workshops of this symposium will deal with the different aspects of this question.

AXIS 1 - WATER RESOURCES AND CHALLENGES OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

- ✓ *What are the water resources of the Mediterranean countries? Are we moving towards a predictable catastrophe? Quantitative data and qualitative approaches of scarcity*

An overview of the unequal distribution of water resources in the Mediterranean countries will allow us to better underline the current challenges, and to highlight the variety of local models of water management. It will be emphasized that water scarcity is not a new phenomenon, and that the ancestral practices of the local communities offer an understanding of and a know-how on the technical and social levels, which have proved their ability to respect a balance between resources and supply. However, this local management is not exempt from socio-political facts such as the access and appropriation by the hierarchy of natural resources.

- ✓ *Water appropriation and conflict: the different local and national strategies for production and reproduction of the territory.*

Massive and extensive appropriation of water has always allowed proprietors to maintain an economic and political capital power on the social members. The current challenges are such that new forms of appropriation/expropriation of the resources (beyond the frame of the local communities) trigger new conflicts: the Middle East is a clear example of what is called the war for water. We will adopt an anthropological perspective on the strategies of the actors (local communities, governments, private companies) in the process of appropriation and diversion of the resources. What are the strategies of local communities in the challenge for power?

WORKSHOP 2 – THE USE OF WATER: AGRICULTURAL HYDRAULICS AND URBAN HYDRAULICS

- ✓ *Irrigated agriculture: dynamics and institutional problems? What future for the hydraulic societies against the population growth, increased scarcity of the resources and desertification?*

Irrigated agriculture is very demanding. This sector is consuming more than 70% of water resources, hence the attempts to come to a rational management. We have to distinguish between hydraulic traditional societies which have a know-how even if their management and distribution are traditional, and communities of irrigants recently arrived in areas recently organised. It may be easier to equip and modernise the techniques of irrigation in the newly irrigated areas, in terms of water-saving, but it is inappropriate to pretend to modernise these techniques without a previous knowledge of the social structures and the organisation and functioning of the local institutions. It is essential to look into the

common laws (legal practices) to carry out a project of modernisation. Some researchers do not hesitate to establish a distinction between the large, medium and small hydraulics. The latter is more related to traditional societies whereas the other two are related to the size of the irrigated area and also to the type of equipments. Now, obviously the determining factor is not so much the size of the area but the knowledge drawn from the type of model management of the water and the strategies of the local actors concerned. It is the reason why the distinction between governmental, community and private water management is more relevant.

Moreover, the traditional systems are suffering from disintegration: diversion of the resources to satisfy a different demand from the agricultural sector (supply in drinking water in particular), creation of associations of water consumers who are taking over from traditional assemblies, new agricultural orientation and as a consequence overexploitation of the resources in particular by water pumping leading to the drying up of water (oasis societies), climatic change and desertification of the areas: all these transformations are experienced by the hydraulic societies.

Contributions to this workshop will provide a thorough look at these changes from a technical, social and institutional point of view.

- ✓ *Access to drinking water and drainage by the disadvantaged population: experiences and projects.*
- ✓ *From water right to right for water : semantic shift or source of a new social and political conflict?*

This is a major problem which the political officials and the civil society are faced with, and they are increasingly mobilised on this aspect. Access to drinking water and to drainage networks is linked to the problems of health in the emerging countries. Actually their populations suffer from a double discrimination: on the one hand a residence-based discrimination as far as the areas which have no access to drinking water and drainage systems are in the poor outlying districts and the shantytowns, and on the other hand a social and economic discrimination because in many cases non- accessibility to drinking water when the system exists is linked to non-solvency of the families, hence the problem of water pricing. It has also been shown by different researches that the poorest pay more for water. Water distribution is provided either by installation of public fountains, or by suppliers who travel through the different districts. Besides, if we look at the quality of the water distributed we realize that it is not suitable for drinking. In front of the increased scarcity of the resources (not to mention that the existing networks of water distribution are outdated with a loss of more than 30%) the question of water recycling is beginning to be looked into, in spite of the reluctance of the populations involved to accept this alternative.

WORKSHOP 3 – TRAINING AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

- ✓ *Aid and cooperation for water: evaluation, training and achievements.*
- ✓ *Role of the NGOs in the politics of training and support of the migrants and local actors of water.*

International aid programs and cooperation are increasingly related to water. Actually the availability and democratic access to water are two prerequisites to set up an effective sustainable development program. Related to water, aid programs and international cooperation cover several aspects: technical, social, economic and political. They are aiming at giving a western know-how which always has to be readjusted on the local realities, because every technological transfer leads to social adjustments and negotiations. In this aid and international cooperation we have to distinguish between an institutionalised cooperation (from Government to Government) and a scientific and technical cooperation carried out by

Research and Development entities (public or private) and NGOs. The presence of the latter is increasingly requested on site to compensate for governmental disengagement. This workshop will highlight the consequences and the conditions of International aid and cooperation in the expertise, training, and realisation in different zones (Mediterranean countries, Africa, Asia ...).

This symposium is under the scientific direction of Jean Yves Boursier and Toufik Ftaïta, teachers and researchers in ethnology at the Nice Sophia Antipolis University, and members of the laboratory: **CIRCLES EA 3159 : « Centre Interdisciplinaire, Récits, Cultures, Langues et Sociétés »**

An abstract of 1500 characters including spaces presenting your paper should be sent by email for evaluation by the scientific committee before august 15, 2007. The participants will receive written notification and the modalities for expense payments.

Participation to this symposium is free, but prior registration is necessary to allow the organiser a better assistance to the participants (transportation, lodging and catering).

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