



Second Order Water Scarcity in Southern Africa

Welcome to the fourth issue of our newsletter. We are pleased to inform you that our project seminar is to be held on December the 8th at the Commonwealth Youth Centre at the University of Zambia, Lusaka (beginning at 08.30 until 1600). This one day seminar will provide a platform for exploring the divergent water management strategies and governance regimes within Zambia. It provides a good opportunity for discussion as well as to further refine the research. The morning will commence with introductions to both our research and case studies from key note speakers, while the afternoon will be devoted to a discussion and synthesis of what emerges from the hydropolitical research.

The confirmed participants so far have a varied range of backgrounds including both water supply and sanitation institutions, and water resource management institutions. Specifically included are small scale and commercial agriculture, urban, peri-urban and rural domestic water schemes, industrial users, NGO, donor and government representatives. This seemingly disparate grouping assembles some key actors who currently hold some influence over the evolution of water institutions in Zambia. The purpose of the seminar is to share knowledge of the varying governance regimes in order to gain a deeper understanding of the interconnections between sectors, actors and stakeholders. The main conclusions of the field work to date will be presented, together with the first stage of the hydropolitical map for Zambia.

We would like to thank Francis Cleaver, Tom Franks, and Angela Kiire for organising the first of the ERSC funded Water Consensus seminar series, and provide a brief overview of the seminar along with their contact details. This issue concludes with a theoretical piece on water governance.

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Water Consensus Seminar Series:

The 18th and 19th November 2004, was the first of The Water Consensus seminar series held at the Bradford Centre for International Development (BCID), UK. The title of the first seminar was “Challenging the Consensus – Identifying the Gaps” (please see <http://www.bradford.ac.uk/acad/dppc/seminar/water/> for further information and contact details).

Participants in the seminar had backgrounds ranging from anthropologists, to engineers and economists, so the debates were very interesting and constructive. Broadly, the range of themes which emerged from the seminar covered scales of analysis and the land/water interface; epistemological debates over hegemonic knowledge; the vast range of economic and institutional mechanisms which can be employed under varying discourses of governance; and the need for engagement with both water research users and with researchers and institutions from other countries, especially those based in the ‘south’. Direct engagement with researchers and networks via email (at the least) is welcomed and encouraged.

The papers which were presented are available electronically on Bradford’s website given above.

Water Governance:

Julie Trottier and Leanne Wilson

Governance may describe formal legislative channels, customarily formulated regulations, or how the interface between these often overlapping political configurations is enacted, including financial mechanisms. Governance was once considered the sole remit of government, but now embodies a more eclectic range of actors, and territories other than the state. Governance can usefully be understood as a reconfiguration, rather than always a diminution of state authority (Pickering, 2004).

Governance is gaining increasing prominence as both an abstract concept and a practical solution to ineffective and inappropriate (water) development policies. The sanctioned discourses of good governance have become hegemonic, particularly within the international policy arena¹. The paradigm of ‘governance’ is fairly analogous to that of ‘sustainable development’, and they are now usually mutually constitutive. The ambiguity of these paradigms ensures political acceptability, precisely because they can encompass and/or justify anything from communal utopianism to industrial capitalism (Hopwood, *et. al.*, forthcoming). The value of employing a concept such as ‘governance’ is that it makes the web of power relations over a given resource more explicit than, for example, terms such as ‘management’. However, the sanctioned discourse of governance is often presented as a ‘technical fix’ which obscures both macro and micro political processes and value judgements (Guijt and Shah, 1998; Cornwall, 2003). Both the technical managerial, and the corollary populist discourses tend to employ archetypal narratives of heroes, victims, and villains which can obscure the multiplicity of interaction between ‘local’ and ‘global’ actors (Adger, *et. al.*, 2001; Beall, *et. al.*, 2000). Though water has been relegated to an inherent concern, Table 1 describes some of the simplified prominent discourses on global environmental issues:

¹ ‘Sanctioned discourse’ refers to “*a normative vision in which the thought process of an analyst or political actor is locked, a...largely ethical paradigm that determines the hypotheses we can put out and the questions we can ask.*” (Trip, 1997, quoted in Trottier, 1999:164). The sanctioned discourse of good governance is central within powerful international institutions, which view the term basically as a conditionality. It is not a reflexive term, for example, it does not refer to the legitimacy of democratic governance within the powerful international institutions, or the industrialised countries themselves.

Table 1: Opposing discourses within global environmental management

	Technical fix	Populist
Deforestation	Neo-Malthusian discourse on increasing population and agricultural conversions in developing countries	Populist discourse maintains deforestation to be a significant issue caused by the marginalisation of the rural poor and external forces of globalisation such as Northern consumption of timber products
Desertification	Neo-Malthusian discourse suggests that local resource users in drylands are degrading the ecosystems on which they depend. Only international action and strict regulation can prevent further desertification. (This discourse is obviously not grounded in any analysis of the 1930s dust bowl in America)	Populist discourse accepts the evidence that desertification is important but suggests that it is the inevitable consequence of historic marginalisation of pastoralists and small holders in both the colonial and postcolonial periods
Biodiversity	Bioprospecting discourse promotes sustainable utilisation of biodiversity as the solution to an impending extinction crisis. This solution can be promoted through international co-operation and institutions	Biopiracy discourse portrays an extinction crisis promoted by the institutions and interests of capitalism that threaten both cultural and biological diversity
Climate Change	Managerial discourse on the compelling science of climate change requiring new markets for carbon and global institutions	Profligacy discourse also accepts climate change as a major problem and as the key symptom in the crisis of ‘global’ over-consumption espoused by capitalism

(adapted from Adger, *et. al.*, 2001)

The ‘reality’ in many cases is that there is a high level of interaction between actors who hold influence over governance regimes at different scales and within different social arenas. Conceptual obstacles are manifest when the term governance is employed, specifically though not exclusively in relation to water management. Water governance, even exclusively within official policies, defies both sectoral and administrative boundaries. Legislated water governance is often pragmatically segregated into water resource management, and water and sanitation services. This is very important, as these sectors usually have divergent priorities and mechanisms with which to achieve desired goals (Franks, 2004). However, this segregation may not sufficiently account for the interdependence of the river basin or catchment area, including the land use/water interface, and can create the inter-sectoral dilemma of how to respond effectively to urban subsistence irrigation demands (Moriarty, *et. al.*, 2004; Newson, 1997). A further obstacle to segregated legislative water governance is that intricate catchment management regulations are unlikely to immediately coincide with existing administrative boundaries, and therefore require vigorously sustained political cooperation (Pollard, 2002). Any meaningful consideration of how ‘local’ peoples perceptions and strategies for water management function may fracture ‘holistic’ management strategies.

Customary governance of land and water is rarely completely autonomous from formal legislative rules, including the postcolonial evolution of manufactured and/or dislocated ‘traditions’ (Mamdani, 1996; Trottier, 1999; Cleaver, 2002). While it is unsound to generalise, customarily governed bundles of water rights tend not to be well documented, and may not rely upon financial transactions and a market economy ethic. These two issues are often overlooked within the rhetoric of participation, which sustain technical definitions of governance (Cornwall, 2003; Guijt and Shah, 1998). Migdal (2001) reiterates this point when he contends that struggles for control within a society do not solely occur at the highest political levels. Governance is a composite description of multi-scalar and multi-stakeholder interaction, but ‘stakeholder’ is

commonly used as a synonym for 'actor' which exacerbates technocratic (mis)interpretations. McKenna (2004) also supports the view that technocratic rationality entrenches inequality by recommending and implementing policies based on individualist assumptions, or alternatively, how cultural violence in the form of macro-economic political imperatives can sustain structural violence within a multitude of water sector interventions (Galtung, 1969: 1990).

Concerns that qualitative approaches to water governance may undermine technical capacity or feasibility, most generally arise from insufficient epistemological engagement. The success of technical managerial solutions for global environmental problems such as the Montreal Protocol, and the various protocols dealing with acid rain were possible because the industrial processes which created the pollution were not deeply embedded within many levels of society. There is perhaps some tendency to conflate technically feasible 'global' environmental management with the institutional, political, and conceptual tools used to comprehend the dynamics of common resources which are, or are perceived to be essential for 'societal metabolism' such as water and fossil fuels. Though both natural and social science recognise interdependencies, for example ecosystems and 'composite' identities, this is not easily captured within the sanctioned discourses of water governance.

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