## WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES: VIEWS AND EXPERIENCE

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Heller L e Castro JE, org. **Política pública e gestão de serviços de saneamento**. Ed. Ampl. Belo Horizonte: UFMG; Rio de Janeiro: Fiocruz, 2013. 567 p. i

The authors of book "Política pública e gestão de serviços de saneamento" [Public policies and management of water and sanitation services] organized by Léo Heller e José Esteban Castro contributed with approaches of social and politics aspects of water and sanitation services. This book is presented in two sections: I. "Theoretical and conceptual dimensions" and II. "National and regional experiences". The first bring views and discussion about politics, economics, and social issues linked to water and sanitation sector. In Chapter 1<sup>ii</sup>, Castro writes about the importance of systemic conditions for the Water Supply and Sanitation Services (WSS) development, organization, and operation. The author adopted a critical stance toward the dominant WSS thinking and management in global scenario; and highlights social conditions and limitations neglected in public policy and management of this sector.

Castro acknowledges the contradictory: greater recognition of social challenges to WSS and not merely technical and physical-natural *versus* the negligence of social systemic conditions in analyzes. The author ends the argument emphasizing a current issue in developing countries: the commodification of sanitary services due to the neoliberal society pressure, acknowledged by Swyngedouw as well, in Chapter 2<sup>iii</sup>. Castro and Swyngedouw point out that the commodification precludes the provision of service to the portion of the population – usually the poorest – due to 'full-cost' recovery logic. Swyngedouw states that the problem is not only the commodification but the corporatization of state or private organizations, which impose by itself the requirement of profitability that has been adopted in many countries, even if they are State property.

Swyngedouw highlights the water as a fluid territorial good, in a complex social arrangement. These water features hinders its private monopoly and commodification. Therefore, State support like Private-Public Partnership – when the State invests substantial portion of investment and operation costs – enable the private participants a profitable return (positive externalities). The author states that the urban government's neoliberalisation and collective issues like `ecologic crisis´ accentuated the contradic-

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tion between productions social nature and private organization since that services are increasingly subject to market forces. The next chapter<sup>iv</sup>, Mulas claims that WSS universalization is a social right and cannot be submitted to market criteria – a principle of New Water Culture. On the other hand, Swyngedouw says that subsidy and redistribution based policies are the only strategies that offer a collective solution, and the major issues are who decides on investment and distribution, instead of who is the provider – public or private companies.

Rouse<sup>v</sup> also points out that the public or private character of water and sanitation companies is not as important as subsidies for the services operator are. However unlike other actors of this book, Rouse supports the market forces – regardless of the operator – in water and sanitation companies to stimulate great performance and service provision. Rouse emphasizes that sustainability of water and sanitation depends on full-cost recovery. The need for public funding is supported by several authors (Swyngedouw; Rouse; Hall and Lobina<sup>vi</sup>); however, Hall and Lobina present a strong divergent point on the full-cost recovery.

To Hall and Lobina full-cost recovery is a common requirement of funders like private donors and development banks. However, the requirement on the private sector and full-cost recovery contradicts the experience of high-income countries, which set up its own WSS with public financing. The authors also state that full-cost recovery is exclusionary, as it compels the investment exclusively to whom can afford the total cost, and the low-income populations continue without access to sanitation infrastructure. In this context, Rouse propose creating accessible charging systems to the impoverished population; reorientation of subsidies directed more for the wealthy, rather than the impoverished population, as the case of Chile; also the role of the independent regulator; and solid government policies. Seppälä e Katkovii also place importance of regulation and formulation of basic rules as a fundamental aspect, given the particularities of WWS and its socio-economic and environmental importance. The authors highlight the regulation as a tool that allows targeting the poorest sections of the population, with satisfactory, sustainable, and affordable provisions.

Mulas grounded his discussion on budget approach to water and sanitation policy; on equity between income and expense, which considers social equity; and argues that even WSS can be provided by public or private sectors, the liability of providing such services is an obligation of public sector. Braadbaart laborings the importance of public sector in WSS provision. The author emphasizes the major role of public sector in WSS canalization; paradigm quickly developed across Europe and North America, followed by the South. Braadbard presented the historical evolution of private enterprises, since its climax on 1840-50's and subsequent decline, assigned to liability of municipalities for public health added to rapid urban expansion. Due to these changes the demand of WSS provider became larger than private companies were willing to offer.

Heller<sup>ix</sup> point out the importance of relation between water and sanitation and other sectors and deepens the discussion on WSS and public health relation as a tool to guide actions on water and sanitation sector. On the other hand the relation intersectoral is actually still precarious in practice. The author highlights the importance of transversal

actions to behold WSS interfaces even in different development levels which determine different agendas. Although the other sectors are co-related, the author deepens the discussion of the relation between water and sanitation and public health, even with the accumulated knowledge on the subject. Locating and specifying the relation between these areas can leverage and turn sanitary provisions more efficacious. Heller concludes the chapter recognizing the importance of the search for convergence of views of WSS and public health policies, breaking the rigidity and fragmentation of bureaucratic machines and therefore building the intersectoral agenda.

Concluding the theoretical section of the book two final chapters presents alternatives experiences on water and sanitation providing: cooperatives, local authorities<sup>x</sup>, and services managed by local communities or families<sup>xi</sup>. These WSS models are suitable to rural or peri-urban areas – ineligible to conventional models for financial conditions or technical inviability – to supply the need of the population who lacks water and sanitation infrastructure. Both experiences are effective on WSS provision and work better when the community is more organized as its involvement is larger.

Second section of the book is directed to cases of developed countries, developing countries, and Brazilian experiences. The European experiences are discussed about France<sup>xii</sup>, Spain<sup>xiii</sup>, and Nordic<sup>xiv</sup> countries, and then Barraqué<sup>xv</sup> presents the development of WSS on the European continent. Pezon addresses decentralization and delegation of WSS in France, its benefits to urban areas, and the important role of funding for universalization of water and sanitation services. The authors who report the Spanish experience highlights the existing conflicts with the WSS privatization increase; the wide variation in fees for services; and the divergence between evolutions of sanitation policy, slower than water supply. This gap between water and sanitation policies was described in most of cases presented in this book. Nordic countries adopt a WSS decentralized policy, like France. However, Nordic has a local management with municipal autonomy – although there are regional councils – and they take over the sewage treatment; whereas in France the decentralization is at regional level. In the European scenario, Barraqué concludes his chapter with lessons for developing countries in order to achieve universal service, such as the importance of subsidies and funding for local rates, and the legitimacy of local level.

North American experiences present two different experiences. Canada<sup>xvi</sup> has plenty of water resources in the country, but has limitations to provide the water and sanitation services to isolated communities. These disabilities lead to a public health issue, especially in Aboriginal communities; and with the age weakened infrastructure, as well as in other localities. United States<sup>xvii</sup>, on the other hand, are known for their tradition in water quality, sewage treatment and solid waste management. However, U.S. has excessive water consumption; and some low-income communities still have inadequate access to services. In between its challenges are the population's unequal economic growth and the age suffered infrastructure.

Developing countries has different realities and needs, than the European and North America scenario. East Africa<sup>xviii</sup> has a liability on WSS provision; wide discrimination on the impoverished; insufficient services provision on informal settlements; and difficulty in maintaining implemented systems. The chapters on South Asia<sup>xix</sup>, especially Bangla-

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desh and Nepal, the authors focused on tools for facilitating community participation as a mechanism to include low-income population. The funding of infrastructure and cost sharing was a prominent point in these two experiences. Sanitation issues in China<sup>xx</sup> are common of emerging countries: rapid urbanization; difficulties to achieve universality and equity in WSS provision; and an institutional and regulatory problem, with no unified laws and regulations. However, the country has a remediation plan with control targets and has advanced in water and sanitation services in provision and quality.

Hispanic-American experiences present failure in WSS network coverage and in meeting quality standards; and in the quality of the supply of services between social classes, like African and Asian. Mexico<sup>xxi</sup> is committed to improve the coverage and quality scores, and is presenting experiences with privatization of services. However, where the service provider is from public sector, the quality of service, universality, and equity have better results. Venezuela<sup>xxii</sup> has experienced significant institutional changes in WSS sector, with a more participatory approach in the services management, to support citizenship construction and poverty reduction.

The session on the Brazilian experience begins with a picture of the legal and institutional framework; the relationship between socioeconomic and political changes in the country; and how this framework culminated into the current legal and institutional setting. Costa and Ribeiro<sup>xxiii</sup> describe the importance of the health sector for development of sanitation in Brazil; regionalization with state-owned enterprises in PLANASA era and background to current sanitation policy. Next chapter, Heller et. al. xxiv presents typologies for WSS providers and a brief discussion of legal and administrative implications and the nature of the companies. As well as Costa and Ribeiro, the authors highlight the successive legacy of water and sanitation policies; and importance of a systemic vision for the sector. Borja and Bernardes<sup>xxv</sup> contribute with a review on evaluation of public policies, typologies and evaluation criteria. The authors reflect on the methodological and conceptual aspects of water and sanitation policies evaluation in Brazil, and how the new policy encourages the development of such assessments.

Chapter 24xxvi addresses the economic and financial management of water and sanitation services, which is associated with the institutional management model and regulatory standards. Therefore, the author defends planning as a management tool, and discusses procedures for WSS regulation according to Brazilian sanitation lawxxvii, reinforcing importance of social control to ensure that the policy achieves its social goals. Social control and deliberative arenas are recommended by Jacobixxviii as instruments which strengthen democratic, integrated, and shared management; favoring the quality of representation capacity in water and sanitation management. The author also discusses challenges of sharing decisions and contributions from Brazilian experience of water resources participatory management.

This important publication fills a gap in the literature by presenting a theoretical framework on the WSS with diversified and integrated views, bringing applicability with experience in various parts of the world. With texts from renowned authors, the book allows access to a critical overview of sector management in the global context. The manuscripts show that there are global issues common to all regions, regardless of their

situation in the development scenario, as the issue of regulation and water as commodified product. On the other hand, there are local issues for specific groups of countries.

In developing countries universal access to services is still a challenge and must be treated notably from the viewpoint of management, as the existing model range. Usually the most successful models are decentralized and/or involving the community (Hispanic-Americans, French, and the Nordic countries cases). Countries with universalized access solved deal with the aging network and problems brought by modernity, such as new forms of water pollution. The session on Brazil is relevant, given the Brazilian political situation after regulation of Sanitation Law, when municipalities, states, and nation are adapting to the new policy for the sector. This publication shows that political and social dimensions became part of water and sanitation agenda worldwide; and these dimensions are central in research and actions in the sector.

## Notes

- i This publication is an enlarged version of "Water and Sanitation Services: Public Policy and Management" translated by Vera Ribeiro.
- ii Políticas públicas de saneamento e condicionantes sistêmicos, Castro JE
- iii Água e revoltas A economia política dos serviços públicos essenciais, Swyngedouw E
- iv Análise de políticas públicas de saneamento: aspectos orçamentários e gerenciais, Mulas AS
- Paradigma centrado no papel do setor privado, Rouse M
- vi Políticas públicas e financiamento de sistemas de esgotos, Hall D, Lobina E
- vii Gestão e organização dos serviços de saneamento: abordagens europeias, Seppälä O, Katko TS
- viii A transferência Norte-Sul do paradigma da água canalizada (...), Braadbaart O
- ix Política pública e gestão dos serviços de abastecimento de água e esgotamento sanitário e suas interfaces, Heller L
- x O paradigma alternativo: o papel das cooperativas e das autoridades locais, Hukka JJ, Katko TS
- xi Organização comunitária e paradigmas alternativos para a melhoria dos serviços em assentamentos de baixa renda, McGranahan G, Mulenga M
- xii A experiência francesa Descentralização e delegação, Pezon C
- xiii O estado do abastecimento de água e esgotamento sanitário urbanos na Espanha: temas, debates e conflitos, Saurí D, Olcina J, Rico A
- xiv Serviços descentralizados a experiência nórdica, Pietilä P, Gunnarsdóttir MJ, Hjorth P, Nielsen SB
- xv O desenvolvimento dos serviços na Europa: da diversidade para a convergência?, Barraqué B
- vi Do mar do leste ao mar do oeste: Canadá (...), Rosenberg MW
- xvii A experiência dos Estados Unidos em saneamento: interação entre políticas públicas e gestão, Uddameri V, Singh VP. xviii Discriminação por princípio: a herança pós-colonial da provisão das águas urbanas na África Oriental, Nilsson DL, Kaijser A.n
- xix A experiência do Sul Asiático (...), Muradian et al
- xx Serviços de saneamento na China (...), Zuo J, Gan L
- xxi Desafios para a universalização dos serviços de saneamento no México, Armentia MLT, Cisneros BJ
- xxii Participação e inovação organizativa na prestação de serviços de água e esgotos na Venezuela, Lacabana M, Cariola C
- xxiii Dos porões à luz do dia (...), Costa SS da, Ribeiro WA
- xxiv A experiência brasileira na organização dos serviços de saneamento básico, Heller L et al
- xxv Avaliação de políticas públicas de saneamento no Brasil, Borja PC e Bernardes RS
- xxvi Aspectos da gestão econômico-financeira dos serviços (...), Peixoto JB
- xxvii Sanitation in Brazil refers to water, sanitation, drainage and solid waste services.
- xxviii Planejamento e participação na governança da água no Brasil (...), Jacobi PR