

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND WATER RESOURCES GOVERNANCE PRACTICES: RE-INTRODUCING ISSUES OF EQUALITY TO THE AGENDA

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Introduction

This work seeks to associate the concept of water governance to the notion of sustainability in its wider context. Therefore, a strict view of water governance as being simply planning, implementation and water resources management is rejected. Policies which are based on economic, environmental and social aspects are considered sustainable. These aspects are core to the drafting of environmental policies.

This article focuses on the importance of ensuring that the policy-making process in relation to water resources encompasses compensatory and distributive measures in order to reduce the damaging effects of socio-economic inequalities. Thus, the increased participation of new social actors in public policies related to water is founded on a move away from a predominantly technical managerial style towards a more encompassing process, involving the multiple uses and forms of ownership of water. It is important to open up a debate which questions the concept of the use of water exclusively based on the market and advocates more egalitarian and sustainable models, and means of access and ownership, of this essential natural resource.

The differences between the market value of water and other values related to water as an element essential to life allows us to discuss it as a commodity within the capitalist system. This is the core question which demands that the agenda be reformulated, placing the issue of the value of water as a natural element at the heart of the debate, so as to move away from exclusively discussing its economic value.

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The aim of discussing these concepts by associating them to issues such as the use and occupation of the soil, income, environmental sanitation and areas of risk is to demonstrate how the way urban space is occupied in a capitalist society perpetuates inequality in relation to access to natural resources. In the case of water, unequal conditions of ownership lead to increasing difficulties in its use by a part of the population. This also leads to situations of greater risks associated to the use of land for housing.

This article initially seeks to reveal the relationship between urban growth and social vulnerability associated to issues of environmental health. Subsequently, issues of environmental injustice are analysed in the light of inequality in relation to access to water of appropriate quantity and quality for human supply in the urban environment. Finally, we discuss the consequences of the absence or limited participation of representatives of low-income social groups in river basin committees, the forums for debates, negotiation and decision-making in relation to the management of water resources.

Urban Growth, vulnerability and socio-environmental injustice

The urbanization process in Brazil has been characterised by an accelerated growth of cities and urban agglomerations, creating metropolises. A decisive factor in this process has been the existence of a migratory axis which lasted for decades, displacing a large part of the population from the north of the country to the south-eastern region, due to structural unemployment caused by the modernisation of agriculture (MELLO; NOVAIS, 1998).

The large metropolises in Brazil, especially those in the south-east, became a pole of attraction for these migrant populations: São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte, where industrialization and urbanization provided work opportunities for migrants, particularly in the civil construction, transport and industrial sectors. According to Mello e Novais (1998), during the 1950s eight million people in Brazil migrated to the cities. A decade later, this number increased to 14 million and in three decades the number of people migrating from agricultural lands to cities totalled 39 million.

With the advent of globalization and a growing need for labour in order to maintain the flow of goods and services, the migratory process continues today, leading to mass displacement of people from poorer areas to the urban centres of the south-east (SASSEN, 2004). Uncontrolled growth and lack of infrastructure planning mean that the low-income, migrant population concentrate in the peripheries of the cities, where there is a basic lack of infrastructure such as access to transport, electricity, basic sanitation and health services (YOUNG; FUSCO, 2006).

Economically excluded social groups inhabiting excluding social spaces tend to be more vulnerable, as they are denied access to consumer goods, a good quality of life and urban infrastructure (SEN, 2008; HOGAN et al; 2001). Occupation of these spaces usually occurs in areas of high environmental risk such as river banks, reservoirs

and hill slopes which, because they are “protected” areas, are not usually part of the formal property market and thus become an alternative for excluded social groups (HOGAN *et al*; 2001).

The development process of these metropolises moves poor people and migrants to areas further away from the economic centres and services (SASSEN, 2004). Far from these hubs, the population has less opportunity to access employment and income - this process, combined with a lack of urban planning to provide this population with areas which are appropriate for housing, means that the growth of precarious urbanization occurs in areas of environmental conservation or areas of risk (HOGAN *et al*; 2001).

The reduction of poverty through the acquisition of material goods is used as an excuse for the over-exploitation of eco-systemic resources in an unsustainable way. This occurs by means of development policies which ignore the long-term scenario of resources, failing to take into account issues such as scarcity and degradation, as well as social and economic losses (MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT, 2003). Therefore, a significant part of socio-environmental problems are based on a development policy grounded exclusively on economic growth as a means of promoting social equality, thus neglecting the individual rights citizens have in relation to quality of life and access to primary environmental goods such as clean air and treated water (SEN, 2008).

Environmental injustice, in the context of human development, manifests itself in a perverse way by denying poor people the freedom of access to resources to feed themselves, be healthy, live in appropriate places, receive quality education and have a decent job. It also denies them access to fundamental environmental resources (SEN, 2008), such as drinking water.

Therefore, environmental injustice is translated into inequality in terms of how environmental damage is distributed between populations of different socio-economic conditions (ALVES, 2007) and also in terms of inequality of access to environmental resources, re-enforcing the link between environmental risks and socio-economic inequalities (VEIGA, 2007). According to Porto (2004:122) environmental injustice is the “mechanism by which, from a social and economic point of view, unequal societies place most of the load of environmental damage caused by development on low-income populations, discriminated social groups, traditional ethnic peoples, working-class districts and marginalized and vulnerable populations”.

According to Acselrad (2009) environmental injustice occurs in two ways: through unequal environmental protection and unequal access to resources. The former occurs when environmental risks, provoked by implementing environmental policies (or when there is a lack of such policies), are directed to socially excluded populations in terms of income, housing, social conditions, among others. The latter occurs both during the goods production stage (in relation to access to resources on the land) and also during the consumption stage (relating to the purchasing power of populations and debates over basic needs).

Socially fair treatment does not exist if we analyse the issue of service provision in terms of the environmental health of the population. On the contrary, there is a

tendency for the low-income population to live in areas subject to greater environmental risks, such as risk of flooding, inadequate sanitation systems, proximity to landfill sites and the threat of landslides due to erosion.

Even when these areas are protected under the law, they do not receive support from licensing and monitoring bodies, particularly when the population affected is socially discriminated. The unequal application of the law results in unequal environmental protection (ACSELRAD *et al.*, 2009). Within this context, the lack of strong action on the part of the State, both in relation to housing and the environmental preservation of water sources, encourages economic forces to allocate poorer populations and “minorities” to areas of low economic value, social exclusion and environmental fragility (ACSELRAD, 2009).

Thus, lack of planning and guidance in dealing with the socio-environmental consequences of economic growth, as seen in the large urban centres in Brazil, such as in the city of São Paulo, has led to the development of two cities, the formal and the informal city. In the informal city, a large part of the population, who have been attracted to these urban centres by work opportunities and a better quality of life, end up experiencing inadequate living conditions (TUCCI, 2008).

This work emphasizes the problems ensuing from the lack of basic sanitation, and more specifically, the relationship between poverty and access to these aforementioned services.

According to Mitjavila *et al.* (2011), among the main risks associated to the management of water resources, the following stand out: scarcity and the poor quality of these resources in the urban environment, unequal distribution of socio-environmental risks associated to the social conditions of the population, the state of the geographical space, as well as abuse of power in the management of water resources and conflicts relating to its ownership.

However, these risks, like all other socio-environmental risks, are politically constructed. Therefore, this issue and ways of dealing with it through organised action need to be analyzed in the light of expanding citizenship by using socially fair, inclusive and democratic tools (IORIS, 2009).

Thus, we seek to analyse how the new water resources management model in Brazil, based on opening up the decision-making process to a greater number of social agents and recognising that water is a public good - that is, it is a natural resource that belongs to everyone and its management is the responsibility of the state - can intervene in the social and environmental cycle of vulnerability to which a part of the population is exposed.

The invisible agenda of water basin committees: agents and issues excluded from the debate

The availability of water in enough quantity and quality to supply the large metropolises has mobilised the responsible management bodies, in particular due to a growth in demand and the introduction of environmental protection to the political agenda. When the economic model of development and economic growth leads to

using water in different ways such as in the production of energy, industrial production and agricultural supply, it intensifies the competition for ownership of this resource, generating conflict in relation to its management (VARGAS, 1999).

Within this context, it is essential to adopt a new management strategy that is integrated and participative and which is capable not only of taking into account conflicts generated by multiple usage, but above all, able to establish priorities in relation to the use of this resource.

The first State Policy for Water Resources (PERH) in Brazil was enacted by the state of São Paulo in 1991. The directives and principles which started to regulate the new water management system reflected profound changes in relation to the previous model. According to Jacobi (2009), during this crucial moment of inflexion, it was observed that the institutionally fragmented management system, which in its praxis was both authoritarian and technocratic, was replaced by a management process based on the tripod of integration, decentralisation and participation. This led to a significant change in the way in which water resources were managed: a new conception based on integrated and collegiate management, the object of which was to arbitrate conflicts and make adjustments for the different interests, taking into account both prevailing discussions as well as socio-technical agreements (MACHADO, 2003).

The water resources management model adopted by the state of São Paulo at the end of 1991, after State Law n. 7.663 came into force, was replicated nationally with the promulgation of Federal Legislation n. 9.433, which established the National Policy for Water Resources. Both laws clearly share common aspects with the internationally accepted notion of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). This terminology was widely publicised by experts from the Global Water Partnership (GWP) in 2002, during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. However, the building of the IWRM concept occurred gradually and took a number of years. It was modified, taking on new elements according to how a number of interconnected and complex natural, social, political and economic factors which surround the issue of water resources were understood.

A significant landmark, which influenced the work of the GWP, was the Conference on Water and the Environment held by the United Nations in Ireland in 1992. Inspired by the launch of the Brundtland Report and the paradigm of “sustainable development”, the conference was considered a preparation event for the “Rio + 10” conference which would take place in 2002. Its objectives were to draft sustainable policies for the use of water and to propose a program of actions which allowed for their implementation. The approach towards IWRM adopted up to that point went through a process of reformulation, which can be synthesized in three points: 1) recognition of fresh water as a vulnerable, finite and essential resource to ensure the development and maintenance of life and environmental conditions; 2) the need to expand the participation of agents in the decision-making process, ensuring the presence of the users of water resources; 3) recognition of water as an economic good, something that would allow for the efficient and egalitarian allocation of this resource

to all users and promote its conservation and protection (RAHAMAN e VARIS, 2005; SNELLEN e SCHREVEL, 2004).

Based on this debate which was resumed in other important international conferences, GWP established the definition of IWRM in 2002, which according to Biswas (2004) and Jeffrey and Gearey (2006) soon became the most widely accepted sustainable solution for water resources management, being endorsed, adopted and promoted by different international institutions as the principle management tool. In short, IWRM can be defined as a process that promotes the development and coordinated management of water, soil and related resources, in order to maximize economic and social welfare results in an equitable way without compromising the sustainability of essential eco-systems. Integrated management defined within IWRM should occur preferentially at the water basin level, under the principles of good governance and public participation (RAHAMAN e VARIS, 2005).

The definition of what is good governance of water can open up different strands of the debate about public policies and the participation of civil society in relation to water resources. Therefore, "good governance" can be considered, according to a particular strand, to occur when there are clear rules and institutional capacity on the part of the government to reduce uncertainties and correct the "failures of the market" (WORLD BANK, 1992). Another strand states that "good governance" of water resources implies the integration of public policies, with the aim of providing appropriate environmental sanitary services to low-income groups and reducing socio-economic disparities among the population (CAMPOS e FRACALANZA, 2010). For the purpose of this study we consider good governance of water resources in relation to the second strand, in that the priority of funding for environmental sanitation should be low-income groups, in particular those who are socially and environmentally vulnerable.

When the São Paulo state and the national legislation on water resources are compared, we note the presence of a conceptual framework mentioned earlier. Thus, a survey of authors whose works focus on critically analyzing the results, successes and failures of implementing the IWRM model throws light on some of the issues and obstacles present in the Brazilian experience of managing water resources. Concentrating on issues involving the concept of environmental justice, two aspects can be highlighted: the marketization of water management and the democratization of spaces for decision-making.

In order to put into practice and achieve the goals and objectives established by the new legislation, a number of support tools were created, such as water resources plans, the classification of water resources into different classes, the granting of rights of usage, charging for usage and the Information System on Water Resources.

The charging for the gross use of water is considered to be one of the main innovations of the new model of managing water resources. This tool is based on the principles of the producer-payer and the user-payer, establishing that water is recovered and available in sufficient quantity and quality, and that these conditions are ensured by the users who employ this resource directly or benefit from the environmental services

it provides. By adopting this tool and associating water consumption to the payment of a tariff, managers of this public service sought to correct market dysfunction, represented by the concept of negative externality, the consequence of which was the irrational exploitation of natural resources and an increase in levels of pollution (CÂNEPA, 2003; SILVIA 2003).

In the light of Environmental Justice we highlight the impact the tool of charging for the use of water, together with the pre-existing charge for sanitation services, can have on low-income social groups.

Charging for the use of water and social inequalities in access to sanitation

According to Britto (2010), costs related to access to water and sewage services are responsible for creating new types of social inequality. In the past areas where the low-income population lived were not covered by sanitation companies who prioritized investment in the wealthier parts of the city, where they were certain of financial returns. Today, despite the expansion of the sanitation system to other regions, people still experience the possibility of not having access to these services (BRITTO, 2010; VARGAS, 2005). Britto (2010) claims that as many residents are not in a financial situation to pay the tariff charged for these services, they search for alternatives, such as clandestine connections to supply grids, inappropriate use of artesian wells and the incorrect disposal of sewage. These measures put both the health of these populations and the environment at risk, perpetuating the cycle of socio-environmental injustice.

In face of this scenario, any increase in the financial burden on these populations, as a result of sanitation companies passing on the cost of water resources to the user through charging, may aggravate their vulnerability if measures are not adopted to protect them.

In the case of sanitation companies, implementing differentiated rates for low-income users aims to make access to services universal, reducing the effects caused by socio-economic inequalities. However, there is no consensus in relation to the efficacy of this initiative to protect the poorer population. According to Britto (2010), even if these tariffs are adopted, the financial conditions of low-income consumers may be so precarious that they would continue to be unable to access these services. Hübner (2010) adds that even when services are paid for, areas with lower economic value incur the risk of being provided with services and infrastructure of inferior quality to those available in wealthier areas. The author concludes that the universalization of these services may only disguise new aspects of social inequality. Finally, another obstacle faced by low-income consumers relates to access to information, as service providers do not always supply the necessary information so that low-income consumers are aware of their right to request the differentiated tariff (BRITTO, 2010).

When examining the mechanism of charging for the gross use of water in the light of the concept of environmental justice, we observe a possible contradiction between objectives and the opportunity to promote reconciliation between environmental and social justice. Charging is an economic management mechanism,

to value and rationalize the use of water. Its aim is to internalize negative externalities or social costs and be capable of modifying the behaviour of consumers, controlling use of this resource by reducing consumption and waste. Charging is also an essential mechanism for maintaining the financial sustainability of the water resources management system, allowing for the recovery and preservation of various water bodies through structural interventions, such as the introduction of new irrigation and re-use techniques, and non-structural interventions, such as the implementation and improvement of monitoring and control programs. The importance of the stipulated value of the tariff is clear in order to achieve the objectives set out for this tool.

If the stipulated tariff charged is low, users will not be encouraged to employ these resources more rationally, subsequently reducing water demand, and the management model will not reach the required financial threshold to fund projects and interventions which would allow for the recovery and preservation of water resources (SANTOS, 2003). In a scenario aggravated by water shortage, in terms of both quality and quantity, the poorer populations would probably shoulder most of the burden and there would be an increase in the environmental vulnerability of water sources and other water bodies.

On the other hand, relatively high tariffs could ensure the efficient operation of the management model and promote more radical changes in the behaviour of users (GARRIDO e FERNANDEZ, 2002). However, in this case, a reduction in environmental vulnerability would be accompanied by an increase in social vulnerability, as low-income groups may be prevented from accessing sanitary services from an economic point of view or be forced to use them below adequate levels.

Therefore, one of the main concerns when considering charging is finding a tariff that promotes a balance between the preservation of water resources and the promotion of its multiple uses, treating distinct groups of users differently so as to reduce existing socio-environmental inequalities. The Water Basin Committee has the task of establishing a charging formula and setting up a tariff. The committees, established by both São Paulo state and national legislation on water resources, are collegiate bodies which have regulatory, consultative and deliberative powers. The participation of civil society is accounted for by these bodies, together with representatives of the municipal and state governments (in the case of the state of São Paulo) and with representatives of the Federal Government and users (in the national case). They should promote debate about issues related to water, and plan the sustainable use of this resource within the water basin under their respective remits.

Issues of participation and decentralization can be discussed and analyzed in the light of the three aspects of accountability. Accountability refers to a set of conditions and mechanisms which provide civil society with greater control and participation in the drafting and definition of public policies, making this process more transparent and democratic. Below we provide a synthesized version of the three dimensions or variations of accountability: Vertical, horizontal and society-driven (PÓ e ABRUCIO, 2006; WAMPLER, 2005).

The vertical dimension is related to the electoral process, bringing to the fore the behaviour of the electorate and its capacity to control public authorities. The mechanism employed in this form of accountability is the choice of representatives during the electoral process, so the availability of information and the transparency of actions in public management are very important, as they directly affect the ability of citizens to assess and select their candidates. In horizontal accountability, the focus is the relationship between governmental organizations within a specific institutional arrangement. In this case, the mechanism is the capacity, ability and attributes of state agencies to supervise, control, punish or rectify actions and decisions taken by authorities in other agencies. The last form of accountability is society-driven accountability. It is an extension of vertical accountability since it also depends on the choices and actions of agents in civil society organizations. In this dimension, made up of institutional and non-institutional mechanisms, civil society organizations exert pressure in order to monitor and influence the decisions and activities of governmental agencies. The focus is on the diversity of available political strategies which go beyond the isolated and simple action of voting during the electoral period. Legal actions, public manifestations, complaints in the media, public audiences and new participative institutions are some of the legal and political mechanisms encompassed by this dimension (VIEIRA, 2006; WAMPLER, 2005; PÓ e ABRUCIO, 2006).

As we can observe, the various dimensions of accountability are highly dependent when the ultimate aim is to increase the capacity of civil society in monitoring the activities of government and influencing their decisions, that is, to increase control over the State. The dependency of these dimensions becomes clear when we analyse the new arenas for participative management, such as the water basin committees. According to Wampler (2005), the efficiency and reach of actions within these arenas depends on the availability of complete and transparent information (vertical dimension), the ability to carry out decisions and monitor the decisions of other agencies (horizontal dimension), and finally, the degree of openness of public debate and mobilization (society-driven dimension).

The opening of the decision-making and management process to debate and public participation is one of the main innovations of the new model of water management. Through participation, sectors of society traditionally excluded are able to take part in the process of decision-making and can influence and monitor policies in the drafting, assessing and implementing stages. According to Jacobi and Fracalanza (2005), both the concept of a collegiate, based on socio-technical negotiations, and its dynamic, which turns the interaction between the actors involved more transparent, should discourage abuse of power and neutralize predatory practices stimulated by economic and political interests. Benefits of this process are the strengthening of democracy, institutional innovation and social learning (WARNER, 2005).

However, as it became clear through a group of studies, merely creating specific positions for the participation of civil associations does not guarantee greater plurality and balance in relation to the participation of civil society. This is not sufficient in

order to change the traditional conception of power. Studies focusing on the relationships within these councils offer a number of explanations for these phenomena.

First, there is a certain consensus in relation to the historical legacy of inequality in Brazilian society. Following this rationale, to a certain extent the ability to cement the democratic principles which are the basis for these new arenas is made more difficult due to the unequal capacity of some actors to participate in political processes, in particular in relation to ownership and mobilization of resources. Thus, economic, educational and power inequalities distort the decision-making process which continues to favour the most politically and economically influential groups (JACOBI, 2009; DAGNINO, 2004; FUKS et al., 2003; ABERS et al., 2009). Low-income groups also find it difficult to occupy positions in collegiate bodies such as the water basin committees, due to a lack of mobilization and organization. Participation in the committees is not on an individual basis, as it is in the participative budget councils. Participation is channelled through established bodies. Therefore, as long as these groups do not formally come together to defend their interests, they will not be able to stand for a representative position (ABERS e KECK, 2008; LÜNCHMANN, 2002).

Analyzing the points and arguments presented earlier, we can conclude that the initiatives of charging for the gross use of water or for sanitation services need to reconcile the preservation of this natural resource and its adequate provision, in both quantity and quality, in order to ensure that a wide range of economic, industrial and agricultural activities are maintained, and more importantly, that the basic and essential needs of living beings are met as water is essential to life. In face of the conflicts which emerge between the multiple uses of water resources and the consequences of applying different tools to manage them, low-income groups, who have a much lower capacity for organizing and mobilizing themselves, may be practically invisible, excluded from the management process. As Abers e Keck (2008) point out, participative management arenas are not currently considered a space for identifying common interests, rather they are seen as spaces for conflicts, for differences; that is, the exclusion of these social groups may lead to the exclusion of their problems and demands which will not be included in government agendas, and consequently, they will remain invisible, increasing the social vulnerability and environmental injustice to which they are exposed.

Finally, many of the participative experiences described in the literature are characterized by two types of vulnerability which significantly affect the potential of these groups to intervene in the decision-making process. First, the new arenas are highly dependent on the traditional management organizations, which may impede the dissemination of information and fail to provide financial, material and human support. Furthermore, the lack of binding legal power clearly restricts the independence of participative management councils, as decisions generally need to be ratified and carried out by other institutions, increasing the risk of interference, in particular by the government (ABRAMOVAY, 2001; JACOBI e FRACALANZA, 2005; JACOBI, 2009). The second type of vulnerability is related to what Santos (2002) calls the democratization of democracy. In face of socio-economic inequalities and cultural

differences the quality of the actions of agents or social groups which take part in these new management arenas ends up being determined by resources that influence power - income, education and political support – moulding their beliefs and their perception of the world. It is therefore necessary to promote and attract more participation, ensuring and qualifying the involvement of groups which have been historically excluded from decision-making processes.

In order to overcome this problem, it is necessary that socially excluded groups actively take part in social mobilization, focusing on the debate of the universal rights of individuals in relation to environmental goods. The participation of these groups in decision-making processes should take into account principles of environmental justice, starting with the right to access and consume water in a quantity and of a quality that are sufficient and adequate for everyone.

Final considerations

This article sought to analyze how social vulnerability is associated to environmental health and how these relate to environmental injustice in Brazil.

The aim of discussing the concepts of social vulnerability and environmental injustice by associating them to issues such as the use and occupation of the soil, income, environmental sanitation and areas of risk, is to point out how the way urban space is occupied in a capitalist society perpetuates inequality in relation to access to natural resources. In the case of water, unequal conditions of ownership of such an essential element to life can only lead to increasing difficulties in how this part of the population can make use of it. This also leads to situations of greater risk associated to the land used for housing.

It is important to acknowledge that public policies related to water often prioritize certain uses which relate to the capitalist value system, without taking into account distributive issues which affect low-income populations.

Due to the inequality discussed here, and to ensure good governance of water resources, it is important to stress the fundamental role public policies relating to water and soil play in combating the disparities observed.

Therefore, it is important to highlight the need to integrate water resources policies with those relating to soil usage and occupation, basic sanitation and even social policies, so as to abate vulnerabilities and environmental injustices made worse by the process of development.

The main priority is to promote environmental sanitation for low-income populations which are not able to use alternative systems of water supply and sewage collection, removal and treatment. Furthermore, taking into account the fact that water is a common good and therefore should be supplied in adequate quantity and appropriate quality to the whole population, subsidies are needed for the sanitation sectors.

Nevertheless, the introduction of differentiated charges for the use of water by specific groups of users, employing a tariff mechanism, can help to achieve a balance between preserving water resources and promoting water's multiple uses, so as to reduce

existing socio-environmental inequalities. The payment of differentiated environmental charges can lead to a decrease in consumption by heavy users, and thus prevent the abusive use of water. Conversely, investment in environmental sanitation for low-income populations can contribute to a reduction in health problems amongst this population, and a decrease in environmental problems and environmental injustice.

It is important to stress that there is not necessarily a trade-off between paying a tariff and the abusive use of water. It is true that a reduction in use of water is one of the objectives of this charge, but the adequate supply in both quality and quantity to the entire population remains an objective of utmost importance in relation to water resources policies in Brazil. Therefore, even if there are some instances of the abusive use of water, the issue of the population's health is essential from a social, environmental and economic point of view, and may affirm the need to fund and provide subsidies for environmental sanitation for low-income groups.

Finally, environmental issues discussed within the current capitalist society, such as those related to water, may contribute to the adoption of ethical values associated to equality, life and justice as they expound abusive patterns of production and consumption and alert us to the need to modify the way natural resources are used and owned.

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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND WATER RESOURCES GOVERNANCE PRACTICES: RE-INTRODUCING ISSUES OF EQUALITY TO THE AGENDA

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Resumo: O conceito de governança vem sendo discutido enquanto uma nova forma de gestão de recursos naturais por incorporar a participação de atores sociais no planejamento de políticas ambientais. O objetivo do trabalho é verificar de que modo a vulnerabilidade social associada ao saneamento ambiental relaciona-se a injustiça ambiental no Brasil. A metodologia do artigo baseia-se em revisão bibliográfica. A situação de desigualdade apresentada ressalta a importância de uma boa governança, considerando o papel fundamental das políticas públicas no combate às desigualdades socioambientais. Assim, é importante considerar: a integração das políticas de água com as de solo, bem como programas, agentes e instituições que desenvolvam atividades conjuntas; a prioridade de saneamento ambiental para populações pobres, além do estabelecimento de subsídios; por fim a diferenciação dos usuários na cobrança pelo uso da água, atuando no equilíbrio entre a preservação do recurso e a promoção dos usos múltiplos.

Palavras-chave: Governança da água; vulnerabilidade social; justiça ambiental.

Abstract: The concept of governance has been discussed as a new form of management of natural resources by incorporating the participation of social actors in environmental policy-making. The objective of this study is to examine how the social vulnerability associated to environmental sanitation relates to environmental injustice in Brazil. The methodology of the article is based on a review of the literature. The situation of inequality which is presented highlights the importance of good governance, in terms of the fundamental role public policies play in combating social and environmental inequalities. Thus, it is important to consider 1) the integration of water and soil policies, as well as programs, actors and institutions to develop joint activities 2) environmental sanitation for the poor population as a priority together with the establishment of subsidies, and finally 3) the differentiation of users in terms of water use charges, influencing the balance between resource preservation and promotion of multiple uses.

Keywords: Governance of water: social vulnerability, environmental justice.

Resumen: El concepto de gobernabilidad se ha discutido como una nueva forma de gestión de los recursos naturales mediante la incorporación de la participación de los actores sociales en la formulación de políticas ambientales. El objetivo de este estudio es examinar cómo la vulnerabilidad social asociada a servicios de saneamiento se relaciona con la injusticia ambiental en Brasil. La metodología se basa en la revisión de la literatura. La situación de desigualdad presentada pone de relieve la importancia de la buena gobernanza, teniendo en cuenta el papel de las políticas públicas para combatir las desigualdades. Por lo tanto, es importante tener en cuenta: la integración de las políticas del agua con el suelo, la prioridad de saneamiento ambiental para los pobres y la diferenciación de los usuarios en los cargos de uso de agua, que actúa sobre el equilibrio entre la preservación de los recursos y la promoción de usos múltiples.

Palabras clave: Políticas del agua; la vulnerabilidad social, la justicia ambiental.
