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Decentralized cooperation and management of urban services in southern countries: an application on water supply services in Senegal

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Abstract

Drinkable water crisis is since the seventies a concern shared worldwide, especially in developing countries urban areas.

Since the early eighties, international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGO) are leading several initiatives trying to solve the problem within frameworks involving central states (between developed and developing countries), and by the early 90' between local authorities in the framework of decentralized cooperation.

The goal of this paper is to show that public-private partnerships model involved by the World Bank and the IMF in developing countries have shown their limits in urban services management, drinkable water particularly. We assume that an alternative model based on decentralized cooperation and a strengthening of local authorities capabilities may widen quality water access in low prices, especially for poor citizens.

Our analysis will be organized around institutional economics and collective action theories in order to analyse socio-economics dynamics in drinkable water issues for developing countries.

Keywords:

Urban services, drinkable water policies, decentralized cooperation

INTRODUCTION

This thesis work follows our master's dissertation in which we analysed ten years of public-private partnership in urban water management in Senegal. We shown that even if the efficiency's goal was attempt, social and spatial discrimination increased during this period. In this frame our interrogation was how authorities can improve water access for poor people living in poor parts (not always illegally) of developing countries cities? Therefore, decentralized cooperation and its proximity-based model interested us as a new way to reinforce solidarities and knowledge transfers as stated in 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto.

Since the late 70's the issue of urban planning and services access in developing countries is at the heart preoccupations of various agencies and actors at diversified levels of interventions from national to the international area.

Today, the issue continues to interest political and theoretical debates because cities in developing countries records most raised demographic rates in the world (today's tendencies are around 4% per year). Because of their high population growth these countries are facing institutional and material difficulties to assure access to urban services to the people, drinkable

water¹ especially. According to UNDP projections, by the year 2020 more than the half of African population will live in urban areas, and authorities will face growing problems if nothing is done.

According to some authors (Jaglin & Dubresson 1993; Jaglin 2004; Dubresson 2004) problems that faces cities in developing countries can be understood under two ways: demographic pressure, due to both natural growth rate and the phenomenon of rural population exodus to cities on one hand, on the other to the urban territories sprawling as a result of population growth which that the size of the African cities does not stop increasing.

These phenomena coupled with the lack of regulatory authorities in these areas often located in suburb facilitate for us, the disorganization of urban space and network services in developing countries.

To face the issue of network services access in developing countries, drinkable water and sanitation in particular, several programmes were thought by countries and international organizations. In the early 80's, an ambitious programme (*International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade*) involving states and several international organizations (governmental and non governmental) tried to ensure access to water "for all" by the year 1990. However, the results of this vast programme have not been commensurate with the investments made, what some authors (Breuil, 2004) attribute to a bad coordination between the evolution of structures and institutional reform within the framework of this project and those who follow.

By the early 90s, the speech of international organization is going to change; the objective is not any more to assure the access to water for all, but trying to insure access for the largest number (Baron, 2006). This situation constitutes according to us a backing on behalf of states and international organizations in front of the scale of the problem.

The failure of the drinking water and sanitation decade goals' and the disappointment of developing countries national government, subjected to rigorous structural adjustment programmes², changed urban policies in developing countries.

Since the 90s, Bretton-Woods institutions (IMF and World bank) and other partners of developing countries focused their speeches around decentralization. It's in this context that will be launched in 1992, the Municipal Development Programme between the developing countries and donor organizations. This new strategy oriented towards decentralization is seen by some (Stern, 1991) as a way to find new financial resources and a more efficient scale of intervention after the depletion of previous strategies.

This work's aim is to analyse the interaction between local policies of water accessibility management and international decentralized cooperation and its consequences on urban territories organization and water access improvement. Decentralized cooperation refers to the international action of local governments in North/South or South/South exchanges and projects run by international NGO subsidized by local governments.

¹ Access to drinkable water is characterized by domestic connection to the network or modes of collective supplies (standpipes or other water sources) available on a reasonable distance from home, estimated at 200 meters (Jaglin, 2001).

² Period of budgetary austerity imposed on developing countries by the Bretton Woods institutions to "consolidate public finances and bring fiscal stability in highly indebted states. Some authors These programmes are institutional process resulting from the adoption of economic and financial agreements by developing countries with Bretton-Woods institutions. Developing countries accept reforms programme in exchange of financial assistance...

METHOD AND HYPOTHESIS

Our work will consist in analysing this frame of action where speeches and practices on urban areas are in perpetual evolution, to see how the actors situated at different levels of intervention, going of the international to the premises, coordinate their strategies to produce a policy tending to resolve the imbalance existing in the access to the drinking water on urban segregated territories (Baron, 2006).

It will also ask how local actors appropriate, adapt or throw back imported models so called "ready to manage" by Dubresson (1993), proposed by donors (IMF, World Bank) or local partners in the North, but their efficiency leaves sceptic some (Damiba, 1996).

The research method includes a bibliographic review, official documents analysis, interviews and questionnaires to relevant actors. The expected result is an evaluation of decentralized cooperation stakes and above all a discussion on new opportunities of collaboration between developed countries local governments and those of developing countries in urban services improvement, especially water accessibility.

We shall try to report this phenomenon through the literature of these last twenty years on the problem of the access to the urban services in developing countries, in Africa in particular, their stakes in spatial engineering (Jaglin, 2004) and of reorganization of the urban space in search of a "good urban governance" (Baron, 2006); but also the modalities of price determination of the water which, for some, has to be made by the market to reflect the real cost of the water and allow an effective allocation of the resources (Thobani, 1995; Camedessus, 2003), whereas for the others (Shiva, 2003) this trade drift is on the base of the disparities in access to water services which must be considered as a public good (Patrella, on 2003; on 2004).

Participatory mechanisms will be analysed in their implementation in the context of the daily ways that communities (NGO's and users association) organize themselves and local governments international cooperation practices for water management. The goal is to identify new ways of collective action and new institutional organization that make it possible to integrate decentralized cooperation in water issues solution.

We shall try to confirm or deny certain assumptions in this work:

- Does decentralized cooperation at the same time it allows communities to improve the water access management is not going to be a way of accentuation of existing disparities between urban spaces and populations, on territories already characterized by an mosaic form of organization (Baron, 2006)?
- How the decentralized governments, within the support of international cooperation, can improve the participation of the local actors (who have a deeper insight of populations' difficulties) in establishing a solution to the problems of access to water in a "bottom up" model?

Evolution of water sector policies

The reforms that followed the structural adjustment policies lead to the end of free service in water and national government's subsidizes. This change in the management of drinking water services in developing countries joined the concerns of the World Bank which considers within the framework of Global Water Partnership that water is an economic good that it is necessary to value and to distribute by taking into account granted investments and profits removed from equipments.

The International Conference on Water and Environment (Dublin 1992) stated: "for all its different uses, water has an economic value and should be recognized as an economic good".

According to this report, "the non-recognition in the past of the economic value of water drove to wasting and harmful practices for the environment of the resource...."

It's on the basis of this principle that developing countries led changes in their water policies with the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPP).

The emergence of a new model of public management

The "depressed" context of post-Washington consensus (Petiteville, 1995) in developing countries allowed to local authorities the opportunity to put in profit their new attributions in foreign actions and engage North/South decentralized cooperation relationships.

The increasing openness of the international relations to non-governmental actors (after the fall of Berlin Wall) and the broadcasting of decentralization model as well as in northern and southern countries participated to the spread of decentralized cooperation [example: French Law of 1992 that legitimised international actions of local authorities and Britain's "Local government overseas assistance" Law in 1993]. These legal devices will permit local governments to become more emancipated from national authorities and to set up economic strategies in their field of competence.

In Africa, the trend towards decentralization is carried by International organizations such as World bank to ensure on one hand a more efficient management of public services and on the other hand to reduce public deficits by transferring at the same moment some revenue and expenses to local authorities.

In a context of spreading of "local governance" concepts (World Bank, on 1992), several African countries under structural adjustments constraints subscribed to this model heavily recommended by international financial partners; that will be the case of Mali (by a law of February 11th, 1993 determining conditions of the free administration of regions and their autonomy) and Senegal by the adoption of Local Government Code in 1996.

It is important to wonder about the impact of transformations intervened since the early 90's (which are ongoing) both in speeches and practices on the urban territories in developing countries, especially dealing with water sector.

This period (the 90s) is also that of the circulation of a "hybrid" model of public management: the *New public management*, which associates public and private stakeholders in public-private partnerships (PPP). The generalization of this model is going to follow in the importance, which was given - at the end of the year's 80- to the participation of users in costs recovering of water services and in commons generally. Thus, international community in New Delhi (1990) and Dublin (1992) conferences on water and environmental stated:

- The diversification of services (a little for all is better than a lot for little)
- The association of users and decision-makers at all levels of decision
- The end of the free services, giving the water an economic value...

It's in this circumstance that at the World Water Forum in Kyoto (2003) public assistance is put at the centre of improvement of water policies, especially in developing countries. After the market regulation and less state model advocated in the 90s shown its limits, it was necessary to find a balance between the market and the State (or the decentralized communities) to assure fair access water for populations, particularly for the poor. According to the recommendations of the Forum, this solution has to go through a strengthening of international solidarity that must be manifested by the development of decentralized cooperation in water sector, support NGOs and associations' actions, and Private sector engaged in developing countries.

Decentralized cooperation and water services management improvement

To us, decentralized cooperation can help local authorities of developing countries to reinforce their management capacities, especially in water services supply for poorest citizens.

For example in France, local governments have already competences in the management of urban services and space too. And in the frame of Oudin Law (2005), which allow them to engage international actions in water access and sanitation programmes, they can help developing countries local authorities to improve their technical and political skills in urban territories management.

We will try to show how decentralized cooperation can help northern countries, local authorities especially, to anticipate on problems that they might face in the future, as water resources allocation will generate more and more competition between territories and populations usage (household, industries, agriculture...).

According to Graham and Marvin (2001) splintering urbanism is a consequence of the less state model that strengthens urban networks fragmentation and the failure of state regulation. Decentralized cooperation, by the close relations it creates between partners can help developing countries to overcome these issues and lead toward social and spatial equilibrium in cities services access, especially drinkable water.

CONCLUSION

Water access services is one of the most discussed issue in international meetings nowadays. This research tries to bring a new comprehension of international practices in water management, especially how developing countries can improve their urban management to guarantee a fair access to water services.

By the combination of theoretic framework (collective action and institutions economics) we will discuss the consequences of decentralised cooperation in urban services management in developing countries. We also try to show how decentralized cooperation can favour the emergence of new collective action both at local and international scales.

In this research we assume that to ensure fair access to drinkable water at low cost (as declined in the Millennium Development Goals) to urban population, it should be necessary to strength local actors “capabilities” (in the sense of Amartya Sen, 2000) so that local governments would be able to regulate socio-spatial organization of urban services, access to water in particular. For us, public-private partnership model has shown its limits and a new model with a stronger role for public institutions is essential to ensure social investment and spatial equilibrium.

The results of ongoing research (literature review, interviews and land practices observation) will allow us to confirm or deny our presumptions.

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