

Session 6.5.1. Cultural Diversity: Key to Water Sustainability

Topic	6.5. Water and Culture
Date of the session	20 th March 2009
Time of the session	08:30-10:30 11:00-12:00
Main convening organizations	Gazi University, Faculty of Engineering & Architecture UNESCO-IHP
Contact person(s)	Ibrahim GURER (gurer@gazi.edu.tr) Lisa HIWASAKI (L.Hiwasaki@unesco.org)
Short description of what the session intends to discuss and the key questions that have been identified	
<p>Sustainably managing water resources is crucial to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); indeed it is water that cuts through and connects the eight MDGs. In order to manage water in a sustainable manner, it is necessary to address the complexity of issues surrounding water and water use, which includes not only the natural scientific and engineering approaches that have dominated water resources management, but also social, cultural, economic and political dimensions.</p> <p>The theme Water and Cultural Diversity has recently received much attention in the international realm. Although many now agree that water resources management that does not incorporate social dimensions is not sustainable, interdisciplinary and systematic analyses of the relationships between cultural diversity and water, and their implications for sustainable management of water resources, are still lacking. Thus, there is an urgent need to understand, identify and analyze the challenges and opportunities cultural diversity offers and to formulate solutions for sustainable management of water resources, in order to ensure that cultural diversity is fully incorporated into water management practices and policies.</p>	
Wider context of issues: Why is the question important to improving water challenges in the world today? And how does it relate to issues outside the water sectors?	
<p>The main objective of water management is to manage resources in a sustainable way. Developing sustainable water resource management strategies requires recognizing and addressing potential conflicts, as well as the considerable strengths inherent in the dynamic and evolving relationship between human and environmental systems. Sustainability cannot be achieved unless economic, environmental, and socio-cultural needs are factored into the water resource management equation. These realities point towards the need for more holistic approaches in water resource development and management. Cultural diversity--meaning the variety of human societies, religious communities, regional cultures, and traditional ways of life--has significant influence on the ways that people perceive, use, and manage natural resources. Interdisciplinary and systematic efforts that recognize and assess the relationship between water and cultural diversity and incorporate cultural values in water resource management can increase public awareness, enhance education strategies, and help sustain cultures and the environment. This first session on water and culture offers an overview and specific insights into "the cultural dimension of water" by focusing on two main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diversity of cultural meanings, values and perception of water and its social impacts. 	

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-Collaborations and conflicts related to governing and access to water.

Previous experiences to draw on expected challenges and past lessons

UNESCO introduced the theme of Water and Cultural Diversity into international discourse in 2000, to further understanding of how they are linked and promote the mainstreaming of cultural diversity in IWRM to facilitate progress toward achieving the MDGs. Both the beneficial and problematic relationships between water resource management and cultural diversity have been explored during the past World Water Forums--in 2000, at the session organized by UNESCO on "Water and Indigenous People" (2nd World Water Forum); in 2003, at the series of events on water and cultural diversity (3rd World Water Forum, organized by UNESCO, the French Water Academy and Japan Centre for Area Studies/ National Museum of Ethnology); in 2006, the World Water Day on the theme of water and culture (lead taken by UNESCO), and organizing a session titled "Water and Cultural Diversity: Mediating for sustainable development" (4th World Water Forum, session organized by UNESCO, the Japan Consortium for Area Studies and National Institute for the Humanities, Japan. In 2007, UNESCO-IHP launched the Water and Cultural Diversity Project to accelerate the comprehensive assessment of existing research and case studies, foster interdisciplinary and multi-cultural research and partnerships, and link worldwide activities dealing with this theme.

A session at the 5th World Water Forum that examines in comparative fashion some of the complex facets in the relationship between water and cultural diversity will allow us to obtain case-specific insights and develop lessons learned and recommendations towards addressing expected challenges.

Discuss the development of session questions and its role on the relevant topic

i. Identify common issues and priority problems

Managing water in a sustainable way does not only depend on scientific and engineering methods, but also on social, cultural, economic and political dimensions as well.

What kinds of opportunities and challenges does social, cultural and political diversity present for sustainable water resources management?

Will an interdisciplinary approach help formulate practices and policies that are more culturally sensitive?

ii. Discuss the future evolution of the topic, in the short-, medium-, to long-term based on changing political climates and other foreseen socio-economic /ecological

Session 6.5.1 would first explore, from a variety of cultural perspectives, the question What is water? then address the key question by providing an assessment of research and case studies on the topic of water and cultural diversity, and linking worldwide activities dealing with this topic. This would include:

case studies that demonstrate the relationship between water and cultural

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factors	<p>diversity, and how diverse “water cultures” are lived by different people</p> <p>traditional knowledge and practices that demonstrate the relationship between water and cultural diversity, which includes those from indigenous and , local people; urban, peri-urban and rural centres ; nomadic and sedentary people.</p> <p>-identification and analysis of ways in which cultural diversity could be interwoven with mainstream science and engineering, in order to contribute to sustainable management of water resources.</p>
Differing perspectives: (Regional, stakeholder, others...)	
Stakeholders at global level	
List of speakers and timing	
08:30 -10:30	
Symbolism of water in the Qur'an - Omid SAFI (15 minutes)	
Blue Ecology: What is water?, an indigenous perspective - Michael BLACKSTOCK (15 minutes)	
Diversity of Indigenous peoples cultural meanings, values and perceptions of water -Monica MORGAN (15 minutes)	
Culture, Purity and Pollution in the Ganges River Basin - Kelly ALLEY (15 minutes)	
Meanings of Water in Bengali Culture - Suzanne HANCHETT (15 minutes)	
Droplets of Hope: Searching for Sustainability and Common Ground through Traditional Water Altitudes and Knowledge in the Arab/Israeli Conflict - Rosina HASSOUN (15 minutes)	
Watersheds and Marinescapes: Understanding and Maintaining Cultural- Thomas THORNTON (15 minutes)	
Discussion moderated by Irene Klaver (15 minutes)	
10:30 -11:00	
Break	
11:00-12:00	
Changing Waters: environmental cycles, local actors and global change in coastal Northern Australia - Marcus BARBER (15 minutes)	
Sustainable Water Management? Lessons from the Lesotho Highlands Water Project - Robert HITCHCOCK (15 minutes)	
The Life in Water- Halide SARGUT (15 minutes)	

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Discussion moderated by Ibrahim Gurer & Irene Klaver
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Panellists

Session Conveners

All speakers
