

Panel T: Re-regulation of Urban Water Supply Organisation: Tracing the Geographical and Historical Trails (chair: Marianne Kjellén; coordinator: Jenny Appelblad)

This panel will explore the international influence and local roots of the present restructuring and re-regulation of urban water sectors in sub-Saharan Africa. The transformation of the provision of water and other infrastructure services forms part of global deregulation and privatisation trends. The trends originate in economic stagnation and fiscal crisis in the North during the 1970s, along with the inefficiencies of most parastatal authorities commonly responsible for water and other social services in the South. Apart from the commercialisation and privatisation of a range of public services, there has also been a separation of roles in provision of services, ownership of infrastructure and the legal oversight of operational responsibilities. At the same time, the value of water as both an economic and social good with multiple uses at household as well as societal levels have put new requirements on what constitutes good governance and prudent resource management. In the resulting landscape for water service provision there is a need to further probe the new constellation of actors and the revised 'rules of the game.' When international financial institutions and transnational water companies push water sector reform throughout the developing world, they meet a variety of local interests and conditions which shape both the debate and the outcomes. Local and international NGOs surface and shake hands in keeping the global commercial interests at bay, and the World Bank on its toes. Regulatory frameworks are invented and re-invented, following colonial historical trails as well as newer lines of influence. Hence, global privatisation has uneven results, with far from global uniformity in regulatory regimes. The present panel aims to define and discuss this regulatory and operational unevenness of the present urban water supply laboratory in Africa, producing a multiplicity of provisioning modes and novel forms of water supply organisation.

Participants:

1) Marianne Kjellén (Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden)

2) Jenny Appelblad (Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden): New Modes of Operation and Regulation in Urban Water Supply- The Case of Uganda

Following decades of reforms and restructuring, the Ugandan urban water sector has been undergoing overall liberalisation, decentralisation and commercialisation processes. As a result, in place today are new constellations of actors and new modes of operation and regulation. The reforms implemented since the 1990s have treaded differently between large and small towns. The governance model in place today is dual; while large towns are provided for by the public water utility; public-private partnerships have come to be the most common way to arrange for the provision of water services in small towns. The achievements made by the public water utility in the large towns are applauded by donors and development institutions (who in some cases have financed the reforms) and seen as an example and result of successful public management reform. The partnerships in place in small town water supply are on the other hand more problematic, filled with tensions between small-scale private operators and local governments. This presentation aims to discuss the international influence and the local roots of the present restructuring. It will explore the existing governance set-up and the ways in which the restructuring has had an impact on the modes of operation and regulation, and even more important, on the actual water services supplied to urban areas. The study draws on interviews and work conducted during two periods of

fieldwork in Uganda, in 2006 and 2008. Interviews have been carried out with officials at central, district and local level of government. Interviews have also been conducted with small-scale private operators. The study is part of an ongoing PhD-project.

3) Anna Bohman (Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden): Why frames matter - Continuity and change in Ghana's urban water supply and sanitation history

As many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana suffers persistent problems to supply its increasing urban population with adequate water and sanitation services. Ever since the inception of Ghana's first public pipe borne water system during colonial times, different ideas on what is best way to operate, regulate and control this sector has been discussed, different strategies have been tried and reformulated again. In addition, the way that the urban water and sanitation issue have been framed in the official discourse has also affected the way that sector problems have been tackled. From being primarily framed as a public health issue during the early phases of sector development, problem frames have successively grown wider to also include issues such as economic growth and productivity as important motivations for sector investments. Initially, sector problems were also largely addressed as engineering challenges whereas with time, the knowledge provided by economists and management consultants became more important. Besides changing frames, however, strong elements of continuity can also be found in the sector development. History shows that that urban water delivery was highly political issue already during colonial times, which, just as today was closely connected to the framing of water as independence and national integrity. The issue of finance and pricing has remained a constant concern and so the debate is not a novel issue that solely emanates from neo-liberal political trends during the 1980's and 1990's. Furthermore, a lingering legacy of a colonial frame tends to continue to normalising inequality in service access and consumption in Ghana today. In this presentation I want to further problematise the concept of policy rationality by unravelling some of the hidden premises and taken for granted assumptions that have steered thinking and action in the urban WSS sector from colonial times to the present. The presentation argues that the perceived space for policy alternatives in the Ghanaian urban water and sanitation sector has been largely constrained by the historical context and contemporary development theories. Therefore, a critical reflection over past and present problem frames can help policy makers and sector professionals to break away from old ways of thinking or to avoid getting captivated by development policies "in vogue". In addition, to constantly strive towards a frame reflective policy dialogue also facilitates a more informed decision making for the future.

4) David Nilsson (Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden)

5) Lina Suleiman (Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden)

6) Andrew Quinn (Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden)