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A Question of Governance

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## Preface

Amid all the books on water management, *Globalized Water* stands out for its originality in simultaneously addressing subjects that are normally considered separately. It deals not only with the management of the resource, but also with urban water and sanitation services, analyzing situations in Europe, India, the Middle East, the United States, and Latin America. It might be imagined that such an approach could run the risk of producing a kind of patchwork quilt of a book, in which the diversity of themes addressed and the variety of points of view expressed work to the detriment of any form of thorough analysis. But *Globalized Water* is by no means incoherent, a fact to which readers who are able to see the sudden emergence of essential similarities between themes will readily attest. Indeed, the approach makes it possible to import into specific fields of analysis elements of diagnosis, interpretation, and action from other, completely different fields.

Let us take the example of governance. The subject is omnipresent in this book, a fact that reflects, beyond the diktats of any putative academic fashion, its decisive importance in contemporary scientific and political agendas. This question, which has come to the fore relatively recently in the field of urban services, has long been central in terms of the management of the resource. After all, it is the same resource that is used by farmers for irrigation, tourists for bathing, energy companies for producing electricity, and local authorities for delivering drinking water. This situation has led to an increase in the number of disputes over both the quantity of water available for specific uses and the quality of a resource altered or threatened by being used for other purposes. From the technical, social, and economic points of view, the actors involved differ greatly from one another. They operate in separate spheres, enjoy equal legal status, and have no power of constraint over one another. Consequently, to avoid a scenario based entirely on the balance of power between various players, we must develop mechanisms for sharing water (such mechanisms have been used throughout the world in all historical eras) and protecting its quality (a more recent phenomenon). Such mechanisms presuppose shared diagnostics and common strategies. The more intensely the resource is used, the more interdependencies between users develop and the more central the question of governance becomes. As Chap. 2 in this book

recalls, it was in France in the 1970s that pollution of the water table gave rise to the patrimonial approach, the objective of which was to provide actors involved in disputes over water with a method of negotiating at the local level. The approach is still being applied, and Chap. 17 includes a description of current projects to develop instruments for shared analysis. Indeed, there is a broad consensus today about the importance of an integrated approach to water management and a participative management approach similar to the river basin agencies in France.

Apparently, the problem is entirely different for drinking water. In most cases, drinking water is delivered through services developed by public authorities. The roles of the various actors involved are defined in advance, and there is a degree of clarity in the way in which responsibilities are apportioned and hierarchies established. The public authority assumes responsibility for the service, defining its parameters and regulating it; the operator, in most cases working on its own, manages transport, treatment, distribution, and commercialization; and consumers expect to receive a high-quality service (drinkability, pressure, continuity) at a reasonable and affordable price. Thus, when problems arise there is a temptation to opt for an equally simplistic solution: if one of the actors fails to respect the role assigned, all that needs to be done is to bring it back into line. The consumers don't pay? We'll cut off their supply. The operator isn't efficient? We'll replace it. The public authority is at fault? Strict rules must be introduced to ensure that it functions more effectively. It seems that the drinking water sector is the industry par excellence of one-dimensional diagnostics and simple answers: "All we need to do is . . ." This attitude has encouraged a dogmatic approach to debates on the public-private issue (all that is required is to replace the inefficient public sector operator with a private sector operator, or to replace an exploitative private sector operator with a public sector operator), and on the issue of regulation (the decisions made by the public authority are inadequate and must be made subject to the authority of an independent regulator guaranteeing the objective rules of a good service). It can be observed that, in these debates, the institutional aspect of the problem is always emphasized far more than the issue of governance, even if, on occasion, the term "governance" is used to give a sheen of sophistication to policies defined exclusively by the reforming technocratic elite.

*Spilled Water: Institutional Commitment in the Provision of Water Services*, the emblematic book on this phenomenon, was published by the Inter-American Development Bank (Savedoff and Spiller 1999). As we have seen above, the process commences with the search for a scapegoat. Blame is laid at the door of governments, which succumb to the temptation to keep prices low, leading to poor quality, an insufficient expansion of services, inefficiency, and corruption. Now, "institutional structures" (it always seems to be institutional structures) "fail to ensure that governments do not behave in an opportunistic manner." To resolve this problem, Savedoff and Spiller suggested that the application of a "number of alternative institutional arrangements have been tried without success, but others hold promise including fragmentation, competition, and privatization."

Now, as several chapters in *Globalized Water* explain, these miracle cures have come to naught. Ironically, Savedoff and Spiller's book was published at the same

time as such approaches, which had been praised to the skies throughout the 1990s, began to unravel. It was no longer possible to believe that water services, constituted as an industry, were able to isolate and manage themselves like any other branch of industry once technical and financial responsibilities had been allotted among the dominant actors.

It was then that, in the drinking water and sanitation sector, concepts, methods, and practices of governance were imported from the field of the management of the resource. These concepts, methods, and practices included management and responsibility, cooperation, the implementation of continuous and adaptable processes, and the participation of all the stakeholders in complex decisions (Chap. 11).

Of course, these changes were partially associated with a growing interdependence between water users, which obliged urban services to become involved in the protection of the resource, negotiate with the actors concerned, and negotiate with the institutions responsible for waste disposal, spatial planning, etc. As Gottlieb and Fitz-Simmons (1991) demonstrated, this was one of the main reasons why private water companies in California altered their management approaches, thus branching out from the logic traditionally underpinning their offer. Chapter 5 of this book shows how the vital task of preserving the resource calls into question the dominant paradigm based on curative approaches and treatment (and on the integrated network: see Chap. 9). This task undermines the technological rent from which private companies benefit, thus potentially modifying relations between the public and private sectors, and promotes an interactive approach to organization that changes the role and place of consumers. Large private companies in the sector that have attempted to focus on integrated management by monitoring added value throughout the chain have understood this dynamic (see Chap. 4).

But the failure of privatization policies as well as of policies designed to promote the integral self-funding of the service also played a decisive role in this evolution. This failure can be attributed to the fact that the income generated by the approach was insufficient in terms of attaining two essential objectives, both of which were, at least theoretically, priorities: the universalization of access to the service and the sustainability of the economic model. What was called into question was not such and such a recommendation taken individually, but the very manner in which these policies were developed and implemented and the model of governance on which they were based. This could clearly be seen in cases in which the termination of a concession contract failed to solve the problem initially imputed to the operator, signaling instead the beginning of a laborious process involving the development of another form of public action.

It is in this context that approaches taken to managing the resource were first applied to urban water services. One text in particular provides a good illustration of this evolution: the report published by the working group set up in France by the Institute for Delegated Management (representing the sector's major companies), entitled *Contractualization, A Key to the Sustainable Development of Essential Services* (AFD 2008). What the report described is not a contract between a public authority and a private sector company responsible for delivering the service, but rather a gradual process of contractualization among all stakeholders with a view to

“escaping the vicious circle of commitments made and not respected, poorly negotiated compromises and exaggerated compensations” when a government “which has lost credibility due to not delivering on its promises decides to embark on negotiations” and “finding ways to create a dialogue and implement procedures that enable each of the parties involved to make themselves heard and move forward.” When the government, the local authorities, the operators, and the users “are incapable of elaborating a common project, the contractualization process must involve all these stakeholders. Elaborating new strategies to furnish access to all these services calls for a change in the governance structure.”

It would be worthwhile to examine the characteristics of water management and the solutions it suggests one by one to see how they are imported into the field of the management of urban services. That is why the rapprochement between the two fields provided by this book is so fruitful.

The approach is based on taking into account the multiplicity of interests at stake and the actors involved.<sup>1</sup> First and foremost, this includes local authorities—sidelined in terms of the decision-making process in many previous models—and consumers. Of course, since the early 1990s, many authors and institutions have insisted on the need to involve these actors in the decision-making process and the implementation of various programs, but most of the approaches applied in reality have not done so. The originality of the resource management approach is that it not only acknowledges a broad range of different interests, but also encompasses a variety of representations and legal systems. And one would search in vain for a consensus based on a single scale of measurement reflecting, of necessity, the moral and financial values of the dominant actors. As a result, the economic theories and methods applied to assess projects have been called into question, as “the diversity of social relations implies a multiplicity of processes of evaluation of and deliberation about the criteria on which values and prices should be based” (Vivien 2009). It is from this perspective that environmental and patrimonial economists developed their critiques of standard economics. In the field of urban water services, a number of practical critiques have been made of the methods used to assess projects economically, but no solid theoretical foundation for such critiques has yet been developed.<sup>2</sup> It should nevertheless be noted that this book is characterized by, among other things, a large number of references to institutionalist and conventionalist theories—previously a rare phenomenon in the field.

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of the “stakeholder” was defined in the early 1980s in terms of a dichotomy between the power of shareholders and that of the many actors concerned by the strategies of corporations, which, according to stakeholder theory, are entitled to a say in the decision-making process. The notion was quickly taken on board in the management of water resources (see Chap. 18), and is now emerging in the field of urban services. For example, Suez Environnement holds work meetings with stakeholders in New York and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> These lacunae become evident, for example, whenever the subject of the right to water is raised. If the rapprochement with water management is pushed to its limits, we should one day ask ourselves if we should adopt, concerning urban services, the kind of discount rates applied by Nicholas Stern in *The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* (2006).

Another characteristic of approaches to the resource is their insistence on negotiation, understood as a process defining not only projects, but also, and above all, the rules of the game, rules which are not set in stone beforehand. The actors are only entirely constituted, in terms of their identity, autonomy, and objectives, by the process itself. It is for this reason that terms such as “process,” “learning process,” “co-production,” and “evolutive solutions” are to be found in every chapter on the management of the resource. However, these terms appear just as frequently in literature on urban services (Chap. 8 and AFD 2008). Such approaches are, therefore, the exact opposite of the kind of normative, turnkey models so dominant in the 1990s, which defined the preconditions of good governance and described how they should be implemented. Those models included a strict hierarchy of actors and a series of well-defined, stable, and unquestionable rules. Their emblematic figure was that of the regulator, an entity independent from all other actors and capable of resolving conflicts on a rational basis. And if the regulator were tempted to succumb to external pressures, limits would be imposed on its “embedded discretion” and strict rules of behavior drawn up by means of a highly detailed “regulation contract” so that the government, subject to criticism, could credibly maintain, “It is beyond my control” (Bakovic et al. 2003).

Although dissenting voices could be heard (Corrales 1998), for a time those models appeared to be beyond criticism, even if daily experience demonstrated that whenever they were implemented their practical results differed from those predicted in theory. As Jaglin (2010) observed, decentralization, “often adopted under external pressure exerted by the international community and providers of funds, but everywhere reappropriated, hybridized, and finally subjected once more to the approaches of individual companies, in practice bears only a passing resemblance to the normative approaches described in numerous documents.” The same could be said of PPPs (public-private partnerships) promoted in the 1990s, or of the figure of the regulator. In Mali, as Blanc explained (AFD 2008, p. 43), “the key concept of the regulator (the Commission for the Regulation of Electricity and Water) has been understood in a variety of ways: sometimes as the body responsible for correcting the imbalances between the North and the South, sometimes as the defender of consumer interests, sometimes as a neutral observer, sometimes as the guarantor of government positions, and sometimes even as the body which anticipates the positions of the President.” And it is amusing to observe, in Chap. 7, that even the famous French model promoted around the world has little to do with how services are really managed in France. The dominant paradigm of the 1990s was based on a series of myths.

The key word today is “negotiation.” Understood in the sense defined above, it is anything but the horse-trading that traditionally goes on prior to the signing of a contract. Even if the result of the process takes the form of a contract—which is often the case—when it does so, the notion itself takes on a radically different meaning. In effect, traditional contracts presuppose that the identity of the actors involved, the rules of the game, and the overall objectives already have been established. “[T]he key success factors, vital if the model is to be reproduced effectively, are the prior existence of a transparent, stable, and established

regulatory and institutional framework, as well as of partnerships between public and private actors in which all the parties fully assume their roles vis-à-vis their respective missions” (Heuraux 2008). What we observe in reality are arrangements that lack outlines for relationships between different actors, immutable commitments associated with potential sanctions, and legally equal partners. The result is not just one contract, but a multitude of contracts that differ widely from one another. The chapters in the second section of this book, Governance, Conflict, and Participation, clearly demonstrate that this is the case in terms of the management of the resource, but exactly the same ideas are to be found in the chapters on urban services, and in the AFD document, in which the term “contract” was replaced by “contractualization process,” a process which gradually generates a network of commitments that are very different from each other, exist side-by-side, and complement one another “according to a strategy focusing on gradual improvements (levels of service, actors involved, their degree of involvement)” (AFD 2008, p. 20). Not only are there many different kinds of contracts, but different contracts are drawn up not only in terms of the various phases of works to be carried out, but also in function of the involvement of the actors: “the role of the actors, and their degree of involvement in guaranteeing access to services must be evolutive” (AFD 2008, p. 172). The process is a long-term one which, because it implies transformations affecting society as a whole, is by no means smooth or linear.

We are thus far from the simplistic debates—simplistic because they are one-dimensional—over the public or private sectors, national or local water management, contracts or regulation, integral self-funding or a free service, and the quest for a miracle cure. The real issue at stake is the social construction of a collective approach to the provision of basic services. It remains to be seen when and how such collective action will become possible.

## **The Limits of Consensus**

When applying approaches developed in the water management sector to urban services, we are, in effect, confronted by the limits observed in the former and the questions raised by the latter. The criticism frequently leveled at the patrimonial approach is that it is based on an idealized vision of social relations in which everything is worked out by consensus, and on a process in which actors supposedly learn how to cooperate with each other and reconcile their respective interests, none of which are asymmetrical. The figure of the regulator is replaced by that of the mediator. However, this model tends to be apolitical. And, as we know, political concerns are omnipresent. Many of the chapters in this book examine unresolved conflicts, both in terms of approaches to water management (Chaps. 12 and 13) and to services (Chaps. 14 and 15). Then there are the reforms that are only applied after 10 or more years of debate and conflict, as was the case, for example, in France. This means that the balance of power between various actors is a decisive factor and

that compromises are sometimes impossible to reach. When talking about a project to install paying water stations in the city, a spokesperson for a Mumbai political party complained: “they [bureaucrats] have come up with one policy for all and that is what we are opposing” (Chap. 14). And there is no shortage of examples of authorities preferring to close their eyes to people in poor areas illegally siphoning off water from the local network, rather than acknowledging the existence of the practice and legalizing it. Presumably they prefer to keep up the pressure on inhabitants of those areas by ensuring that their behavior remains illegal. In the working class neighborhoods of towns and cities in developing countries, the issue of water immediately implies that of the place of poor people in the urban space, a question that by no means attracts a consensual response. How can shared conclusions be reached in cities characterized by an especially high level of inequality in terms of income, access to basic services, and exposure to pollution?

A number of articles in this book feature analyses of access to water in neighborhoods deprived of it. For example, Chap. 14 demonstrates that the inhabitants of working class neighborhoods are unaware of the normative and anonymous supplier/client relationship and live in a world of governance based “on informal compromises and clientelist practices often routed through local elected representatives.” In India and elsewhere, relations between the people dwelling in shantytowns and local politicians who represent them have little to do with the model of patrimonial negotiation. Indeed, those relations are characterized by the kind of populism that is so disparaged in that model. Elsewhere, the systematic politicization of the debate provides a way of altering the balance of power, a necessary goal since the kind of symmetry required for the negotiation model to work does not exist.

In yet other parts of the world, political arguments ably apply the notion of the right to the city and its services either to justify the siphoning off of water and electricity or to demand compensation from the state. The shantytown identity, which is both ambivalent and changing, is often evoked in an attempt, in the name of defending the weak against the strong, to legitimize a wide range of practices depending on the relationship between local inhabitants and those responsible for running the system. This relationship is never entirely defined by sectorial issues (water) and rarely provides the kind of conditions that encourage cooperation.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, in residential neighborhoods, debate about the collective environmental issue often descends into a NIMBY (not in my backyard) scenario in which a kind of exclusive communitarianism benefits the strongest.

The issue is an especially thorny one in that the patrimonial model focuses to such a large degree on promoting a local management approach in which the actors work together to deal with problems where they arise. Indeed, the approach

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<sup>3</sup>Zaki (2009) provided a remarkable analysis of this subject. It should be noted that, in his article, as in Chaps. 8 and 15 of this book, the observation was made that the introduction of a private company substantially modifies the rules of the game and considerably changes this kind of relationship.

is often implemented within a community development framework in working class neighborhoods bereft of infrastructure. Local action, the diversity of technical and organizational solutions, adaptability, the direct responsibility of stakeholders, and the empowerment of inhabitants are the key concepts. As Chap. 14 demonstrates in an analysis of the situation in Mumbai, these concepts are already applied in local solutions cobbled together in working class neighborhoods. These solutions are characterized by extreme diversity not only in terms of organization, management, and funding, but also of the actors involved.<sup>4</sup> But isn't it at this scale that we obtain an overall view of the service delivered in major cities and are thus able to elaborate a technical, organizational, and financial strategy capable of managing and coordinating diversity?

Of course, the advocates of the patrimonial approach insist on the need for a global analysis enabling all actors involved to position themselves within a framework that takes into account factors beyond their immediate interests and to acknowledge the existence of interdependencies and the attendant problems that need to be addressed. Interlinking scales of analysis making it possible to think both locally and globally at the same time and procedures effectively articulating those scales have yet to be developed. This is the subject tackled in Chap. 3.

Problems also persist in terms of defining appropriate methods of sharing costs between all of the actors.<sup>5</sup> Many chapters in this book address the question of the universalization of access to the service, which remains profoundly unequal in a large number of countries. The justified insistence on recovering investment and operational costs in the long term was often translated in the 1990s in the ideology of full cost recovery, the objective of which was to recoup from every user the totality of the marginal costs imputable to them in terms of cubic meters consumed based on implacable analytical accounting procedures.<sup>6</sup> It seems that we have not fully taken to heart the lessons of the water management approach, based as it is on compromises making it possible to recover all costs by means of a diversified and evolutive ensemble of funding instruments and approaches to distribution informed by a logic of cost sharing. And neither have we sufficiently taken into account the historical experience demonstrating the crucial role of budgetary funding in terms of the generalization of access to water (Chap. 7).

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, we can only marvel at the infinite subtleness of the creative approaches to collective management and the imagination by which they are underpinned, characterized as they are by borrowings, derivations, and hybridizations of all kinds, which have little or nothing to do with canonical models.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted in this regard that the wealth of studies on the subject of full cost recovery is reflected by the paucity of studies on how, and over what period of time, costs are distributed between all the actors in the service. The results of such studies may be surprising. The AFD has initiated an exploratory study on this subject.

<sup>6</sup> Even in France, the principle of full cost recovery based exclusively on the number of cubic meters of water consumed is currently being called into question. Indeed, historically, this approach to pricing was abandoned in all network services when it was realized that they had to be understood in terms of systems (Mueller 1993).

The appearance on the international agenda of the task of making the service universally accessible, and the struggle to give concrete expression to the term “the right to water,”<sup>7</sup> have had the effect of increasing the number of calls for new funding instruments and price structures. It would be difficult today to imagine a concession contract that failed to provide, as was the case in Argentina, any measures in favor of the least well-off users in terms of prices or access to the network (Chap. 8).

Gabon, for example, has three kinds of intertwined subsidies: between services, with electricity subsidizing water; between classes of users, with the better off compensating for the lack of ability to pay among the less well off; and between territories, with cities subsidizing rural areas. Measures of this kind were explicitly prohibited in the dominant doctrine of the 1990s:

- Equalization between services, even though the examples provided by Germany and Colombia demonstrate how the approach can, at least in certain circumstances, be successful by providing a transversal and integrated vision of urban services rather than a purely sector-based perspective.
- Equalization between consumers,<sup>8</sup> although Posner (1971) demonstrated this was an approach that was equally effective as—if not more effective than—other methods of redistribution.
- Equalization between territories, which should be considered for a moment because the question is raised in many chapters in this book and is intimately linked to the issue of governance. We find this type of equalization in all countries in all eras, despite the fact that it was pictured in the 1990s as a dunderheaded strategy. The current insistence on local management means that the question has once again become vitally important; as Graham and Marvin (2000) pointed out, an over-emphasis on the approach involves a risk undermining the unity of the city, with the wealthiest areas becoming autonomous, leaving the poorest to fend for themselves. Indeed, a number of existing equalization mechanisms are under threat.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, experience teaches us that a centralized approach, on the national level for example, by no means guarantees territorial equity. It would be well worth conducting an in-depth study of the development of new mechanisms and new scales of cost sharing, either explicit or implicit, in agglomerations and regions and at the national scale.

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<sup>7</sup> See the Colombian bill (Ley 047/08).

<sup>8</sup> To discredit this solution, a number of caricatural examples were used, for example the endlessly quoted case of Guayaquil in Ecuador, where 90 % of households pay subsidized rates, and Mumbai (Chap. 14) where industry, which consumes 20 % of the water produced, generates 80 % of the income of the service.

<sup>9</sup> Even in France, the hidden mechanism employed by private companies to equalize their profit-making and loss-making contracts is threatened by a growing demand for transparency in terms of individual contracts. This equalization mechanism was largely perverse, but its disappearance has made it necessary to invent other approaches in a similar vein that have not yet been developed.

It is also unclear what exactly we are talking about when we call for consensus. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has examined the question and come up with the following definition. Consensus is “a general agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process that involves seeking to take into account the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any conflicting arguments” (ISO/CEI Guide 2 1996). Does this definition, which makes it possible to certify so-called good practices, correspond to what the history of water services teaches us? It is enough to think of the Marxian Oriental despotism of hydraulic societies or civilizations such as China to doubt that this is the case.

At certain times in history, water management was marked by stability in the rules of the game, or, in other words, the rules of the distribution of responsibilities, tasks, and funding models. But that can happen in very different social, economic, and political configurations. In Spain, a solid coalition based on an authoritarian regime made it possible, over a long period of time, to implement an ambitious policy for transferring huge quantities of water between river basins. When the coalition, whose approach focused entirely on the service that it was delivering, fell apart and became obsolete, the policy was abandoned (Chap. 13). In regard to India, Chap. 14 describes a consensus within the state apparatus made up of civil servants and governors that reflects the interests of the elites. These configurations are associated with very different approaches to sharing costs and profits: some services have the effect of excluding much of the population by essentially targeting economic activities and the upper echelons of society, sometimes exclusively funded by the income generated by the service itself, sometimes publicly funded. Everything depends on the coalition that supports them, on its cohesion and its capacity to maintain the same balance of power and the same hegemony. Is it capable of resisting the pressure exerted by the popular classes struggling for access to the city and its services, or will it be able to come to a compromise enabling it to manage that pressure and retain its advantages? Is it capable of finding alternatives to public funding, which has dried up in the recession, or to a price structure that is no longer sustainable, while at the same time keeping up its investments?<sup>10</sup>

If it is not capable of this, then the existing model enters into a crisis and ceases to be sustainable over time technically, economically, or politically. It is, therefore, the nature of this crisis that must be analyzed (what made the previous model unsustainable, and why is the existing coalition unable to adapt?) if we are ever to overcome it. If many institutional and financial solutions can be found for practical problems, a new question emerges: Which new coalition will be able to promote, legitimize, and defend them? A number of cases could be mentioned in which such crises are never resolved, a situation that engenders a gradual and cumulative

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<sup>10</sup> In the terminology used in convention theory, this would be referred to as cooperation as a collective capacity for adaptation.

deterioration in the service eventually affecting those who profited from it the most.<sup>11</sup> In such circumstances, numerous individual and collective attempts are made, often in an ad hoc fashion, to ease the crisis. Unfortunately, most of the time, they only end up making things worse. Sometimes, the previous coalition falls apart and new configurations of the public policy community arise. These new configurations can either usher in a period of stability or reveal themselves to be too contradictory and fragile to be effective. Sometimes heteroclite coalitions are formed, capable of blocking reform but not of creating the conditions required for a stable agreement based on a new model.

In the 1970s, authors like Jean Lojkin, writing on France, and Samuel Jaramillo, writing on Colombia, attempted to identify the nature of these basic services and the contradictions that developed within them with a view to understanding their dynamics. But over the last few years, researchers have placed too much emphasis on the ideological debate between management models without paying sufficient attention to the corresponding issue of how public policy communities have changed—an issue addressed by authors working on the telecommunications and energy sectors. In the article on contractualization mentioned above (AFD 2008), a number of authors insisted on the eminently political character of the procedure adopted, “a political approach providing structure at the level of a country or a local territory” that helps “all the actors become aware of the fact that their chances of successfully carrying out their functions and attaining their objectives depend on the degree to which other partners are integrated into the approach” (AFD 2008, p. 30). It is clear to see that, depending on whether they are applied to the management of a local patrimony (resource, network) or to the creation of new national rules, these observations have neither the same content nor the same meaning. A question runs through the pages of this book: How does a society define a long-lasting approach to managing the resource to deliver essential collective services? Before we ask how collective action becomes possible, we must first ask ourselves whether the cooperative paradigm can, on its own, take into account the reality of the situation.

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<sup>11</sup> This is the impasse in which water policy in Argentina was trapped, a situation described in Chap. 8.

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