

Community water management in Veracruz. Challenges and current perspectives

La gestión comunitaria del agua, en Veracruz. Retos y perspectivas actuales

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Abstract

Adjective. In this article we will present a situational diagnosis of community systems in water management in the national and state context, taking as a specific case community management in the Sierra del Gallego, Córdoba, Veracruz. The research methodology applies an analysis of the legal framework of community water management, returning to some specific studies that glimpse the potential for participatory, democratic and community water management; Some experiences of regional and national organizations in defense of water and community managers participating in the 3rd *Congreso Nacional Agua Para Todos*¹. The diagnostic situation in the state of Veracruz is reviewed, highlighting some paradigmatic cases of social management; Finally, we will analyze a specific experience of community management. Finally, a series of social, regulatory and programmatic policies are proposed to recognize the potential of community and social drinking water systems in the state of Veracruz and in compliance with the additions to article 4 of the Constitution, which guarantee the human right to water.

Community water management, Water legislation, Access to water as a human right

Resumen

Objetivos. Expondremos un diagnóstico situacional de los sistemas comunitarios en la gestión del agua en el contexto nacional y estatal, tomando como caso concreto la gestión comunitaria en la Sierra del Gallego, Córdoba, Veracruz. Metodología de la investigación. Se realiza un análisis del marco legal de la gestión comunitaria del agua retomando algunos estudios concretos que vislumbran el potencial de gestión participativa, democrática y, comunitario del agua; se incluyen algunas experiencias de organizaciones regionales y nacionales en defensa del agua y gestores comunitarios participantes en el 3^o Congreso Nacional de Agua para Todos¹. Se revisa la situación diagnóstica en el estado de Veracruz, destacando algunos casos paradigmáticos de gestión social; finalmente, analizaremos una experiencia concreta de gestión comunitaria. Conclusiones. Se plantea una serie de políticas sociales, normativas y programáticas para reconocer el potencial de los sistemas de agua potable comunitaria y social en el estado de Veracruz y en el cumplimiento de las adiciones al artículo 4.º constitucional, que garanticen el derecho humano al agua.

Gestión comunitaria del agua, Legislación del agua, Acceso al agua como derecho humano

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¹ *Congreso Nacional Agua Para Todos* is a national movement in defense of water that emerged in 2012, whose central purpose is to stop the privatization of water in the country and to propose a new Water Law with a participatory and democratic character for the sustainable, social, equitable and redistributive use of national water.

Introduction

By community or social water management we mean those processes of drinking water or various uses whose ownership or usufruct is administered directly or indirectly by social sectors that are autonomous or semi-autonomous from the state for collective use, whether or not they hold a water concession. Water management corresponds to what has been called Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), and community management is an important axis to achieve sustainable and responsible water management as an essential need nowadays (Torregosa, 2004).

Water legislation in Mexico does not have a regulatory framework or legal recognition for the participation of community groups related to water management, but it does provide for their participation in social management. In the country, there are countless experiences of community or social water management, but their importance for the development of community life and the precept of the human right to water - recently incorporated and regulated in article 4 of the Constitution - is ignored or minimised.

So far - and although they are not the only ones with community and social systems - few states have water regulations that explicitly recognise the legal participation of social water management (including community management), among them Veracruz, Tabasco and Chiapas (Aguilar, 211:12; Gutiérrez, 2005). Since the 1990s, with the opening up to free trade and the world water forums, the global trend has been to privatise drinking water systems and water services in general, as happened in the municipality of Veracruz in 2017 when drinking water and sewage services were concessioned to the MAS group, transnational investors from Brazil and Spain (Zavaleta, 2020). Since the reforms to the Water Law in 1994 and 2004, decentralised management was strengthened in Mexico, where states and municipalities were given greater responsibilities (LGA, Title 3, Section XIII). It also opened up the regulatory possibility of participation from private concessions to civil associations alongside parastatal management to provide drinking water services (Rolland, 2010).

However, there is no regulatory law that defines the terms and conditions of community management or social responsibility, which is why it develops de facto, under such diverse modalities and dissimilar organisational processes that, while allowing civil society to self-manage or co-manage water, it is left at the expense of multiple social and political conditioning factors, giving rise to adverse processes of conflict or, in the best of cases, successful processes of community management (Pineda, 2010).

Veracruz explicitly recognises in its local legislation (Law 21 of Water of the State of Veracruz-Llave) social participation as a subject of concession and manager of water, and leaves open the possibility for water systems to be operated by the government, private parties and civil society (Law 21, art. 59 and 60). However, this legal framework does not have an explicit policy of normative recognition or the design of programmes aimed at strengthening and promoting their organisation.

Water management is still centralised in the state agency called Comisión del Agua del Estado de Veracruz (CAEV) and in the Municipal Operative Systems; although there is generally a patronage or water committee in each community, which is in charge of overseeing the supply and operation of the water distribution system, there are some community associations and organisations that practically manage and administer water, but they have not been given the character of "community water operator".

It is therefore necessary to carry out a state situational diagnosis of these small de facto organisations, their level of organisation, coverage, resources, training, degree of autonomy and the quality and quantity of water they manage, in order to strengthen them or, if necessary, formalise them legally and broaden community and social participation in water, with the aim of complying with the precepts of the human right to water guaranteed in article 4 of the Constitution and the sustainable management of water.

Community and social management in the National Waters Law

Community management in the country is a remnant of experiences that have endured in changing forms through Mexico's various water policies, particularly after its revolutionary stage; these redistributive reforms of water and land and the new actors: ejidatarios, comuneros, and inhabitants of the cities in formation, sealed the social character of management in the countryside and in the cities (Aguilar, 2011). Regulatory improvements obviated de facto forms of social and community management to give priority to private water and centralised state control over its management, preserving concessions to large landowners and nascent industry, basically leaving the focus of public water to urban supply and irrigation.

The communities largely retained their organisational forms and learned to manage water at various levels by negotiating with the state bureaucracy, making water exchange agreements with other communities, contributing labour, community work, carrying out infrastructure works for water supply and collection, and implementing these internal reforms through assemblies, committees, social consensus, cooperation, rules and norms for water management and administration.

This parallel aspect of local and regional organisation is perhaps the best example of sustainable water management due to its low economic cost and rationalisation of use, as well as the social and participatory benefits it implies, in addition to environmental conservation measures for water catchment (Sandoval, 2015).

The national water legislation, however, did not act in their favour, but rather was ommissive and allowed them to exist. They are organisations that survived through their self-managed capacity and resistance against the large irrigation communities, landowners and the nascent industry and intensive urbanisation, which demanded greater volumes of water for human consumption. It was not until the 1994 and 2004 reforms that they were contemplated as possible subjects of concessions and with the possibility of forming associations or water management bodies, giving them new expectations, although no regulatory laws were passed, nor was a policy of community and social water management promoted.

The Rio de Janeiro and Dublin Summits framed new directions related to water policies at the global level; Mexico adopted Agenda 21 and the action plan to promote sustainable development; it reoriented the economic value of water and sought to influence social vulnerability and the role of gender in water policies (Agüero, 2010:210).

Privatisation of operational water systems attracted more force in water policy in Mexico but did not advance significantly due to social resistance and unclear management of concession transfer and administration. Conversely, community and social systems were again constrained by the onslaught of transnationals and national corporate groups in a new onslaught to control water for mining, multi-purpose dams, energy activities such as fracking, the growing expectation of agrofuels and the control of urban water for private management by national or transnational consortiums.

The New Water Law (as an initiative in the legislature, arising from the reform of the 4th Constitution) elevates access to water as a fundamental human right, in sufficient quality and quantity to sustain the quality of life, but it is a paradox; on the one hand it pretends to guarantee sufficient water supply to the most vulnerable population and, on the other, it shows its most perverse side to concession and privilege the large extractivist consortiums by placing the management and supply of drinking water in the hands of national and transnational private initiative.

In this New Law initiative, the right of communities and indigenous peoples to organise themselves and guarantee their human right to water is practically ignored. It is precisely this interest that motivates an urgent reflection so that the Citizens' Water Initiative, proposed in parallel, takes up the community experience and guarantees the supply, self-management and substantive participation of citizens in water management.

The information base document of the National Water Commission (CONAGUA), "Water in Mexico" (2016) - a compendium of basic statistics on the water sector at national and international level - does not have any statistical reference on community and social water organisation in Mexico, despite the fact that this is of enormous importance for supplying the poorest and most vulnerable communities and urban centres in the country.

Dimension and importance of community organisations in Mexico

Potential and weaknesses of management

Despite the fact that community organisations are considered essential in the country, not only as part of the organisational process in the defence of water, but also as a guarantee of self-supply, environmental care, substantive participation, economic benefit and as a source of social balance, they do not have a specific public policy. For this reason, it is not known how many there are or what levels of organisation they have, as well as their financial sources, location, local, regional or national coverage, volumes of water they manage, tariffs, primary needs, beneficiaries, levels of conflict and social stress resulting from the violent defence of water.

There are states where their presence and organisational dimension can be distinguished, such as Guadalajara, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Puebla, Veracruz, Tabasco, Morelos, Hidalgo, San Luis, Guerrero, Zacatecas, Durango, among others (Antonio, 2010; Valdivia, 2016), where community water systems subsist. These same organisations have been the basis for the defence of water and territory against the latest onslaught of megaprojects, open-pit mining, multipurpose dams, fracking and shale gas, GMO production, among others. In order to illustrate this aspect, we will describe the demands of some organisations in defence of community and social water, who attended the 3rd National Congress of the National Coordinating Body Water for All, Water for Life, an organisation that promotes the Citizens' Water Initiative, held in the city of Xalapa, Veracruz, in 2016, whose report is presented below:

Experiences and demands

- Guarantee the fundamental rights of peoples and civil society for the defence of territory and natural resources. The main problems faced by the organisations in Guadalajara are the mega-projects of dams and mining.
- Revision of constitutional reforms that favour large consortiums and transnational companies, affecting community organisation and local management in defence of natural resources (San Luis Potosí, Guerrero, State of Mexico, Puebla, Oaxaca, Veracruz).
- Recognition of traditional and community forms of organisation; elevate effective community consultation and assemblies as local and regional decision-making bodies to constitutional status.
- Encourage local, regional and national organisation against mining megaprojects, dams, fracking, shale gas and oil, to prevent dispossession, control of water, contamination and extraction of natural resources.
- Advocate for municipal council agreements to declare regions and municipalities free of megaprojects and promote participatory land use planning (Consejo de Pueblos Tiatliani, Puebla).
- Promote autonomous regional organisation for social and environmental defence against extractivist projects that destroy nature, as is currently being done in some regions (Frente Popular de Lucha de Zacatecas; Consejo de pueblos Tiatliani, Puebla; Frente Hidalguense en Defensa de la Tierra, etc.).
- Legislation should be passed on territorial rights and self-determination of peoples and communities, in accordance with the principle of article 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
- Weaknesses of social and community water management, proposed at the roundtable (synthesis)

- In urban areas it is very difficult to raise awareness among the population due to the degree of individualisation and lack of solidarity; however, it is necessary to rescue committees or associations for the defence of urban or suburban water.
- There are municipalities with several community systems (Oaxaca, Tabasco to mention a few) in which a linked and organic articulation would facilitate their organisation with a regional impact.
- Legal empowerment of communities to make more assertive decisions. This indicates that it is necessary to have a legal personality that gives legitimacy to the organisation. It is a priority to overturn municipal concessions that, without being in charge of water management, authorise and execute projects in an irregular manner without consulting the Basin Committees.
- It is important to link planning and land and water use tools and instruments that can be inputs for the creation of public policy.
- Sustainability of water resources should be paramount for community systems; reforestation should be encouraged.
- Many of the community systems do not have an adequate level of professionalisation; they must have knowledge of administration, accounting, collection, sanitation and, above all, legitimacy in order to have the correct financial management.
- Optimal water management cannot be achieved without considering the problems of contamination and poor water use practices. Association in water and sanitation committees is also important because progress on an individual basis is more complex.
- Successful experiences must encompass an autonomous, self-managing and self-sustaining community system.
- There must be a collective awareness of the care and non-contamination of water and sanitation, and more awareness than technical issues.
- In Colombia there is a National Network of Aqueducts (community systems) and with this union they have had achievements such as the creation of an aqueducts law and the obtaining of public resources for the financing of infrastructure and sanitation.
- It is necessary to address the gender approach in community systems, since women and girls, because of their gender role, are in charge of household water supply and sanitation activities, and their knowledge and experience in water management must be taken into account.

Law 21 in the context of the General Water Act

The state of Veracruz is one of the entities that stands out for its community organisational capacity both in the seven existing indigenous regions and in rural communities throughout the country. Since 2001 and aligned with the National Water Law, it promoted the state Water Law 21 (Art. 44-59) to recognise: a) social and community entities in water management, b) the regulation of concessions, and c) the transfer of management to private initiative.

Products of this law have been the initiatives for the privatisation of water management in the metropolitan area of Veracruz Puerto, Boca del Río and Medellín, to Grupo Metropolitano de Agua y Saneamiento (MAS), a Brazilian-Spanish consortium owned by Odebrecht and Aguas de Barcelona, two large transnationals that thrive on appropriating Mexico's water and energy resources as part of neoliberal state policy, including transferring control to these companies in the municipalities of Coatzacoalcos and the Xalapa-Banderilla Metropolitan Zone; For obvious reasons, this law gave room for a clear policy of privatisation of the management of drinking water in the main cities of the state of Veracruz.

The social mobilisation against the privatisation of the water systems, the lack of clarity in the bidding processes, the uncertain management of the financial resources for the transfer, and the undeserved administration of the MAS group, have brought social distrust to the process of water privatisation in these cities.

The regulations of Law 21 (which displaces Law 72 on Water and Sanitation, approved since 1950, encouraging the patronatos) give room for community and social management of water and foresee the possibility of self-organisation and autonomous management, but it has not become a public policy that encourages social initiative, or strengthens existing organisations. The terms of Law 21 are practically unknown, since it is general and does not promote its recognition in the communities or social groups.

Although there is autonomous management of various water committees or boards - be they municipal or inter-municipal - they are ultimately subject to the ultimate decisions of the municipalities and their Water Operating Bodies (OOA) and, where appropriate, of the CAEV (Comisión del Agua del Estado de Veracruz); bodies that are supposed to guarantee the regional or local water supply. In 2016, the CAEV had 67 operational offices in four regions of the state, with 652 rural systems under its control that functioned as patronatos, but more than twice as many (1425) operate in a self-managed manner, with a strong lack of knowledge of their functioning and administrative efficiency (Domínguez, 2018).

Social and community water management in Veracruz

In Veracruz, Water Law 21 recognises three spheres of water management: public, private and social, either in partnership or independently. The third title of the law deals with the participation of the social and private sectors.:

Article. 44. It is considered of public interest to promote and encourage the organised participation of the social and private sectors for the financing, construction, expansion, rehabilitation, maintenance, conservation, operation and administration of the hydraulic infrastructure of the state of Veracruz-Llave, as well as the provision of public services of drinking water supply, sewerage, drainage, wastewater treatment and disposal; and the actions that promote the reuse of treated water.

The different forms of water management, whether integral or partial, will be open to different modalities: 'public-private', 'public-social' or 'private-social', these legal forms will be adjusted to the normative dispositions indicated in the same code and will be promoted in accordance with the public policies that the state promotes; the important thing is that the possibility of the participation of the social sector's management is regulated. Chapter III, Article 59 reads as follows:

Non-profit organisations may carry out, upon concession, the works and actions necessary for the self-supply of drinking water, treatment, disposal and removal (SIC) of wastewater, in compliance with the provisions on quality control, under the terms and conditions established by the regulations of this law.

Under these regulations, the state has since favoured a policy focused on the privatisation of drinking water services and, in collusion with the federation, the granting of large water concessions to multi-service companies, with an emphasis on dams.

Recall that the privatisation of water in the metropolitan area of Veracruz, Boca del Río and Medellín in 2006, giving the concession to Odebrecht and Aguas de Barcelona was the most significant experiment; the next places on the list were Coatzacoalcos and Xalapa, but civil opposition stopped them. In the same year CONAGUA announced the construction of 112 dams for control, storage and multiple uses.

This inclination to benefit private and transnational capital unleashed a strong social conflict in defence of territory and water sources. The most representative cases were the mobilisations against the dams in Amatlán, Zongolica, Jalcomulco and the 'Monterrey 6 diversion' project, whose promoters are consortiums such as Odebrecht, the Monterrey group and the Higa group. The other case is the open-pit gold mine known as Caballo Blanco, promoted by the Canadian transnational Golden Group. Almost all of these dam and water control projects in Veracruz, which included the concession of extraordinary volumes of water to these business groups, were stopped by social mobilisation and opposition, except for Zongolica, which was the first dam built under this privatisation policy, which was erected in 2004.

In contrast, legislation and public policies have acted in a lukewarm or omissive manner in favour of social and community water organisation, despite the fact that it is an important component in the management of water throughout the territory of Veracruz. The CAEV, the governing body of the vital liquid in the state, lacks a timely register with the location and diagnosis of the social and community water systems; moreover, it does not have a social policy that makes the management and sustainable co-management of water effective, with a community focus.

Community-based water management in Sierra del Gallego

The experience of the Civil Association 'Ciudadanos Unidos en Defensa del Agua en la Sierra del Gallego A.C.' allows us to reflect on the potential of community water management and on the social and regulatory risks of its management.

Since 1996, twelve peasant communities in the Sierra del Gallego initiated efforts to introduce piped drinking water, as the mountainous area lacked water for supply and the diverse uses required by human settlements. The Sierra del Gallego is located south of the municipality of Cordoba, Veracruz and is a humid mountainous area, with a mesophilic mountain ecosystem and heavy annual rainfall of 2065mm; however, the height above sea level (MSNM), which reaches 2300m, means that the enormous amounts of rainfall filter into the subsoil and there is little retention of surface water.

It was this scarcity that led to the development of a water culture that took advantage of rainfall through community and family water retention and rainwater harvesting works; Although canals and ponds were some of the water collection and supply strategies for decades, new retention and catchment measures allowed for subsistence and minimal domestic water supply, the construction of water retention basins, jagüeyes, rainwater storage tanks, facilitated the carrying of water from the river, and pots, buckets and containers were filled with water from roofs.

With the introduction of piped drinking water, the communities had to organise themselves by creating a precise and effective management; from this process a solid regional community organisation emerged that integrated fourteen highland communities. Local and regional assembly has been the basis of the agreements, rules and effective and substantive participation of this organisation. Community work, tasks, economic and social cooperation, and internal water management and administration norms have generated local power vis-à-vis the municipality and its Water Operating Body, Hidrosistema.

Municipal policies have been changing and controversial with community management, depending on the political parties and the interests that move the municipal interest groups. La Sierra del Gallego has favoured the National Action Party (PAN), which has negotiated and carried out actions and alliances for the management and introduction of water since 1996. In contrast, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has deployed a policy of force and confrontation whose actions have sought to control the water concession, dismantle the self-managed regional organisation and channel the "surplus" or "excess" water to the communities of the Sierra Media and the city of Cordoba, even though the water supply in the Sierra del Gallego has been deficient and precarious.

The resistance and opposition of the communities has resulted in a proposal for the legal formation of an organisation called 'Pueblos Unidos en Defensa del Agua de la Sierra del Gallego A.C.' (PUDASG), as well as in the reorganisation of the communities to favour a medium and long-term self-managed process, that is, to constitute an autonomous operative body or to associate with the Municipal Operative System (Sistema Operativo Municipal). The legalisation of the organisation and a water co-management agreement would lay the foundations so that, in the future, water supply would be guaranteed and decision-making would rest primarily with the community organisation.

Experiences: progress and setbacks

The process of negotiating with the municipal authorities so that they would recognise the legality and legitimacy of a collective organisation was not easy. Within the organisation itself, a self-diagnosis and review of capacities and potentialities to promote an autonomous organisation was carried out.

Supported and advised by the Academic Body 342 of the Sociology Department of the Universidad Veracruzana, self-management workshops were held to train and analyse the organisation's abilities in three main areas: a) associative figure and operative organisation; b) administration and training; and c) community planning; which we will briefly summarise by highlighting the basic decisions that characterised the process and that serve as a framework to propose the normative, organisational, administrative, political and contextual needs of the autonomous organisations in the management and defence of water.

Social organisation

Here the dilemma was posed between traditional community organisation, the formalisation of the organisation for water management and relations with the governing institution (Hidrosistema) of the municipal water operation.

The first proposal consisted of remaining a formal organisation or not, of community and regional political oversight, conditioning Hidrosistema's decisions and negotiating achievements and benefits: tariffs, administrative attention, incorporation of workers from the organisation, community oversight of water distribution and supply, consultation with the organisation on important decisions, etc. This implied that Hidrosistema would continue to administer the water and that the communities would only have a monitoring and negotiation role.

The second option was co-management of water. Here, the signing of a bipartite agreement was proposed, in which the organisation would become a community management body recognised by Hidrosistema, or rather co-administrator of the Sierra del Gallego system, and decisions would be taken collegially, with transparency, accountability and under established rules.

This organisational perspective of co-management proposed that, if necessary and in the community's interest, autonomous water management would be transferred to the community gradually as its members were trained.

- Thirdly, the organisation's total autonomy was proposed in order to become an independent, self-managed, community-based and social water agency, as provided for in the state's Law 21 and the General Water Law. It is worth noting that until that moment, Hidrosistema had shown full openness and willingness to provide a lasting and convenient management to both instances.
- Here there was a division of opinion, with one side arguing that it was better for Hidrosistema to remain in charge of water management and that the community organisation would continue as a watchdog and collaborator under a regulation recognised by both parties; The second group was more accepting of bipartite co-management, since responsibilities were shared and the Municipal Operational Body, which was to guarantee water supply, was not abandoned; the third position, total autonomy, was the least favoured, since the committees and representatives saw themselves as having full responsibility for water management, without adequate and substantive training, and this frightened and worried them for the time being.
- The workshops not only discussed tariffs, community organisation, communal work, technical reorganisation of work, surveillance, collection and administration of resources, but also the concertation of both organisations was used to dialogue and to concretise adequate water management that would guarantee water supply, to formulate tariff regulations, water uses, administration costs and technical expenses, the legality of co-management, supervision and labour contracts.

- The overall review of the various aspects of co-management reached a culminating curve for the benefit of the negotiating bodies and above all for the decision-making and empowerment of the users; the workshops guaranteed the reduction of subsequent conflicts, unilateral decisions, the verticality of the decisions of personalities, parties or vested interests, and priority of water for the organised communities, thus regulating participatory democracy in the community organisation (organisational strength for the achievement of goals and mediation with the local power).
- Nine years passed before reaching the climax of the organisation's destiny, just as elections for the municipal presidency were approaching. This time the rupture came from within the organisation: on the verge of signing the bipartite agreement and initiating the actions of the agreements taken, the main leaders of the community organisation began a confrontation, apparently of dishonesty, accusing each other of admitting personal economic support from the director of Hidrosistema, and from here the intentions and achievements that had been promoted until then were called into question. In the end, both leaders were participating with contending political parties and the differences transcended the organisation, halting the gains and organisational progress momentarily.
- The organisation's internal regulations have been a pillar of its organisational strength, among other principles, the fact that 'the organisation is like water, it has no colour or flavour, it is not conditioned by politics or religion; each member is free to join the party of their choice and practice the religion of their choice as long as it does not affect the internal life of the organisation'. This time, the context prevailed over internal norms and has postponed the project of autonomous water management that would guarantee water supply, democratic decisions within the Sierra and control of water vis-à-vis the regional power groups.

Discussion and results

- Community or regional organisation, as well as its organisational strength, substantive democracy and decision-making, are the basis for autonomous water management; a fact that must be recognised as a principle in any water legislation based on integrated co-management of water resources. Their local, regional or extra-local level depends on the organisational capacity of peoples, communities and urban water managers. This is the basis of legitimacy.
- Similarly, the legality or recognition of the fundamental human rights to access water and organise freely, must guarantee and promote the relevant associative figures to consolidate participatory and substantive democracy. The legality of autonomous or shared management, whether with the state or with civil associations (or, where appropriate, with individuals) must always consider social supply as a priority.
- The new Water Law should promote a special chapter that is the framework for a regulatory law on social and community water, which should guarantee a dignified, sufficient and quality water supply, as stated in the 4th Constitution.
- The existence or proposal within the Citizens' Initiative for the New Water Law of an ombudsman's office to protect community and social water management is proposed.
- It is of utmost importance that the rights of communal ownership of water and territory be guaranteed, considering Article 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and that priority be given to human water supply and the conservation of hydrological ecosystems, as opposed to other consumptive uses and uses of great commercial value, as provided for in the National Water Law.

General conclusions

The lack of regulations and policies to promote the organisation of community and social operational systems is a pending task in the secondary regulatory laws of the LAN, and constitutes a priority to be incorporated into the Citizens' Initiative for a New Water Law, since the official one, called 'Korenfiel', does not foresee it.

The normative recognition of operational systems for water management does not translate mechanically into social policies for community development and social organisation; it is necessary to formulate social policies in this regard and to include them in national, state and municipal development plans.

Community and social water management systems, considering their limitations and potentials, are seen as a social asset of great importance to promote social organisation around water management, to meet the millennium goals and to realise the human right to water enshrined in Article 4 of the Constitution.

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