



Initiative for a transatlantic dialog

Front of the water sector shift into the commercial sphere
**clarify and spell out the terms of the debate
on water issues**

INVITATION

Informal Meeting for water activists and representatives of social movements

Créteil (France), April 30th, 2007

Faced with the evolution of the fresh water issues, the social movements adjust their directions, their strategies, and their tactics, just as the other actors in this file do, incidentally.

The concentration of forces in a same direction can be considered, by and large, as having imposed the principle of the "right of water as a human right" on the international agenda. Although this "victory" is not complete, just as the whole of human rights are never completely acquired and implemented, the fact remains that the majority of governments now recognize this right as an inescapable parameter of debate and action in the field of water.

On this level, the "re-nationalization" of the struggles can therefore appear as normal and adequate in so far as the complete implementation of rights comes under the responsibility of each government and differs according to national contexts.

However, where the status, ownership, commercialization of water and its related services (sanitation, distribution, waste water treatment, etc) are concerned, the issues are all the less clear that those who praise "water as an economic asset" use diversified and sometimes indirect strategies and tactics in a debate that they know is sensitive. Though the privatization of services in the less developed countries as supported and encouraged by the International Financial Institutions provided the opportunity to illustrate the link between right and public responsibility, the recognized set-backs and the fuzziness of the actual trends bring about in some measure a dispersion of the strategies. Thus, the spreading of the PPP logic, the focalisation on the role of local communities, the multiplication of actors and partners make it more difficult to identify the trends and interests at work. Furthermore, the different "methods" chosen to bring the water sector into the commercial universe scramble the signals and impede the joint action to block this trend.

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Particularly, the social movements of western developed countries are faced with the different strategies of the actors who want to bring the water sector into the commercial universe, and the modest contribution we hereby propose is to offer a space of discussion where these movements can try to clarify and spell out the terms of the debate on both sides of the Atlantic.

In North America, we are faced, on the one hand, with the NAFTA logic of economic integration and the underlying perspective of a North American resource market, and, on the other hand, with the display of the PPP logic in the field of public services, including distribution and sanitation, on top of being faced with – since water, at least in Canada, is abundant – the multiplication of water withdrawals for bottling.

In Europe, although bottled water is at the heart of certain controversies, the best part of the energies is focused on the GATS issue, that seems to be the way to which Europe gives special weight to "bring water into" the commercial field.

THEREFORE, THE PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED MEETING IS TO TRY TO:

- 1- Clarify the different visible trends attempting, implicitly or explicitly, to bring water into the commercial order;
- 2- Spell out and share the respective strategies that have been developed in the face of these trends;
- 3- Review the possibility – in spite of the diversity of contexts – of developing joint strategies that may be instrumental in making more VISIBLE and READABLE this intention to bring water into the commercial realm as well as the underlying dangers.

INFORMATION

- **Date** : April 30th, 2007, from 9 AM to 6 PM
- **Venue** : Créteil (Val-de-Marne, FRANCE) Hôtel du département – avenue du Général-de-Gaulle – Salle des commissions – 5th floor
- **Accès** : Métro ligne Nb 8 – Direction : Créteil-Préfecture – Final stop
- **Language** : French (Informal English facilities)
- **No fee for registration**

This meeting has an informal Character.

It is being organized by water activists in Quebec and in Europe, and hosted by the Local Government of Val-de-Marne County in France, at the occasion of the Water University and the Festival de l'Oh! Of whom Saint-Laurent River is the honoured guest in 2007 (know more about it : www.festival-oh.org)

There is no registration fee. The Local Government of Val-de-Marne County offers facilities and meal at its head quarter's building - the Hôtel du Département. Domestic and international transportation as well as accommodation are in charge of participants.

More Informations on contents : paquerot@yahoo.fr

More informations on logistic : olivier.meier@cg94.fr



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Registration Form

NAME :

FIRST NAME :

ORGANIZATION :

Address :

Tel/cel :

e-mail address :@.....

To be sent :

Festival de l'Oh! / Conseil général du Val-de-Marne / 25 rue Olof Palme / 94000 CRETEIL / FRANCE

fax : +33-1 49 56 89 90 / e-mail : olivier.meier@cg94.fr

Dead line for registration : April 15, 2007