

WT52 – Water management

Session 1

The Chinese vision

- China's main water issues : Short term: water pollution, ecosystems degradation, and water-related disasters . Longer term: water shortages. Water issues in transition: from traditional ones to complex ; Water pollution has become the top priority issue, it may result in water shortages
- Water pollution at river basin level ; Water quality of the seven major river systems of China
- Mandate targets during the 11th Planning period (2006-2010): water saving; reduction of pollutants cut ; Obstacles in the realization of the reduction targets
- Water management model is in transition: institution arrangements are changing; consolidated management; negotiation and compromise between stakeholders; integrated management is progressively implemented
- Law and regulation conflicts in water pollution control; Conflicts between governmental departments
- The key problem in recent years of China's water issues is systemic problem rather than technological one; Roadmap for integrated water management and integrated river basin management are required
- Shortages in the North: pilot attempts of water right trading are tested

The European questions addressed to Chinese

- Population dynamics and especially rural exodus is a major driver of the evolutions: is water management used to favorize this? Is it good?

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Session 2

The European vision

- Main issues in Europe : implementation of the European Framework Directive ; large diversity among countries, between north and south
- Three main tension lines help understand the issues and their evolutions: centralization vs decentralization; private vs public or communities, sectoral vs integrated
- Tensions between central system and decentralised organisations (local governments and communities, basin agencies) are key to understand the situations
- “Narrow” economic approach is not a solution (eg in the European Framework Directive); water issues are firstly of political and social nature
- Water policy models cannot be transferred (no “one fits all” solution); water policies are specific and related to the peculiarities of the countries

The Chinese questions addressed to Europeans

- Are water markets an interesting tool? What could be their long term consequences on water use?
- How to compute the full costs of water?
- Who is in charge of solving the conflicts between users? Between regions or basins?
- Who are the representatives in the river basin commissions and how are they elected? What is the legal basis for these commissions?
- What are the rules for the payment of the members of the river basin commission?
- In case of conflicts, who takes decisions?

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Session 3

Similarities

- The silent revolution has led everywhere to a “hydroschizophrenia”, i.e. surface and groundwater policies are and remain disconnected
- Water scarcity and water saving needs result in the development of water meters, which is not always the most appropriate solution
- Social management of climatic hazards: farmers pay less for their water but are first affected in case of drought or flood.
- What are the relations between droughts and climate change is a question addressed in Europe and in China.
- Global changes, including social issues (demography, migrations), economic forces are likely to have a greater impact on the societies in the coming years.

Differences

- Role of markets/merchants important in case of failure of institutions
- Democratisation of societies leads to a shift of values, from efficiency (engineers) to legitimacy (elected officials).
- While food self-sufficiency is not driving the agricultural policies in Europe, it remains a high priority in China with several consequences for water resources
- In Europe the economic growth is today disconnected from the growth in water consumption. Thus there is no (less) need of large infrastructure but for small scale and more flexible systems

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How to enhance the dialogue between China and Europe ?

- Proposal to continue the dialogue and to focus especially on pollution issues
- There is a need to develop a long term vision since decisions on water issues may have consequences for several decades