

done about them can stop the search now. Armed with this book, readers can assess those challenges and opportunities, and much more, as well as learning one or two witty facts about history, geography, engineering and culture.

## References

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**Water and Sanitation Services: Public Policy and Management**, edited by José Esteban Castro and Léo Heller (Eds), first published 2009 by Earthscan, UK and USA, and reprinted in paperback 2012 by Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 392pp. ISBN: 978-1-84407-656-7 (hb); 978-0-415-50703-5 (pb)

José Esteban Castro and Léo Heller's *Water and Sanitation Services: Public Policy and Management* is a valuable collection of case studies and theoretical discussions that extract key principles from this complex and hotly debated field. The editors' aim is to build a more interdisciplinary body of literature that encourages a shift away from a techno-centric focus. They also seek to bridge the gap between the policy and management dimensions, to which they attribute an inhibiting divide in the sector. Packed with accessible, current and historical examples from both developing and developed countries, the book effectively achieves its objective to "provide support for policy design and planning in the interfaces between WSS [water and sanitation services] and other interlinked areas of activity such as public health and water resources management" (p. 4). It does this without being overly prescriptive, even allowing contradictory evidence to stand, although, from the outset, the authors firmly defend their stance on the necessity of public-sector investment and ownership for universalization of services. The case studies underscore widely noted, but often ignored, key principles: there are no "one-fit solutions" (or perhaps more accurately, no countries successfully use the exact same policies and management); and WSS policies and management must address systemic conditions. These themes are well supported by clear examples, making the book an excellent reference for those engaged in water and sanitation policies and management.

The editors begin by challenging the potential of mainstream policy and management approaches since the 1980s (those largely informed by market-principles and decentralization) to achieve universalization of WSS. The reality of failed policies is apparent in the 2.5 billion people lacking access to improved sanitation and the more than 780 million lacking access to safe drinking water (WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation 2012). A key assertion in their argument is that WSS must "constitute a social right of citizenship" (p. 4). In Chapter 2, the always

eloquent Swyngedouw supports this by discussing the fundamental contradiction between commoditization of WSS, which necessitates profit as the main goal, and the objective of providing a social good. He rightly points out the irony in the Camdessus Report's call for national governments to encourage private investment by shouldering a greater portion of the financial risk, which would mean a default to public financing.

A second fundamental perspective, addressed in the early chapters by Castro and Swyngedouw (Chapters 1 and 2, respectively), is the notion that WSS policies and management must consider the long-term socio-economic, political and cultural conditions (i.e. the systemic conditions) with equal importance to the natural-physical conditions (i.e. the technical design). They argue that failure of neoliberal policies is increasingly attributed to these systemic conditions, yet assert that the issues underlying them, such as severe social inequity and weak institutions, are rarely considered in WSS policies. Furthermore, they contend that despite policy failures, strong pressure to apply them by international finance organizations has worsened challenges: it has created *new* systemic constraints, such as the weakening of a public-service ethic, long-term debt on the poorest countries and continuous pursuit of the same failing policies under uncritical approaches (p. 28).

Although these first chapters set up the book to feel as though there will be a vicious theoretical debate on the merits of public and private services, the following chapters reveal the reality of WSS that typically involves both sectors. In several examined cases, such as France and the Nordic countries, core-responsibilities remain public, with strong private-sector engagement. Chapter 9 (Hukka and Kato) explores "complementary paradigms" (p. 154) for the organization of WSS seen in Europe and Brazil that involve some market principles. Rouse suggests (although in contrast with most authors) that such market principles are a crucial ingredient, to be included in varying proportions along the spectrum of public and private responsibilities (Chapter 8). Nonetheless, other authors, such as Rosenberg (Chapter 16), more firmly blame the neo-conservative agenda for the deregulation and privatization that led to a gap in institutional accountability for water quality in the Walkerton, Canada, drinking-water disaster.

Yet, in strong support of the editors' challenge of mainstream WSS policies to achieve universalization, many illuminating examples examine the historical evolution of WSS policies within the broader political, economic, territorial and cultural contexts and changes of different countries. In the case of developed countries, the examples show the strong role of public responsibility and funding in early movements toward universalization, and the absence of full-cost recovery policies until generations later. Chapter 14 (Barraqué) summarizes the early development of most public water systems in Europe, for which the costs were mostly upfront and did not require user payments. Private companies often led early development of luxury piped services (initially considered too risky for municipalities) until governments recognized water supply as a public health and safety concern that could not be guaranteed by private motives (Uddameri and Singh, Chapter 16; Braadbaart, Chapter 4). Thus municipalities took responsibility for universalization in the second half of the nineteenth century, relying heavily on local taxation. Heller (Chapter 7) uses this history to suggest there should be a return of focus to public health outcomes as an important driver and a more interdisciplinary approach toward universalization.

More detailed discussions of the historical development of WSS in France (Pezon, Chapter 11) and the Nordic countries (Piteila, Hjorth and Nelson, Chapter 13), where there are high levels of service and coverage, reveal the territorial and political histories around strong municipalities, local government funding and/or government subsidies. None-

theless, within the Nordic municipalities' responsibility for WSS there has been a long tradition of private or consumer-managed water systems that operate on a non-profit basis. The emphasis in the French case is on the systemic conditions of territorial fragmentation that led to strong municipal management, the eventual private-sector compatibility with public finance, and only charging users full costs after two to three generations of universal service.

On the subject of full-cost recovery, several authors question how this can be achieved given the objective of universalization in developing-country contexts (or even in European contexts where an emphasis on resource protection and demand management may lead to less consumption, therefore leaving others to pay more [Barraqué, chapter 14]). All authors, including Rouse, seem to agree that full-cost recovery requires subsidies when there are large portions of the population unable to afford costs. Yet the debate lies around whether these should be in the form of redistributive taxes used as public investment in infrastructure, or direct-subsidy mechanisms such as in the case of Chile. Echoing the editors' call for WSS to address systemic conditions, Swyngedouw notes that this widely depends on forces outside of the water sector: "The pivotal social and political struggles for the years to come will exactly revolve around the modalities of subsidization" (p. 50).

Illustrative of the challenge in full-cost recovery and the impact of ignoring systemic conditions is the case of post-colonial East African countries (Nilsson and Kaijser, Chapter 17). Colonial powers left behind piped networks designed to serve wealthy urban areas, and with the rapid urbanization that took place following independence, financial shortfall and weak institutional capacity (particularly at the local level), system expansion to poorer areas through full-cost recovery has been more an ideal than a reality. However, the authors provide encouraging examples of how the challenge of expanding services can be met in these contexts, such as the organization of bulk and delegated water supply for low-income urban areas in Ugandan and Kenyan service pilots.

Another positive example in addressing systemic conditions to improve WSS comes from Brazil (Chapter 20), which has faced a serious problem in asymmetries of sanitation services between rural and urban areas. More progressive policies passed in 2007 show promising signs of increasing coverage, yet are dependent on re-organization of institutions, alignment with institutional changes that are happening outside the sector, and anticipating the political inertia that will accompany those changes.

Other informative examples identify policy strategies for community management that can support extension of coverage to marginalized areas, where community organization can be "critical to getting the government and markets to function efficiently" (McGranahan and Mulenga, p. 184). The examples from Mumbai and Pune present the success of community-led-total-sanitation programmes that have logically galvanized community empowerment around sanitation as one of the clearest public goods, with all benefiting from the outcomes. Importantly, the examples are balanced, identifying the limitations and barriers to community management and emphasizing its value in combination with government and market strategies. Chapter 18 (Muradian et al.) presents highly accessible examples of cost-sharing models and tools in community management, such as penalties for late payments and rewards for early and on-time payments, as well as organization of WSS management in synergy with other income-generating activities. In large metropolitan areas, working on a smaller community basis with low-income or marginalized groups can catalyze a common feeling of citizenship where it might not otherwise exist. The authors are clear that there is also room for private-sector involvement in these models, though in no case should customers be billed for services until they receive them at an acceptable level.

Through multiple examples, the book articulately provides accessible, interdisciplinary content that frames management and policy as part of a holistic discussion within the systemic conditions of each country or region. While the large number of case studies included is positive overall, a few examples strive to include so much detail about systemic conditions that a reader unfamiliar with that background risks losing focus on the primary points. To this extent, more synthesis between the sections to discuss the at times contrasting evidence, and to extract key principles might have been useful, though perhaps this would have been at the expense of more case studies. That said, the non-prescriptive approach taken, with limited editorial commentary, is appropriate in a book that aims to engage an interdisciplinary audience and bridge divides. Though several case studies will be familiar to those with significant sector experience, some will be new, and all provide valuable insight into the development of WSS policies and management.

### **References**

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