

Mexico 2006 4th World Water Forum

Public Participation and Solidarity in Basin Management:
Local Innovations and Lessons Learned

From public mobilization to public involvement : the case of the Berre lagoon ecological restoration

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Environmental setting

A fragile ecosystem
strongly impacted by decades of economic development

Lagoon watershed:	155 km ²
	1700 km ²
	600 000 inh.
mean depth	6 m
max. depth	9,5 m
vol.	980 million m ³



strong anthropic pressure throughout the 20th century:

- Industrial and urban pollution
- Huge freshwater runoff from the Durance river diversion for the alimentation of a hydroelectric power plant



Citizen mobilization

degradation of the environment

→ mobilization of citizens

→ emergence of environmental issues

70's. Fishermen, inhabitants and local politicians demonstrations

1991. Local referendum in favour of the stop of freshwater inputs

1994. French government initiates a restoration plan

1998. Actions of fishermen against EDF, then of the European commission against the French State

Afterwards, until 2000, a strongly conflictual climate generates difficulties in the dialogue between citizens and institutional stakeholders



Establishment of a governance organization...

... for the implementation of a dialogue between all actors, which was achieved by :

1. gathering the actors of the debate
(the French State - Minister of Ecology and Sustainable Development, local State agencies, the Water Agency, regional and local assemblies, professional and associative users)
2. developing common projects of environmental restoration

The GIPREB: a specific structure among French institutions



Public Participation : success and limits

The success of the dialogue was originated by the collective elaboration and the sharing of knowledge

Several tools of communication and dialogue were deployed :

- largely spread newspaper
- an Internet site (www.etangdeberre.org)
- public meetings

This success is nowadays fragile :

1. Because of differences among actors
2. Because of the resistance of the institutional decision makers to fund the projects sustained by local actors

Coming back to the original conflictual situation is thus not to be excluded



● ● ● | Conclusions

The dialogue around the Berre lagoon has led to :

- citizen involvement in the Berre lagoon issues
- ambitious projects of ecological restoration, at the height of the environmental issues faced

But the emergence of new difficulties at the approaching of the phase of concrete realization revive the conflict

However, the involvement of the European Commission, particularly strict with regard to the application of environmental laws, could change the situation (The Berre lagoon falls within the scope of application of the Protocol for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution from Land-based Sources, the Athens Protocol)