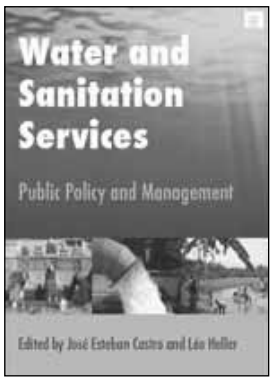
Reviews and resources



Water and Sanitation Services: Public Policy and Management
Edited by José Esteban Castro and Léo Heller
February 2009, Earthscan, 392 pages, hardback, ISBN 9781844076567, £65.00
http://www.earthscan.co.uk/?tabid=42724

This book, published by Earthscan and with contributions from 35 authors, mainly from academia but also from practitioners and from civil society, provides insight into the evolution of water and sanitation services across the globe, examining alternative approaches to service delivery within the wide diversity of physical, socio-economic, political and cultural contexts in a range of countries. The book is divided into two halves. The first half presents the key theoretical and conceptual contexts in which water and sanitation services are provided (including the political and economic contexts, finance, and links with other sectors such as health) and the second half presents case studies from different parts of the world including Mexico, Brazil, China, Bangladesh, Nepal, China and East Africa as well as those from high income countries including America, Canada, France, Norway and Spain.

As a consultant involved with the planning, management and evaluation of water supply and sanitation services my first reaction to this book was that it was a little academic and didn't have enough practitioner input or outlook. This broad approach, however, is one of its strengths. By delving into the book more deeply, the reader is provided with a rich and deep source of information, analysis and advice for all who are committed to improving access to and the quality of water and sanitation services.

The book provides a clear appreciation and understanding that providing water supply and sanitation services is much more than a technology issue. It advocates looking beyond the immediate sectoral and technological horizons and engaging with the wider policy, planning and financing frameworks. As such, this book has a target audience well beyond those working directly in the sector and is aimed at those who have to engage with politicians, policy-makers and planners and those involved in national and local level policy development. While planning for service delivery, it emphasizes the need to

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take into account the myriad of organizational and behavioural contexts that ultimately determine the success of water and sanitation interventions.

The only area where the book fails to provide clear and concise advice is on how to engage with vested political interests and to stimulate political interest where it is absent. These issues are pointed out several times, but advice on how to address this challenge is absent. This is essential if, for example, institutional and regulatory reforms are to be introduced and be effective. However, all in all, the book presents very useful and timely access to well-thought out and presented theoretical and practical examples of how water and sanitation services can and should be provided.

David Sutherland, ATKINS

Climate Change Adaptation in the Water Sector

Edited by Fulco Ludwig, Pavel Kabat, Henk van Schaik and Michael R. van der Valk, February 2009, Earthscan, 304 pages, hardback, ISBN 9781844076529, £49.95

Water systems have a direct relationship with climate and are therefore highly sensitive to climate variability. This has long been recognized by researchers and practitioners alike. However, with advances in climate modelling, new techniques are now available to water managers. Furthermore, there is an increasing recognition that adaptation measures which just seek to control water, for example by building higher flood banks, or bigger dams, are not always appropriate or successful, and that a range of physical and institutional measures are needed.

Climate Change Adaptation in the Water Sector is a key outcome of the Cooperative Programme on Water and Climate, a Dutch Government-funded international programme that aims to stimulate activities in the water sector that contribute to managing the effects of climate variability and change, particularly for the most vulnerable countries.

The book brings together succinct summaries of the latest thinking in climate science and adaptation in water management (Part I), which are supplemented by a series of diverse case studies that highlight some of these concepts in practice (Part II). Chapters 2 and 3 provide an overview of climate prediction and climate change scenarios, respectively. The fundamental issue of longer-term change is balanced with a discussion of advances in seasonal forecasting; the use of seasonal forecasts in water management is the subject of Chapter 6, which includes a helpful section on 'when to use seasonal forecasts'. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the impacts of climate change on water systems, recognizing the importance of impacts beyond

the water sector, for example in health, ecosystems and agriculture; it also highlights the institutional as well as physical implications.

Chapter 5 examines water management under current climate variability, noting that water management is all about managing climate variability, but that classical, top-down approaches may no longer be adequate. As an alternative, integrated water resources management (IWRM) is introduced as a way of thinking that pays particular attention to social equity and the environment. Chapter 7 examines adaptation in the water sector, with an excellent section on adaptation options in the context of risk and uncertainty, which highlights some of the alternatives in coastal zones, large river basins and drought and arid zones. Chapter 8 summarises the concept of climate-proofing, providing three different interpretations, and sets these within the context of the two paradigms of 'foundational water management' (the traditional approach that assumes stationarity and largely relies on structural solutions) and 'adaptive management' (a flexible and 'learning' approach that largely relies on non-structural measures).

Part II provides an excellent set of eight case studies that examine different aspects of water management in varied climates and institutional settings. The case studies are drawn from Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, South Africa, Yemen, Germany and the Netherlands, and provide useful insight into some of the principal challenges associated with adaptation.

The book is aimed appropriately at students and professionals in the water sector. Its objective of enabling this audience to feel comfortable in analysing and using climate data would require a more comprehensive textbook, but the book does demonstrate the key issues that practitioners should be aware of. It should also be a useful book for those in the climate modelling community who need to understand current issues in water management and the demands for and use of climate information.

The book continues Earthscan's excellent pedigree in this field. At the time of writing it is only available at the hardback price of £49.95. A cheaper paperback edition would improve affordability, which is important if it is to get the universal readership it deserves.

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