

The Right to Water

The UN's recognition that the right to water is a fundamental human right is an explosive victory, and this was achieved by different movements all over the world that have called for this for many years. For example, we are thinking of the water war in Cochabamba, Bolivia and many other water conflicts. This right also includes access to clean and uncontaminated water, conservation of the resource, information, and the participation of citizens in the decision-making process. It opens the way towards seeing water in an alternative manner, as a water commons, not as a water commodity.

This victory will help this right become effective worldwide, going beyond the declared intentions. The UN statement, which does not give constraints, has nonetheless already helped some populations win cases in national tribunals and make sure their right to water is respected.

The five sessions we have brought together under the theme “the right to water” will highlight testimonials and demands, analyses and strategies, various experiences, and proposals from social activists. We will discuss different movements in different places, but also the awareness that water is a common good, in face of political choices and economic priorities. The issue of the right to water will also be looked at from a legal and legislative point of view in order to create synergies which could lead to implementing constraints.

Sharing experiences about these recent major popular movements for water will also provide an opportunity to exchange ideas about strategies for the right to water, between socialization and political dynamics. We will see how water is a catalyst for demanding democracy. Finally, through different testimonials we will hear about challenges in making the right to water effective and about examples of successful citizen participation in water management.

*All sessions will take place at the Cabaret Rouge 4
across from the Docks, rue Urbain V in Marseille*

Thursday March 15, 10am to 12.30pm

Testimonials from local activists who fight against water plundering and for the recognition of the right to water as a fundamental human right

People are rising up all over the world in order to counter the monopolization of natural resources. This monopolization threatens resources and deprives locals from water by making this essential element scarce. These movements protest the reasoning behind privatization and the economic choices and models that have been imposed on them, demanding their rights on their lands.

This session will open with testimonials about the Walk for the Defense of Water and Life that took place in Peru in February 2012. This echoes other testimonials from other movements around the world. The history of activism is rarely written by those who live through it. This initial workshop will be an opportunity to exchange experiences about struggles for local water, and it will look at resistance, strategy and the strength of different propositions.

Moderator: Pedro ARROJO, Spain, Goldman Prize 2003-Nobel Prize for the Environment

“Agua si, Conga no va”, Françoise CHAMBEU, sociologist and teacher, Franco-Peruvian, Member of Conga No Va Association, Peru

“Water for the Guanacastecos or for business?” Gad AMIT, Asociación Confraternidad Guanacasteca, Costa Rica

“The campaign for the right to water in Turkey” Akgun ILHAN, “Initiative to Keep Hasankeyf Alive”, “the Dam and HEPP Affected Communities”, Turkey

“Communities against privatization and in favor of social and democratic alternatives for water in Italy and all over the planet”. Forum Italien des Mouvements pour l'Eau, Italy

Thursday March 15, 1pm to 3.30pm

Water, common good and heritage of the land: defending ecosystems and the integral water cycle

We cannot defend the right to water without understanding first that water is part of everything, without taking responsibility for the consequences when the water cycle is broken, without realizing that we are appropriating an element that by nature cannot be monopolized.

Today, in face of dominant economic systems that exploit and exhaust natural resources, causing a veritable eco-cide, many people are beginning to question the choices that have been made. The occupation of territories, the production systems, the development orientations are not neutral, and they have certain repercussions on the ecosystems. Alternatives do exist, but they require larger responsibility in understanding ecosystems and a better awareness of what this common good represents.

By looking at different angles and totally distinct realities, from the Andean communities where water is managed from beginning to end to the citizens' initiative to remunicipalize water in Italy, from properties that break the physical integrity of rivers to total privatization in Chile, this workshop is about re-thinking environmental and social crises by looking at relationships that people, communities, and economic systems have with living ecosystems. The speakers, from very different backgrounds, will exchange ideas and propose alternatives.

Moderators: Francisca CAPRINI, writer and journalist, YAKU Association and Forum Italien des Mouvements pour l'Eau and Elif KARAKARTAL, anthropologist and filmmaker, member of ALDEAH, of FAL and of the Coordination Eau Ile de France

“Water, vision and democratic management in Andamarca” Melanio HUAMANI DAMIAN, Head of irrigation in the Andamarca community, Peru

“Common goods, heritage, and property: conflicts and rights” Juan Camilo MIRA, Environmental biologist, Coordinator of Unité Technique de Corporación Ecofondo, Colombia

“Water, common good and human right: an ethical and spiritual vision” Monseigneur Luis INFANTI, Chile

“Connecting from beginning to end: a plea for improved water management in rural areas” Daniel MOSS, Our Water Commons

“Remunicipalization and common goods, the human right to water and other cultures: indigenous peoples and Andeans who consider common goods as heritage of the earth” Enzo VITALESCA, writer and journalist, YAKU Association and Forum Italien des Mouvements pour l'Eau, Italy

Thursday March 15, 3.30pm to 6pm

Water and law-breaking: using legal tools to defend the right to water and penalize irrational water use

As appalling as it is, industrial contamination is almost never sanctioned and is never fairly assessed with regards to the irreversible damage to the environment and to the destruction of the communities' lifestyles. Throughout this session, we'll look at a few cases of contamination that are just as criminal as they are ordinary, as exposed by the voices of those who are forced to accept the consequences without any choice or cause, simply because they happen to live there. These testimonials will lead us to reflect on how legal mechanisms are failing to protect rivers and how existing legal tools have their limits in protecting administrative and civil rights, in the sense that they are unable to discourage polluters and restore the imbalances. The speakers will make proposals about how to regulate the use of rivers and how to set restrictive sanctions against environmental offenses.

Moderator: William BOURDON, lawyer, Sherpa (to be confirmed)

“Environmental injustice in the communities of El Salto Y Juanacatlan, Jalisco Mexico” Graciela GONZALEZ DE ENCIZO and Atahualpa Sofia ENCIZO GONZALEZ, Un salto de vida, Mexico

“Drinking, breathing, eating oil: the people of the Niger delta must have access to drinking water” Jacques VIERS, Head of Entreprise Commission of Amnesty international France

“The largest toxic dump in Europe” Alesandro LILLO, Faculty of architecture Pescara-Abruzzo, Italy

“Defining rights to water bodies. San Francisco Bay. Enforcing rights about ecosystems” Linda SHEEHAN, Earth Law Center, lawyer, United States

“Water and breaking the law: penal consequences of irrational use of water. Working towards an international penal tribunal” Gustavo GOMEZ , Prosecutor in federal court of Tucuman, Argentina

Friday March 16, 10am to 12.30pm

***“We write water, we read democracy”:
citizen groups and social movements for the right to water***

In face of the commoditization of common goods and the looting of natural resources, citizens have come together to defend the right to water worldwide. In some cases, the people have succeeded in implementing democratic mechanisms such as referendums; in other cases, the people have been able to directly expel private companies. In all cases, the legitimacy of the citizen's political voice has been constructed through the structuring of these movements. From Colombia to Italy, from Morocco to Germany then to Ecuador, this session will enlighten us about the social dynamics that made water a political catalyst and that led to the structuring of resistance movements which protest imposed models and demand more citizen participation in the decision-making and political processes.

Moderators: Jacques PERREUX, president of the Commission environnement du conseil général du val de marne and vice président of the Commission environnement du conseil régional d'Ile de France and Elif KARAKARTAL, ALDEAH, Member of FAL and Coordination Eau Ile de France

***“Perspectives for the right to water in Colombia: movement for the referendum on right to water”
Rafael Colmenares, advisor for the Organisation Culturagua and Secrétaire Exécutif du Forum National Environnemental. Member of Comité National de l'eau and promoter of Référendum Colombien for the right to water, Colombia***

“Citizen participation against water privatization” Dorothea HARLIN, Aquattac, "Berliner Wassertisch", Germany

“We write water, we read democracy: the processes of Italian movements for defending water and bringing water back to the republic” Renato DI NICOLA, Forum Italien des Mouvements pour l'Eau, Italy

“Movements for water in Morocco”, Yasser GMIRA, Naïma LAHLOU, ACME Maroc, Morocco

“The struggle for water in south Ecuador” Carlos PEREZ GUARTAMBEL, kichwa, president of Fédération d'Organisations indigènes et paysannes de l'Azuay and Union des systèmes communautaires de l'eau, Ecuador

“Movements in Greece”, Kostas Marioglou, President of the worker's trade union, Greece

Friday March 16, 1pm to 3.30pm

Political dynamics and the right to water

Sometimes holding a cup of water to one's lips is far from... the recognition of the right to water. This right is not necessarily taken into effect. Despite the fact that the right to water has been written into the new Moroccan constitution, the government continues to privatize the management of both drinking water and water for agriculture. We find similar situations in many other countries. In Italy, the situation is in contrast on a local level after the referendum, and the fight continues on a national and European level.

Political dynamics and the right to water. What mechanisms can a small group use in order to confiscate water management? In an opposite way, how can citizens appropriate their water? This round table will bring together activists from associations from different countries, elected officials who wish to work differently, and young people who have investigated and audited this topic within the framework of the Assises régionales des associations pour l'eau en Île-de-France

Moderators: Jean-Claude OLIVA, president of the Coordination Eau Île-de-France and Bibiana SALAZAR RESTREPO, lawyer, Penca de Sábila corporation, Colombia

“Campaigning governments for the right to water. Enforcing the UN resolution of July 2010 through government action, national parliaments, economic pacts, human rights advisories”, **Rosario LEMBO**, committee **Italien du Contrat mondial de l'eau**

“Recognition of water in the Moroccan constitution: between public speeches and concessions towards private industry”, **Kamal SAIDI, Mehdi LAHLOU, ACME MAROC**, Morocco

“Participation et action depuis le Défenseur du peuple”, **Juan José DUTTO, ex Defensor del Pueblo de la ville de Neuquén, Virginia CERF, Julieta PINEIRO, Caja Roja**, Argentina

“Involving citizens in water management: French examples of citizen participation: Grenoble and Essonne lakes”, **Jean FRANCOZ, president of the Comité des usagers de l'eau de Grenoble and Gabriel AMARD, president of the Régie**, France (*to be confirmed*).

“Thoughts about water, youth, citizenship, through workshops organized by Coordination Eau IDF last December”, **François LEBECQ and Anna POYDENOT, IERPE**, Belgium