

## Foreword: The role of the Botín Foundation to support the analysis of issues on water ethics

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This Special Issue is the latest activity and outcome from the support and commitment by the Botín Foundation to water and ethics over the last twelve years. The Botín Foundation (BF) began its activity in the field of water resources in 1998 when it launched the *Groundwater Project (Proyecto Aguas Subterráneas or PAS)*, one of the first interdisciplinary assessments of groundwater governance. The project under the leadership of Prof. Llamas had Spain as a showcase for many of the ethical dilemmas faced in countries across the world, like the intensive use of groundwater resources for development. This and many other questions around groundwater are inherently ethical and thus the Botín Foundation became increasingly active in the field of water ethics.

In the same year of 1998, Dr Jerry Delli Priscoli and Prof. Llamas were appointed as coordinators for the UNESCO *Working Group on the Ethics of Freshwater Uses*. This Working Group gathered a dozen international figures with different professional backgrounds and expertise. The Botín Foundation supported this important work, first by sponsoring the final session of this working group held in Almeria (Spain) in 1999 and second through the publication of a monograph (PAS no.5) collecting the main results of this meeting and other valuable work (available at [www.fundacionbotin.org/agua.htm](http://www.fundacionbotin.org/agua.htm) under publications).

During the Second World Water Forum held in March 2001 in The Hague, the Director of the Groundwater Project, and current Director of the Water Observatory of the Botín Foundation, Prof. Llamas chaired a session on Water Ethics. In this session one of the main conclusions still pertinent 10 years on was the need to give equal importance to the utilitarian and intangible values of water.

At the next World Water Forum in 2003 in Kyoto there was a session co-chaired with Cheryl Davis of San Francisco Water Supply Co. At this Forum, UNESCO presented a series of 13 monographs – the UNESCO Water Ethics Series – that mainly included the papers prepared by the Working Group on Water and Ethics.

In 2004 together with the University of Harvard, the Botín Foundation hosted its Second Botín Foundation Water Workshop (2BFWW) to stimulate debate on the so called *Water crisis myth or reality?*.

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The corresponding book and all the Foundation publications on water have now been made available as open access, freely downloadable books and monographs.

The Foundation dedicated a workshop (3BFWW) to the *Ethics of Water* in 2007 as a joint venture with UN University and Transparency International, presenting the subsequent book at a side event during the Fourth World Water Forum (Istanbul, March 2009). This side event had presentations from many of the authors, from the public, private and civic society sectors. Acknowledging the increasing awareness related to Water and Food security, and many of the underpinning ethical decisions needed to secure water and food for a growing, urban planet, the Botín Foundation hosted in Santander its Fourth Botín Foundation Water Workshop (4BFWW) *Water and Food Security* in September 2009. The corresponding book available free of charge at the Botín Foundation website, was presented in a side-event at the 2010 Stockholm Water Week.

Finally, in order to get a better view of the issues related to Water and Food security in a globalized world, the Fifth Botín Foundation Water Workshop (5BFWW) was organized in Santander in October 2010. The preliminary presentations and a short video can be watched in the Web ([www.fundacionbotin.org/agua.htm](http://www.fundacionbotin.org/agua.htm) under international seminars and videoteca). In order to ensure wider outreach, the results of the final, peer-reviewed papers presented at this 5BFWW are now published in journal format. This Special Issue gathers thoughts and reflections in relation to water, values, ethics and religions in an increasingly globalized world.