

Public Participation to Promote Water Ethics and Transparency

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WATER ETHICS

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*For to him that is joined all the living there is hope.
Ecclesiastes 9:4*


- ❖ **WATER IS DIFFERENT**
- ❖ **ECONOMICS REPLACES WATER ETHICS?**
 - “How can we keep growing economically and at the same time reduce the gap between us and the poorest billion?” (Klevena, Lena, 1999)*
 - “Will the Greens be our new priests?”*
- ❖ **HUMANS ARE DIFFERENT**
- ❖ **HOPE LIES WITH HUMANS**




HOPE LIES WITH HUMANS

“Advance of the ethical basis of governance, economic transactions and human interaction especially in respect of open governance; publicly available and independent audits of economic transactions and their environmental impacts; and common rules for best business practices, safety and environmental performance.” (World Energy Council, 2001)

- If not acceptable that one person or limited group decide for all:
 - All participate in the making of decisions affecting them, or
 - Delegate the responsibility to others (democracy?)
OK if decision-makers are well informed on the concerns of those affected by a decision and of their preferences, and that the eventual decision does not restrict fundamental individual rights.

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- ❑ **The conditions of participation and the procedures must be established.**
 - ❑ **The legitimacy of the process will depend on whether the decision-makers are seen to be responding to the concerns and opinions that arise from the consultations.**
 - ❑ **Possible weaknesses:**
 - **May not result in a consensus, but rather accentuate conflicts between interested parties.**
 - **an explosion of participative processes may ultimately lead to no one being accountable for decisions.**



EXPERIENCE OF THE BUREAU D'AUDIENCES PUBLIQUES SUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT

- The BAPE is a standing quasi-judicial organization reporting to the Minister of Sustainable development, Environment and Parks**
- Members are appointed by the government**
- Established in December 1978**



Mission

Inform and consult the public on environmental issues on projects referred by the Minister in order to enlighten government decision-making from a sustainable development viewpoint.

To do so, the BAPE :

- ❑ Organises information and public consultation periods**
- ❑ holds public inquiries and hearings**
- ❑ carries out environment-related mediations**







BAPE members are required, among other things :

- ❑ To fulfill their role in the interest of the public, with integrity, dignity, honour and impartiality**
- ❑ To serve the public in an irreproachable manner and to the best of their ability**
- ❑ To consider any attempt to interfere with their work unacceptable and intolerable**




BAPE is the most democratic of Québec institutions

- ❑ We provide public information on a wide range of projects**
- ❑ The Minister must mandate a public hearing when serious requests are made by citizens**
- ❑ We create an environment where people feel comfortable to voice their views and opinions on a project**
- ❑ Because of its credibility, the opinions of the BAPE clearly have a impact on the thinking and decisions of the government**
- ❑ In an ideal world, there would be no need for the BAPE as ongoing dialogue would lead to solutions beneficial for all**



THE BAPE CONSULTATION ON WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

- 1998 mandate to hold public consultation:
 - Receive written comments from public and interested groups, hold public hearings, hold discussions with participants, analyse briefs received.
 - Prepare recommendations on improved water management taking into consideration the principles of sustainable development
 - Distinguish those elements specific to each region.
 - Report on each of the themes addressed.

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- ❑ **16 themes addressed, including:**
 - **Agricultural pollution abatement**
 - **Hydroelectricity**
 - **Integrated management of water and aquatic ecosystems at the watershed level**
 - **Exporting water**
 - **Privatisation**
 - **Special case of the St. Lawrence River**

- ❑ **Hearing divided in two parts**


- **Building knowledge**

142 public meetings in 17 regions, 1000 documents.

Consultation with Inuit and Cree nations

- **Giving Public Opinion Center Stage**

379 briefs.

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- **« *Water: a resource to be protected, shared and enhanced* » (the report)**
 - Improved governance through water management at the river basin level;
 - The preparation of the portrait of each region with the public's expectations concerning the management of water and aquatic ecosystems; and
 - A reform of the legislation and institutions is necessary to implement an integrated water and aquatic ecosystem policy;

 - **« *Water: Our Life, Our Future* » (the policy)**
 - Most commission recommendations adopted.
 - The BAPE consultation process led to a policy that reflects the values of citizens as expressed in the hearings.



CONCLUSION

- ❑ Public consultation fulfills a need that follows the trend of the genetic and mimetic evolution of humans.
- ❑ Decision-making by elected representatives is the best form of governance to date, but the decision-makers should be better informed by public debate.
- ❑ The BAPE has been followed one approach and has been successful.
- ❑ It raises public awareness, intensifies research and evaluation to provide answers, and has led to a sector-specific policy debate.
- ❑ Transparency that is essential to the process also increases the efficiency of decision-making and eliminates opportunities for corruptive practices.
- ❑ *“One of the strongest messages from consultations across stakeholders is the importance of disclosure, participation and monitoring to preventing corruption”* (World Bank, 2007)
- ❑ Humans will learn to transcend themselves and to live in an alliance with each other and other species of earth. Water may provide the vehicle that facilitates our efforts.