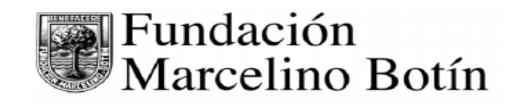
# Public Participation to Promote Water Ethics and Transparency

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### WATER ETHICS

3<sup>rd</sup> Marcelino Botín Foundation Water Workshop

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

### WATER IS DIFFERENT

### CONOMICS 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.

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.

- 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.

- 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 sectorspecific 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.