Which governance for the social and environmental acceptability of new reservoirs for adaptation to climate change ?

Alice DEVOT, Charlotte DAYDE, Claire TRAMOND,
Lyvia MANZATO, *Oréade-Brèche*
Jérémy SAVATIER, *ISL Ingénierie*
Daniel LOUDIERE, *DLD Consult*
...

Introduction

- How to manage water access in the context of climate change?
  - Measures to reduce water consumption (management of water demand, 'sparing' use) = RBMP
  - Building of new water storage structures for irrigation and low water support. Ex: National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation, Adour Garonne basin adaptation plan
- In France, the creation of small dams or basins is increasingly contested
- How, then, can the acceptability of such works be ensured? What tools are implemented in France and within the framework of works financed by international donors?

High conflict projects – examples of Sivens and Caussade

Project	Authorisation request process	Project stopped	Reservoir capacity (hm3)	Opinion from the CNPN*	Main events and reasons for conflicts
Sivens	2012	2014	1,5	Not favorable	- Exemption for the **destruction of protected species** agreed - Environmental association **request an administrative appeal** - Tensions with the law enforcement and **death of an activist** - In 2014 Europe gives **formal notice** to France on this project in relation to the **risk of degradation of water bodies and non-achievement of the objectives of the WFD****
Caussade	2017	2019	0,9	Not favorable	- **Incompatibility with the RBMP*** - **Appeals** by nature conservation associations - In 2020, the Court of Agen pronounces **criminal convictions** against the two main responsible for the dam construction

*National Council for the Protection of Nature ; **Water Framework Directive ; *** River Basin Management Plans

How did the French government answer to these crises?

Use participatory approaches to support social and environmental acceptability :

- The French **territory project** for water management is an approach based on a global and **co-constructed approach to water resources** on a coherent perimeter from a hydrological or hydrogeological point of view.
- It makes it possible to achieve, over time, a **balance between needs and available resources** while respecting the proper functioning of aquatic ecosystems, anticipating climate change and adapting to it.
- The territory projects must integrate the challenge of **preserving water quality** (reduction of diffuse and point pollution).

To which extent does the participatory approach of territorial project ensure social and environmental acceptability?

Many ingredients come together to promote the achievement of a long-term balance, the acceleration of the process and the adhesion of the stakeholders. However, effectiveness may be hindered by various aspects.

+

- The 2019 instruction sets **relevant social and environmental objectives** that should prevent conflicts
- The 2019 instruction specifies **the roles and responsibilities of the State**
- The territory project is a real tool of **participatory democracy** that allows stakeholders to be involved at each stage of the project and to co-construct projects
- The 2019 instruction provides guarantees of the **economic and financial success** of the actions resulting from the territory project.
- **Consistency** with other **water planning and management policies**, **State policies, Water Agency policies**

-

- Unclarities about the structure of the Steering Committee and the role of its members
- The **lack of knowledge and the capacity of stakeholders involved** to understand complex situations
- The **lack of precision in terms of means, obligation of resul**t, evaluation of the process or control beyond the regulations already in force
- **High costs** associated with required studies, long consultative process, individual involvement of numerous stakeholders
- **Failure to take into account regional agricultural** policies that may contribute to the achievement of the sobriety objective
- **Environmental aspects to be carefully considered** by the project holder

How Environmental and Social Standards (ESS) could improve acceptance of water storage structures in France?

Major infrastructure projects financed by organizations such as the World Bank or Bilateral Agencies must comply with the **standards laid down in the Environmental and Social Framework of the World Bank**.

- The PTGE should inspired from the World Bank ESS, especially regarding the **stakeholders' engagement** which is a key point to be addressed from the beginning of the project.
- The World Bank requires the Borrower to provide a **grievance mechanism**, to respond, in a timely manner, to **concerns and grievances from project-affected parties** regarding the environmental and social performance of the project.

However, fundamental differences remain between these approaches

Territory project for "water storage projects under approval"

- The water storage project **is not validated yet and can be modified** throughout the process
- It is a co-construction process with all the stakeholders (steering comity, representative bodies, users, NGO, etc.)
- Its objectives are :
  - to prevent conflicts by identifying all possible alternatives
  - to guarantee the balance between needs and resources

Brakes and conflicts can still (re)appear during the implementation of the project

ESS for "projects to be implemented under certain conditions"

- The water storage project **is ready to be implemented and must take into account the concerns** of project-affected parties
- It is an information process towards stakeholders as early as possible in the project development process
- Its objectives are:
  - to collect grievance and opinions from project-affected parties
  - to facilitate resolution of concerns and conflicts

Key factors for the success and acceptability of reservoirs in France

- Further encourage **governance and coordination** by a **neutral facilitator** of consultation upstream of the definition of objectives and development projects,
- **Provide adequate information** and develop the level of **knowledge of water resources** - natural hydrology (past, current and with climate change projection),
- **Share the definition of current and future water needs for irrigation** in a more general context of **adapting uses to the scarcity of the resource**
- Consider the study of **alternatives**, which must be carried out at a sufficiently detailed stage (preliminary project),
- **Integrate national and European environmental objectives as early as possible** in projects (good status of water bodies – WFD, RBMP, wetlands, protection of protected species, etc.),
- Carry out the **cost-benefit analysis** as a decision-making aid for the choice of scenarios and the justification of the project.
- **Formalise the commitment of the stakeholders** to carry out actions, by **legal, administrative and financial contracting** of the territory project.