

Gustavo Córdova Bojórquez (2014). *La ciudad y sus actores: La sustentabilidad del agua en Ciudad Juárez*. Collection: Pensar las sociedades contemporáneas. Editorial El Colegio de Chihuahua, 328 pp. ISBN for this volume: 978-607-8214-20-4. ISBN for the collection: 978-607-95327-3-4.

Jorge A. Salas Plata Mendoza*

The primary purpose of this recent book is to analyze the actors who shape the city of Ciudad Juárez through their daily actions. These actors face a series of challenges in their attempts to balance economic, social and environmental development. A notable aspect of this analysis is the degree of citizens' commitment and involvement in water management.

The key question that the author wishes to address is What are the scopes and limitations of various actors with respect to making decisions regarding such an important resource for the development of a border region?

The most important information in this book begins with three charts that depict the extraction of water for the city from 1930 to 2011, the number of extractions from 2001 to 2012, and the range of water consumption per resident per month from 2008 to 2011. The book then presents a series of author-generated indicators for monitoring water management. These indicators include responsibility; affiliation; trust; participation; subjects of action; city and urbanization; and political management.

The area of study includes a table with demographic and territorial data for the municipality of Juárez over the 1960-2010 period. Dr. Córdova then refers to prior studies he conducted that divide the city into four zones with their own characteristics, including Anapra (northwest), Sierra de Juárez (west), Infonavit Casas Grandes (center) and Acequias (center). The study of these areas is supported by photographs; operating characteristics of the political system for articulating citizen demands in the aforementioned zones; a series of tables describing residents' educational attainment; reasons for saving water; preferences for designating, as applicable, an individual with authority over the city's utility agency; arrangements for the payment of water bills; types of political affiliation; trust in party and institutional systems; and strategies of participation by heads of households. This study involved both citizens connected to the water supply network and citizens who are not connected to this network but instead receive this vital liquid via water trucks.

The author suggests that certain facts provide evidence that users with running water and sewage services in their households exhibit extremely little participation in water management-related activities and that users without these amenities are almost completely prevented from participating in these activities due to their marginal status.

The author recounts historical experiences of social participation through the popular urban movement, environmentalism and social welfare, human rights, justice, and insecurity.

* Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez. Departamento de Ingeniería Civil y Ambiental, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México. Email: jsalas@uacj.mx

The following inferences/conclusions can be drawn from this book. *a)* Although water is a strategic resource for Ciudad Juárez, it remains impossible to visualize a public policy that involves society as a whole. *b)* There is a need for greater citizen participation to guarantee the availability of this scarce resource. However, the social interactions between authorities and the citizenry require institutional and legal changes that allow actors to enter a new playing field based on shared responsibility. *c)* The matter of governance, in combination with the Integrated Management of Water Resources, suggests that the presence of the citizen is a condition *sine qua non* for these changes to function as paradigms of a new form of public management.

The key concepts that must be understood in this article are sustainability; governance; state and society; citizenship; participation; and water management.

The author makes the following assumptions. *a)* Citizen participation is the dependent variable, and the functionality of citizen participation is determined by various required factors. The independent variables are internal and external influences on the citizen. *b)* Given more than a century of the intense management of water resources by governments and the complexity of social relationships in large urban areas, it is necessary to reflect on citizens' degree of commitment to and involvement in water management. *c)* As time passes and as the process of urbanization in large cities continues, structural problems are revealed; these problems are limited by laws and institutional arrangements that are not suited to urban needs. *d)* As they acquire new rights, citizens themselves adopt new responsibilities with respect to their resources and social development. In turn, they enter into a game of interactive power involving the spheres of the state and of other actors in the phenomenon known as governance.

The following implications must be addressed if the suggestions of the authors are seriously considered: *a)* whether high-quality water can be supplied at a reasonable price for all social and productive sectors, with the collection and treatment of wastewater occurring in a manner that does not endanger the community and protects the environment, and *b)* whether the lack of trust between the state and society can somehow be overcome through increased public action.

The following implications must be addressed if the author's suggestions are not seriously considered: *a)* whether heads of households and independent citizen leaders will remain excluded with respect to the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies regarding water, thereby weakening the democratic system that one would hope to consolidate; *b)* whether the experiences of social movements undertaken specifically to address the disorder of urban growth will be wasted; and *c)* whether the binational nature of water management will render it impossible to avoid prior practices of the political system, such as the use of access to a basic service as a bargaining chip in urban management.

The primary perspectives presented in this book are as follows. *a)* Citizen participation progresses slowly during the process of defining public policies. This phenomenon is due to the multiple factors that are broadly exposed in the daily struggles for water among governmental actors, actors in the business sector and actors from social movements. The latter group of actors includes users, settlers on the urban margins, civil organizations, society-government working groups, and others. *b)* The monopolization of discourse by certain authorities, the independent actions of other authorities, and the evident relationship between the political system and the utility responsible for water management may explain the indifference of citizens with respect to strategic water resources.