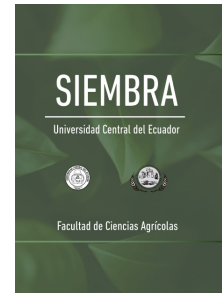


Dossier: Water and Irrigation Management

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The Government Panel on Climate Change, in its latest 2014 report, announces the advance of climate risk (IPCC, 2014). Is it a reality or a constructed imaginary? Is it the return of the myth of the universal flood from which humanity's civilizational odyssey will have to be restarted? While scientists debate the origin, causes, reality, and degree of probability of such an event, humanity is experiencing the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change. Are the changes in rainfall and drought regimes, deaths, and migrations due to climate phenomena "real" or constructed? Should we wait for such phenomena to shock humanity so that they lead us to rethink or refound our ways of inhabiting the planet? Can the scientific method give certainty to the processes unleashed by the environmental crisis, settle its controversies through crucial experiments and the falsification of empirical evidence, or take its arguments to the court of communicative rationality? Can science effectively measure and manage its risks?

All these questions call us to build a "knowledge" (s) that questions the forgetting of what the "West" calls nature by the sciences, as well as the methods of construction and the principles of validation of scientific knowledge. The environmental issue, in general, and water, in particular, challenges us to think about the ontological, epistemological, and historical causes of the environmental crisis and, therefore, of the "management" of water and irrigation in the social and cultural construction of the globalized world.

The environmental and water management crisis is a civilizational crisis, a crisis of the modes of understanding, cognition, and knowledge production that, through its dominant hegemony, has built an unsustainable world. This crisis surprised humanity headed towards progress as an idea of the enlightenment of reason and the scientific-technological-economic rationality of modern culture, inscribed in the era of the image of the world.

The environmental crisis is not just a series of emerging facts that fit into the modes of intelligibility, understanding schemes, and research programs of the so-called 'normal' sciences. It is a call to question the ontological and epistemological foundations of the construction of the social order of the world in crisis and unsustainable modernity.

Latin America is experiencing an accelerated process of exploitation and overexploitation of its natural resources. This is reflected in the tremendous pressure on the water regarding its



control, access, and distribution.

These processes have triggered acute disputes between different actors and sectors over access to and distribution of this strategic heritage (Constitution of Ecuador 2008). In this context, power relations play a fundamental role. Finally, based on them, the horizon of public policies that allow access to water management and distribution is defined.

Those who are directly or indirectly involved with what has been called the Social Management of water and irrigation end up consciously or unconsciously assuming that the “only” job of the organizations in charge of this “task” is to work to solve daily problems and immediate, which contributes to legitimizing the status quo. When problems arise within the “Social Management” field, we intervene to provide solutions within the same systemic logic. However, the given conditions are never transcended. The ontological, epistemological, and historical assumptions of the hegemonic culture around which the entire imaginary of social water management is organized are not questioned. This has turned organizations into “good social managers of water and irrigation” but incapable of thinking, dreaming, and imagining different worlds in which their social action can transform social structures and established cultural assumptions. That has led us to the environmental crisis that we face today globally.

Within this framework, academics, researchers, and members of the various organizations involved in water management have asked the following questions:

- Is “normal” science capable of responding to the environmental crisis and water management challenges from its ontological, epistemological, and axiological conceptions?
- Is the environmental crisis just another crisis, among others, that modernity faces as part of cyclical processes, or is it a civilizational crisis that must be responded to from new ontological, epistemological, ethical, political-economic horizons?
- How can counter-hegemonic water management be carried out that allows overcoming its concentration in a few hands?
- How can new relationships around water be generated within a new cultural and civilizational horizon?
- How can we create new cultural frameworks that guarantee life’s production, reproduction, and development as the foundation of all culture and, therefore, water management?

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Guest Editor