

Interactive comment on “Reconstructing the duty of water: a study of emergent norms in socio-hydrology” by J. L. Wescoat Jr.

D. Mustafa (Referee)

daanish.mustafa@kcl.ac.uk

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This is a first rate piece of scholarship that I found enormously educational and downright entertaining. I know of few scholars who can pull off this trick of educating one on the topic of duty of steam engines in 18th century Europe without losing the reader.

I think this is a very interesting approach to reintroducing 'multiple' ethically based duties of water in contemporary water research and policy. While I find the overall moral/ethical tenor of the paper attractive, I am worried that the emphasis on morals and ethics to recast contemporary socially derived 'duties of water' a little naive. Water is not managed, appropriated and used in a socially isotropic plane and I don't think that Jim is implying that either. But his short treatment of the issue of equity and by

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implication the problematique of social power, does not do justice to the questions of how differential power may be the arbiter of which 'duties of water' are adopted and which one's will mostly just remain on paper. I recommend expansion of the section on 'Anticipating the Emergent Duties of Water' particularly the subsection 7.2 and 7.3 with reference to the water literature directly concerned with issues of social power in water. Many (e.g., Swyngedouwe, Jessica Budds, Mark Zeitoun, Trevor Birkenholtz, Farhana Sultana and others) have argued that social power distorts the reality of water allocation and use despite an almost universal ethical commitment to equity, justice and safe drinking water supply and sanitation. I believe citing that literature and clearly how the pragmatic approach of the paper speak to that literature concerned with issues of power. I am not asking for an intellectual bar fight, even just acknowledgement of the power related literature will considerably strengthen the argument.

Overall as I said before, this is a first rate piece of scholarship which could be stronger if the author were to incorporate the changes that I have suggested.

Daanish

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