

Interactive comment on “Watershed regulation and local action: analysis of the Senegal River watershed management by a regional organisation and public participation” by A. M. Sène et al.

Anonymous Referee #1

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General comments

Above all and beyond my criticisms, this paper is a very interesting one since it questions the relations between public participation and sustainable development, especially the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in developing countries. The authors base their study on the analysis and criticism of the regional organization OMVS (Organization for the Development of the Senegal River) which is in charge of water management in the Senegal River.

The call for sustainable development has increased the focus on participative approach but a lot of academic papers contented themselves with analysing only official docu-

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ments and political speeches to find in favour of development of that kind of approach. This paper does not share this weakness because the authors have referred in this study to another methodology: document analysis supplemented by on-site observation, discussions and interviews.

This toing and froing between texts and their implementation points out the contrast between the top-down approach advocated by the regional organisation OMVS in its management practices, on the analysis of a number of documents concerned with the regulation and the new tendencies, mainly exhibiting the actual intention of OMVS representatives to conform to the standards of participation suggested by the great international conventions. These tendencies have resulted in the creation of new rules (Charter of waters, 2002) and new structures (National and Local Committees of Coordination, 1997. But, in reality, the governance of the Senegal River did not actually involve the public in decision-making process. The analysis of documents shows, however, that despite the obvious political intention to involve the public in river water management, no remarkable progress is achieved: this remains more or less an illusion. Finally, the paper suggests some measures (local governance, education. . .) which could possibly improve the level of participation of local people in river water management

All in all, this paper worth publishing but he must be improved in two ways:

1) The authors need to increase the extent of on-site informations' analysis (interviews, observations, discussions) in their demonstration. In spite of their assertions, analysis often limite itself to commentaries of official documents and the references of the interviews is rather poor in the paper.

2) I think the paper must be updated to take into account OMVS' recent history. There is not enough recent references about OMVS since "Charters of waters" passed in may 2002, the most significant exemple is the big project GEF (Global Environment Facility) / BFS ("projet régional pour la gestion de l'eau et de l'environnement du fleuve

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Sénégal”) that started in 21 April 2004. This project includes an important public participation programme led by the IUCN (the World Conservation Union) and the funding of local micro-projects. The consequences of this new project must be assessed by the authors.

Specific comments

1) The affirmation “the withdrawal of the Guinea” must be clarified because the Guinea is once again a member of the OMVS since 2006. Moreover, it seems that the project GFS/BFS is the consequence of the negotiations with Guinea.

2) The absolute correspondence between public participation and bottom – up approach must be precised. Cf. for exemple, Bacqué M-H., Rey H., Sintomer Y. (dir.), *Gestion de proximité et démocratie participative*, La Découverte, Paris, 2005.

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