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Water Terminology



The Importance of Words
When Discussing the Water Crisis

A project labelled by the UfM



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Introduction

Understanding the precise language regarding water management is essential for effectively addressing water challenges and advancing water justice. This glossary defines key principles and terms to foster critical discussions around water equity, security and climate change adaptation.

Key Terms in Water Justice

- [Equitable Water Access](#): The principle that everyone deserves reliable access to safe water and sanitation, focusing on dismantling disparities.
- [Water Governance](#): The political, social, and economic systems that manage water resources, which should be transparent and participatory.
- [Water Apartheid/Unequal Access](#): A situation where certain groups (e.g., in settlements) have high access while others (e.g., occupied territories) face severe scarcity and lack of infrastructure.
- [Water Security](#): The reliable availability and sustainable management of sufficient quantities and acceptable quality of water to meet human, ecological, economic, and societal needs, while protecting communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems from water-related risks, including scarcity, pollution, disasters, and conflict.
- [Water Commons](#): Treating water as a shared resource and public good, rather than a privatized commodity.

Dimensions of Justice

- [Ecological Justice](#): Promoting social and environmental justice, based on healthy relationships of exchange, sharing and co-creation.
- [Procedural Justice](#): Ensuring communities have a say in water management, access to information, and participation in decision-making.
- [Substantive Justice](#): Focusing on the tangible outcomes, such as equitable allocation of water resources and reduction of water-related risks.
- [Intergenerational Justice](#): Ensuring current water use does not destroy resources for future generations.



Key Principles

- [Anti-Water Grabbing](#): Protecting local communities from corporations or institutions that seize water resources, often framed under "efficiency" or "market" initiatives (and closely related to land grabbing).
- [Human Right to Water](#): Recognized by the UN (2010), prioritizing water for personal and domestic use.
- [Distributive Justice](#): Ensuring the fair allocation of water and water-related benefits/burdens .
- [Environmental Justice](#): Protecting communities from pollution and environmental degradation.
- [Water Management Unit](#): Geographical subdivision made up of one or more neighboring river basins and their associated groundwaters and coastal waters.
- [Water basin & River basin](#): Territorial unit for water management. Under the EU Water Framework Directive, a river basin is officially defined as the area of land from which all surface run-off flows through a sequence of streams, rivers, and possibly lakes into the sea at a single river mouth, estuary, or delta.
- [Hydrosocial territories](#): Spatial configurations of people, institutions, water flows, hydraulic technology and the biophysical environment that revolve around the control of water.

Climate Change & Water Management Adaptation

- [Adaptation](#): Actions and strategies implemented to enhance the resilience of communities and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change.
- [Adaptive Capacity](#): The ability of systems, institutions, and individuals to adjust to potential damage, take advantage of opportunities, or respond to consequences of climate change.
- [Integrated Water Resources Management \(IWRM\)](#): A process that promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources to maximize economic and social welfare without compromising sustainability.
- [Nature-Based Solutions \(NbS\)](#): Engineering inspired by natural processes and recovery of ecosystem functions to tackle environmental challenges, such as restoring wetlands for flood control.
- [Transboundary Water Management](#): Cooperative management of shared water resources (rivers, lakes, aquifers) across borders to manage climate risks.
- [Water Scarcity](#): An artificial or natural lack of sufficient available water resources to meet demand.



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