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POLITICS OF WATER FLOW IN MAPUTO

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Abstract

This article examines a contemporary issue affecting Maputo's water sector: the emergence of informal water providers within the peri-urban areas of the city. On this topic, the paper will explore not only the causes for the proliferation of such kind of service and its characteristics; but also in what way did these agents come to be an integral part of the water sector's framework, transforming the general landscape of access to water. Lastly, it will also reflect upon which outcomes were propelled by this new configuration at a state, water operators and consumer level. Research here presented derived from two fieldwork trips, semi-structured interviews, published and unpublished reports from several organisations, local conferences and governmental workshops.

Keywords: non-state provision of water, small-scale informal providers, Maputo, water associations

Introduction

With the rapid and uncontrolled growth of cities, governments from left to right have been facing an array of challenges when it comes to ensuring adequate and sufficient provisioning of water. Firstly, how to catch up with the rhythm of present and future water demands in urban spaces where ‘the content [is constantly] transcend[ing] the form’ (Harvey, 1996, p.418). Secondly, how to attend to the multifaceted nature of water services, whose distribution and allocation processes reflect an incessant battle between public and private interests (Schouten & Schwartz, 2006, p.142). Thirdly, how to safeguard the public sector’s historical responsibility of ensuring that the wide benefits brought by provision of adequate water can be accessed by the entire society, particularly by the poorest layers (Nickson, 2002, p.2). Despite all these challenges the general trend under public provisioning of water in developing countries has been that of underinvestment which contributed to the inefficiency of water utilities (Kirkpatrick et al, 200, p.158). The main consequence of such trend resulted in an uneven distribution of water amongst the different parts of the cities, with the peri-urban/informal areas being the most affected. Such differential has thus been left to be filled by non-state service providers that have become an important substitute for government services in developing countries (cf. Batley, 2006; Sansom, 2006).

The same trend applies to the Mozambican context – especially within the urban water sector of Maputo, which saw since the 1980s an increase in the number of small-scale informal providers (SSIPs) supplying the parched residents living in the informal neighborhoods. Based on qualitative research, triangulation and two fieldwork trips to Maputo (2011 and 2012) the paper will contribute towards the debate on non-statal provision by adding new information on the way this new set of stakeholders came to emerge, settle and interfere with the politics of

water flow. Such evidence resulted from direct observation, fifty-one interviews to several key stakeholders, and participation in sectorial workshops, international conferences and examination of different sources of data. Within this topic, the paper will thus explore: 1) how water has been historically provided in Maputo; 2) how these agents evolved and proliferated, as well as the nature of their service and some of the issues it raises; 3) the current structure of the water sector, and the role that the private sector is able to play; 4) how the small-scale water providers came to conquer enough political influence to be able to interfere within the water governance models formally in place; and 5) which outcomes did this meddling brought to the state, the private operators and the consumer itself. The paper will conclude that such politics of water flow within Maputo have indeed contributed to the emergence of a new set of agents that by having acquired enough bargaining space are now able to defy the established status quo and emerge as a service provision alternative.

1 Water Provision in Greater Maputo

In order to understand the emergence and role of non-statal actors within Maputo's water sector, it is important to understand just how the topography of the city influenced this process and determined how water was to be distributed amongst its residents. Like in many other African cities (e.g. Luanda), patterns of urban development within Maputo bore for many decades the segregational imprint left from colonial times. During this period, the production of the urban forms was markedly dualistic, with infrastructural investment decisions mainly driven by metropolitan capitalist concerns and interests (Jenkins, 2011, p.145; Njoh & Akiwumi, 2011, p.453). These were aimed at promoting European living style and protecting the health of the

settlers, resulting in a topography that was deeply imbedded in social and spatial dual relations. Such segregation led to the establishment of inner *cement cities* surrounded by areas of informal settlements where infrastructure provision, such as water, was minimal, and overcrowding spread (Jenkins, 2011, p.145). Still today, the ghost of this parallel realm is imprinted in the topography of the city, and can be most visible in the way water flows through its arteries. Despite the construction of conduits that transport water from the river Umbeluzi (30kms away from the city centre) all the way to the cemented/city centre areas, the majority of the informal settlements still have no access to it as the infrastructure is embedded in deep subterranean passages - such invisibility and inaccessibility signalling the continuous reinforcement of space manipulation as it was seen through the colonialist geographical violence. The generation of a 'dual circuit of [water] supply' (Graham & Marvin, 2001, p.132) implies that some parts of the city are supplied via the formal sector with its public utility, whilst others are done so via the informal one, with its non-statal providers and community based schemes – indicating the clear failure of the city-wide model propelled by colonial regimes and westernised international agendas on urbanism.

Notwithstanding changes in political regimes and governmental programs over the years¹, the complex mosaic of Maputo's water provision derived from these unequal processes of urban metamorphosis. Still today it can be divided into three main service modalities. The first modality relates to the use of conventional network (formal access) and in-house connections, mainly found within the *cement city*, under the responsibility of the water utility AdeM (Águas da Região de Maputo). The second appears within 4-5kms of the city centre and concerns a 'mixed' area (Ahlens et al., 2013a) where service provision is an overlapping of both water utility

¹ The first attempt at changing this situation was made by the proto-socialist regime established between 1975 and 1984, which soon initiated a nationalisation programme and made efforts to extend the network within Maputo. However, this effort was soon to be halted by a prolonged civil war that lasted until the 1990s.

and small-scale private operators. Within this area, the water company distributes water through standpipes and has since 2007 managed to introduce some major infrastructure connecting these areas to the rest of the network. Despite still being a concession area where AdeM has exclusive rights to operate, it has allowed small operators to maintain their activity. This has to do with AdeM's long-term incapacity to expand the network to such areas, and the recognition that a solution was needed to fill in the gap between service provisions and demand.² The third and last modality concerns areas outside the water company's official service area and this is where the majority of small private operators run their businesses, either on their own (on a quasi-formal or informal basis) or through recent partnerships established with FIPAG (Fundo de Investimento e Património de Abastecimento de Água) a public asset holding authority. For the purpose of this paper, only this last modality will be further explored thus allowing for a better understanding of those service providers (section 4.2).

2 Origins of small-scale informal providers and their service

The origins of water providers in greater Maputo can be traced back to the early 1980s and was triggered by the lack of state capacity to supply water to the peri-urban areas where most of the population running from the war was settling in. As a consequence residents began looking outside the conventional administrative channels in order to gain access to this vital service (Myers & Murray, 2002, p.6). The result was an improvisation of a daily need that led people to invest in digging boreholes in their private land so that their families' water demands were satisfied. Soon after they realised the potential of such venture and began selling water to

² Water Utility Manager. Personal Interview. 2011

the neighboring community. What had begun as a business dominated by ‘small artisans’ scattered in some peri-urban areas, had mushroomed into larger scale, profitable businesses now in clear competition with the water utility by the turn of the 21st century. According to an unpublished report from FIPAG (2010) between 2004 and 2009, small-scale private operator’s activity within the water sector had more than doubled, and the government official data confirmed the existence of 400 small-scale private operators. By 2006 the market for informal water sales was estimated to be worth \$6.5 million (Chapponiere, 2008) or 46% of the peri-urban market (Güida, 2009); and in 2009, governmental statistics estimated that SSIPs were already serving 350,000 people – or 54% of the incumbent operator’s direct beneficiaries (Blanc et al., 2009).

The kind of service they offer is quite often mentioned to be better than the one provided by the formal utility. Such evidence is clear in different reports and articles on the topic, such as Blanc et al. (2009), Chapponiere (2008), Güida (2009) and Matsinhe et al. (2008); as well as through several informal talks held with residents of peri-urban areas that had access to both formal and informal service providers. Their general opinion highlights that small-scale private operators will usually offer a more flexible approach, depending on the costumers’ level of affordability (e.g. either by building a standpipe aiming at those with a lower purchase level, or building a house connection on those situations where household income level is higher). Interviews with these agents and direct observation of their systems, also revealed many of those characteristics identified in current literature: i) small-scale private operators were seen to have a closer relation with their customers and allowing greater flexibility in terms of payment (be it on the monthly bill or connection fee) or in the quantities sold (Mcgranahan et al., 2006; Mitlin, 2002; Solo, 1999); ii) their service had reduced the distance between household and water source

(Dardenne, 2006); iii) they were quicker than the water utility company in responding to complaints and in solving problems related to the network (Chapponiere, 2008; Güida, 2009); iv) their service was seen to be more accessible and reliable (Kariuki & Schwartz, 2005); v) they were willing to provide water to informal areas and in problematic conditions (Plummer, 2002); and, vi) were seen to be more responsive to poorer households, as their service coverage lead to more supplies in the poorer neighborhoods (Clarke & Wallsten, 2002). On top of this, research showed that these operators had also acquired the technological ability to supply water for longer periods of time than the water utility³; and that even water utility staff was able to recognise the value of these agents. According to a manager interviewed in 2011: “Small-scale informal providers found different ways of dealing with the problems posed by escalating demand and absence of resources, and used their creativity to generate original and flexible solutions. One of the good things about them is that they are not as centralised as we are, and commercially, they are actually quite good, especially when it comes to customer relation”. Despite the positive overview, however, SSIPs in Maputo seem to share the same cost recovery logic applied by other informal water vendors elsewhere and prices charged are twice or even three times higher than those practiced by the utility (Dardenne, 2006; Dagderiven & Robertson, 2011; Kariuki & Schwartz, 2005; Sansom, 2006). The issue becomes a source of greater concern when the charge ‘to enter the water shop’ or connection fee is considered (Kayaga & Franceys, 2007)⁴. Even though this situation might contribute to generating further inequities amongst the already financially strained population (Kjéllen & McGranahan, 2006), it is also a fact that agents of this

³ By 2010, the majority of these operators were already supplying water 24 hours a day something that the water utility was not able to match even within the city centre where people were only receiving around 6 hours of water a day.

⁴ According to unpublished data from FIPAG (2010) the prices of a connection with a private operator could vary between \$9 and \$150 USD (with material on top), whilst the water utility would charge for around USD \$73

nature have no access to subsidies and are unable to benefit from economies of scale (Cave & Blanc, 2012; Collignon & Vezina, 2000; van Dijk, 2008) – all strategies that would allow for prices to be lowered.

Research showed that private operators have undoubtedly come a long way. Even though their activity has only been able to be materialised because regulation and enforcement methods have been poor or nonexistent for decades (SAL Consultores, 2006), there is a common feeling amongst the different governmental entities that these agents played a crucial part: not only in contributing for the hydration of the city whilst it was still expanding; but also for ensuring a social duty that the state was in no conditions to fulfil – be it politically or economically.⁵ It is perhaps because of this feeling that despite the informality in which they acted for so long, they were still able to infiltrate the concession, finding common ground to liaise with political formal channels and integrate the water sector's legal framework.

3 The Mozambican water sector & private sector participation

Mozambique's water sector is organised around the delegated management model, which establishes an institutional pathway that leads to the unbundling of infrastructure (Graham & Marvin, 2001, p.138). Accompanying the trend of economic liberalisation of infrastructure in the 1990s, this model was the first step to ensure segments of the water sector market were to be open to competing agents (especially large international private water corporations). The main institutions of the sector still include: a National Directorate of Water (DNA) responsible for policy making; followed by FIPAG, an asset holding authority with the mandate to manage

⁵ Views expressed during personal interviews held with different members from the National Water Directorate, the water utility, the regulatory council and municipal authorities.

investments, rehabilitate and extend water supply assets; five Regional Water Administrations (ARA) responsible for planning and management of the water resources with a jurisdiction split between five geographical areas (South, Centre, Zambeze, Centre north and North); a Regulatory Water Council (CRA) who oversees the stakeholders within the delegated management framework and regulates the sector; a Water Company (either private or public entity); and multiple Municipalities which [should] be responsible for water supply within their own localities. In 2010, a new institution was created – called the Water and Sanitation Infrastructure Agency (AIAS) its mandate is to implement the extension of the public secondary systems of water supply and sanitation in smaller villages. Such framework is supposed to: 1) guarantee the efficient management of the public service; 2) facilitate the definition of sectorial laws and legislation; 3) ensure more transparency within the sector’s stakeholders; and, 3) improve the regulation of the private sector (mainly large private corporations). Although the National Water Policy approved in 1995 mentioned the role of the informal water suppliers within peri-urban and rural areas as potential solution to improve the levels and quality of service (under the constitution of *formal* agreements – decree 17/95 art.2)⁶; it is clear that legislation was still not able to address the issue of incorporating small-scale informal private operators into the main framework. In a personal interview in 2012, a member of the executive board of the regulatory council mentioned that: “[The Government was] having difficulties in adapting the institutional and legal framework to the current urban water reality because the previous model sold to us by the international institutions was meant to reflect that of a lucrative business of service provision. Since all the foreign companies have now gone⁷, it seems we missed the opportunity in all these

⁶ Possible forms of agreement included contracting out, concessions or direct investment.

⁷ In the early 2000s, AdeM was created and its board integrated members of a Mozambican Water Consortium, French water company SAUR and Portuguese water company AdP. In 2002 SAUR left the company and AdP

years to get to work with the local private sector and somehow integrate it within the framework”. And he goes on to acknowledge that: “Since the sector has been going through such deep changes (with the expansion of the formal network and the strengthening of the institutions), we have now reached a point of reflection and change. We definitely need to rethink how we are going to generate opportunities for the private sector to grow”.

Despite this legal void both water utility and small-scale providers coexisted in relative peace and intervened very little in each other’s systems for almost a decade. However all this changed when in 2004 an investment program put in place by FIPAG contemplated building one of the water company’s distribution centre right at the heart of where most of the private operators had been developing their activity since 1980s. It was at this point that the largest small-scale informal operators decided to organise themselves politically, so that they could explore venues to legalise their activity and become an integral part of the sector itself (a process called *formalisation*).

4 Associations of water providers & integration in the institutional framework

4.1. AFORAMO & AMATI

The majority of the small-scale informal operators in Greater Maputo organised themselves under the umbrella of either one of two organisations: AMATI (Underground Water Private Operators’ Association) founded by José Nhaca in 2005; and AFORAMO (Water Operators of Mozambique Association) founded following the initiative of ten operators led by Paulino Cossa. They were both established primarily as a means of organising collective action

retained SAUR’s shares, holding 73% of the company by then. In 2010, AdP decided to leave AdeM and since then FIPAG has become the largest shareholder.

to advocate common interests (Collignon & Vezina, 2000), but also to defend the small private operators' interest; to act as a platform for dialogue with other institutions (governmental and of other nature); and as a way of regulating their activity (AFORAMO's decree). Even though AMATI is in the process of dismantlement, AFORAMO has become the major association and has led the process of formalisation since 2007. With around 500 registered associates, of whom 60% are still active (interview), this association has played an important role in the professionalisation of the national private water sector, whilst attempting to put self-monitoring mechanisms in place. This strategy is aimed at boosting the small-scale operators' image as a viable alternative to the water company in areas where its network was not yet able to reach (interview). Despite this, criticism have been made in relation to the real intentions of these associations, with one recent article by Ahlers et al. (2013b) inferring that their foundation was linked to strategies to hamper 'free entry and competition' within the small-scale operators' market segment. However, research showed that an issue with potential to propel this phenomenon seemed to be, at least for now, safeguarded. For example, tariff setting amongst the 500 affiliated SSIPs needs to meet the unanimous approval of the association's general assembly, thus challenging the notion that only a few private operators are in fact in charge of steering the association (Ahlers et al.2013b).⁸

AFORAMO's true reach though was most prominent with the unfolding of the licensing process and consequent formalisation of the small-scale private operators. Through lobbying activities and a strong advocatory positioning (widely represented in the media), the association was able to enter the bargaining process of Maputo's water governance. And even though their actions begun by not being political per se, by addressing and organising themselves to solve a

⁸ The Association's president highlighted that price setting was seen as a levelling tool as to reduce SSIPs overcharging for their service (Personal interview held in 2012).

problem of a political nature, they substituted defective institutions and entered the realm of [in]formal politics. This helped convincing the governmental authorities that these agents were serious in their claims of becoming a viable alternative to the water company and that an increasingly professionalised sector with self-monitoring mechanisms and an “accreditation” system in place was being institutionalised.

4.2. Integration of small-operators in the sector

Within the Mozambican context, integration and formalisation of private agents has thus been a ‘bottom-up’ voluntary process prompted by both associations. For more than ten years, small-scale water providers’ presence within the city was undetectable and their actions were not politics of protest but rather a way of redressing the situation of exclusion they were in. Their political being only took shape once the expansion of the public water network threatened their gains, and it was then that they became conscious of their actions and the value of the role they played for fifteen years. By politically organising themselves via legal associations, and engaging in an open debate with formal politics, they were able to produce and accumulate a certain amount of interventional power. Such ability was conveyed through the instigation of strikes and water disconnection campaigns (in 2008 and 2013) aimed at gathering public consensus around their cause. They also managed to become part of a forum for negotiations prompted by an international donor (in 2012) in the hope that a consensus with state authorities would be reached.

The first attempt of integration was made in 2006 when both associations sent a request to the National Directorate of Water stating they wished their member’s activity to be recognised and regulated by the state. Such recognition would allow them to become licensed, fully

operational and open to the possibility of applying for investment in commercial banks. On top of that, it also seemed to have been a pre-emptive reaction to the apparent incoming changes within the urban water sector due to be introduced in 2007 (following a multi-donor 95 million Euros investment agreed with the government). Despite battling for more than 4 years, in 2012 the government conceded in providing some small-scale providers with a 5-year license that has since been in place. Another important moment in the process of integration was the pilot scheme promoted by FIPAG whereby small-scale providers were given the possibility of operating under a delegated management agreement with the government: FIPAG invested in the construction of 16 new small-systems and delegated the management and operational elements to the private operators. Through public tendering, FIPAG managed to attract 15 private operators who have been running those systems since 2010. The contractual premise is that FIPAG pays for the entire infrastructure and the operator has a license to manage it for five years. In this package an output-based aid financing mechanism (or public funding subsidy) is included for the first two years (offered per each connection and/or standpipe the operator builds). The small-scale private operator is responsible for all the costs related to the system, including the payment of a lease fee to FIPAG. The location of these systems was within the third modality of provision – outside the water utility concession areas, and was decided upon a joint discussion between both associations and the local municipalities (highlighting just how much bargaining capacity they had manage to acquire and deploy in the face of their associates' interests). Interviews with those involved in operating under this contract held in 2012 showed that both private operators and state authorities had much to learn from each other: “such partnerships allowed us to understand each other better and to open the doors for dialogue. With the government I have state of the art technology, but from me they can learn about how we do business, about our

efficiency and customer service style”. However, and despite what seemed to be a positive experience, apprehension was generalised on both sides. For FIPAG this scheme would not be extended or replicated to other areas of Maputo, as the state was still looking into consolidating the water utility’s prominence as the main supplier in the city. The general idea amongst the government and the public company was that these agents would eventually disappear as the formal network continued to expand (interview with water utility and regulatory council). For the majority of AFORAMO members this collaboration was also seen with suspicion and they were reluctant to get involved due to a lingering sense of distrust towards the real motives of FIPAG’s interests in working with private operators directly. Even for the association such scheme was not deemed to be the answer to their demands. According to a member of the executive board interviewed in 2012, this still did not offer them the economic criteria that could bring sustainability to their businesses, neither ensured their business was safe. On top of that, it was still important for them to ensure they remained independent from governmental authorities and able to make their own strategic decisions: “if we were to receive investment or request a loan the conditionalities imposed could not interfere directly with our business”.

Notwithstanding managing to ‘stir the waters’ of the city, the small-scale water providers integration within the formal framework of the sector between 2007 and 2013 was thus relatively limited. As identified elsewhere in similar studies, that was also due to a number of other reasons: a) the general legal uncertainty about what this process should entail (Collignon & Vezina, 2000, p.13); b) the lack of legal status and of a supportive regulatory framework (Baker, 2012, p.3); c) the incompatibility and mistrust that prevailed between public authorities and the small-scale private operators (Sansom, 2006); d) the ‘calculated lack of interest’ by authorities (Moran & Batley, 2004) as they refused to welcome the ‘sudden’ arrival of these nonconformist

stakeholders – or systems of malaise (Schaub-Jones, 2011, p.12), that introduced competition and profit-making into public service management (Cave & Blanc, 2010, p.330) whilst interfering in what is seen to be a ‘monopoly’ sector; and, d) that small-scale stakeholders providing water to disconnected communities are usually seen by state authorities as a merely curious or even troublesome transitory phenomenon (Cave & Blanc, 2010, p.324), to be ignored rather than supported (Dardenne, 2006, p.22) in the long term.

5 Outcomes of integration

Even though the reach of successful integration and formalisation of the private operators might have been limited, it was possible to observe that such process came to reveal some issues and instil some changes within the sector.

At the state level, it contributed to expose some problems inherent to state structures that pose a risk to an effective, integrative and fair process. Firstly, the fact that government capacity is still generally weak, that most state institutions still lack competent staff (Cave & Blanc, 2010), and that the state has a centralised administrative culture (Cleaver, 2012). Another problem relates to the lack of coordination amongst the state sector entities: FIPAG reports that even in 2007 there were no municipal plans for water and sanitation (despite the legal duty that the municipalities have). An interview with a member from the Maputo Municipality showed precisely this flaw and highlighted that it was not just because they did not have enough human or financial resources; the problem was also the lack of vertical and horizontal communication with other governmental agencies, which left the whole department without a sense of direction. There was also lack of clarity regarding which agency should be responsible for what within the process. An AFORAMO member goes even further by stating that even the head of state was not

aware (or did not want to recognise) this thorny issue. Secondly, the lack of accurate information about informal providers, their scope and the kind of service they provide (Batley & Mcloughlin, 2010) – it was clear that not all the governmental authorities made correct assumptions about this other private sector, which interfered with the openness of communication channels and hindered dialogue. Thirdly, this process also unlocked the complexities of contractual arrangements (between FIPAG, AdeM & SSIPs concessions areas) and the ambiguity it emanates. Another aspect relates to the existence of loopholes within the legal framework, as for example the lack of regulation for the water distribution licence (and not just for its extraction).

In terms of the association and its members, it contributed to help regulating a previous informal sector, increasing the level of water quality provided, and consolidating social, legal and political recognition. It also helped strengthening collective action. In a way, as a member of FIPAG highlighted in an interview held in 2012, formalisation resulted on a “sieving process”: some businesses will remain small and informal in nature, but “the private operators that are driven by a serious commitment to this kind of service decided to embark on this journey”. Critics point out though that this element shows just how selective (and unequal) formalisation might be, potentially contributing towards another encroachment of informality in this newly formed institutional space (Shaub-Jones, 2011). In Maputo however, this feature opened the doors for the future of a more professionalised private sector: a more integrated and mature one, with the potential to become a serious contender within peri-urban and rural areas.

Even beyond the main stakeholders, this process also contributed to some changes related to users of the service provided by the small-scale informal providers. Legalisation and regulation of their service (via the associations) led to a bigger control in terms of water quality. As FIPAG’s unpublished report (2010) confirms, out of the 365 samples submitted to the

ministry of health by these agents, 77% showed that the water being sold was fit for human consumption. Such achievement derived from a campaign launched by AFORAMO in that its members had to comply with quality criteria and testing procedures. Another area where consumers might have, arguably, gained from this process was within tariffs and the cost of connections. With AFORAMO's internal regulation capping both elements, some of the more extortionate small-scale providers were controlled. Despite these (possibly contested) gains, consumers, as citizens, remained very much trapped in the water conundrum: that of water as a human right and the logic of cost recovery (a topic for a whole new article).

Conclusion

As Blanc et al. (2009) had already mentioned, the Mozambican case offers an original example of private operators' involved in supplying a public service. It does so, because these small-scale private operators developed an ability to permeate the sector that derived from a slow encroachment of a traditional state led service. So slow was this process, that it would take the state almost 20 years to feel threatened by these new stakeholders and devise a mitigation plan. Nevertheless, and as a member of the executive board of one of Maputo's water vendors association puts it: "[it is widely known] that it is the State's competence and responsibility to distribute water – in the Mozambican case both laws and policies are clear about that. However, if the State is incapable of supplying water to everyone, I believe it is only fair to incentivise those individuals who have been doing that for the past two decades". By taking this matter into their own hands and instigating a 'bottom-up' process of formalisation, these stakeholders assumed the mission of professionalising their services, creating incentives for these enterprises' marketisation and instil a degree of regulation. All these elements contributed to show their

capacity to embody an alternative model for water provision in Maputo. Schaub-Jones (2011) does indicate that in other settings, like in Ghana and Uganda, SSIPs have already been working in close partnership with the government. However, for Mozambican small-scale providers more than serving as government contractors, their aim is to constitute themselves as a multitude of small water companies, able to operate in spaces where there is no dominant utility.

The challenges of such process do not end with its initial design and stages of implementation. In fact, they are only now starting. Bearing in mind that water governance is assumed as a ‘wicked problem’ (Franks & Cleaver in Cleaver, 2012), such task demands from state structures to adapt, manage and integrate a varied number of stakeholders’ perspectives and competing values, whilst balancing the multiplicity of water resources and the plural institutional arrangements needed to regulate both actors and resources. Despite whatever the outcome of such process in the future, the truth is that ‘[the] flows of water...[will always] carry in their embodiment [a] myriad of social struggles and conflicts’ (Swyngedouw, 2004, p.4); and unless there is scope to aspire for dialogue, recognition, legitimisation, alternative and change, the world of the informal will carry on ‘entangled within power dynamics that position [it] at the city’s margins’ (Myers, 2011).

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