

Asia Pacific Focus

Enhancing Local Resilience through Water-Culture-Innovation Nexus

New-fashioned Water Governance in Central Asia to Make Future Water Developments Viable and Durable



Vadim Sokolov – Agency of IFAS/GWP CACENA



Stockholm 21 August 2023

WISDOM IN WATER GOVERNANCE IS INFINITELY MORE IMPORTANT THAN KNOWLEDGE

Human capital is a major factor in innovative development. The modern world accumulates technical knowledge but future at that paradoxically becomes less predictable. Therefore, water problem is to be solved not just smart but more importantly - wisely. Wisdom in water governance is infinitely more important than knowledge.

The goal is to create water governance system which will be continually updated, benefiting from unpredictable events, stressors, variability and not only suffering from them, but become better than before. That is in line with new philosophy of Lebanese scientist Nassim Taleb about “anti-fragile” world.



Whether it is possible to make water governance "anti-fragile"? The answer could be found from the Nassim Taleb:

The system in which we DO NOT put own skin is fragile;

The system in which we put own skin is unbreakable;

The system in which we put own SOUL is anti-fragile.

HUMANITY MUST OPEN ITS SOUL TO WATER!

Public behavior around water can be changed only on the basis of focused, comprehensive and persistent training of people. If humanity is wise its behavior around water should be based on universally recognized legal norms such as, already widely adopted Traffic Rules. Water Law should not be non-regulatory as it is today, but be compulsory behavior conduct of every person.

The history of civilization demonstrates that legal and moral frameworks in form of regulations and agreements are only half a step towards good water governance. Besides, people have to be taught or forced to keep once given word - enforcement mechanisms and regulations are required. If humanity creates "Regulations on Water", they should contain a clear "own skin" mechanism in relation to water. **Main thing – the humanity must open its soul to water!**



Is Civilization a Dead End for the Earth?

Humanity has always believed that nature is basic for human society in the form of an assistant to live better, create socio-economic benefits. Until mid of the 20th century, there was a theory that potential of nature is unlimited, and people can and should take from nature as much as a possible.

The strategic principle to guarantee the key needs of people by solving political, economic and social problems at the expense of "bottomless natural resources" finally led to global social inequality and environmental crisis!

Irrelevance based on a humanity's loss of morality and ethics, along with an underestimation of climate change, is the main cause of environmental tragedies - the Aral Sea disaster in Central Asia, the Salton Sea crisis in the United States and Lake Urmia in Iran, and many other aquatic ecosystems on the Earth.

Root of the evil is that the **environment** was declared to be property of society, it is a **collective type of property**. In reality, society follows the economic (commercial) interests of political elite of society, therefore, priority for developments is **the economic benefit**.

Humanity remembered about ecology - only when nature takes revenge for its ignorance



Implementing development of Central Asian region in the 1930-80s

the leadership of the republics and the entire Soviet Union understood that the Aral Sea would disappear if all the waters were taken from the rivers for socio-economic needs.

The speech of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan **Usman Yusupov** at a meeting at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan with the parliamentarians of the Uzbek SSR in Tashkent in 1939:



"We cannot look to the fact that the Amu Darya river is carrying its waters to the Aral Sea uselessly, when our lands in the Samarkand and Bukhara regions are not irrigated enough. And our task, as true Bolsheviks, is to change the existing situation, smashing all sorts of sabotage theories, to ketch the Syr Darya and Amu Darya, hold them tightly in our hands, make their waters serve the interests of socialism, the growth of the material level of the population and development of the country"

Stalin's plan for the transformation of nature (approved by the USSR Council of Ministers on October 20, 1948)

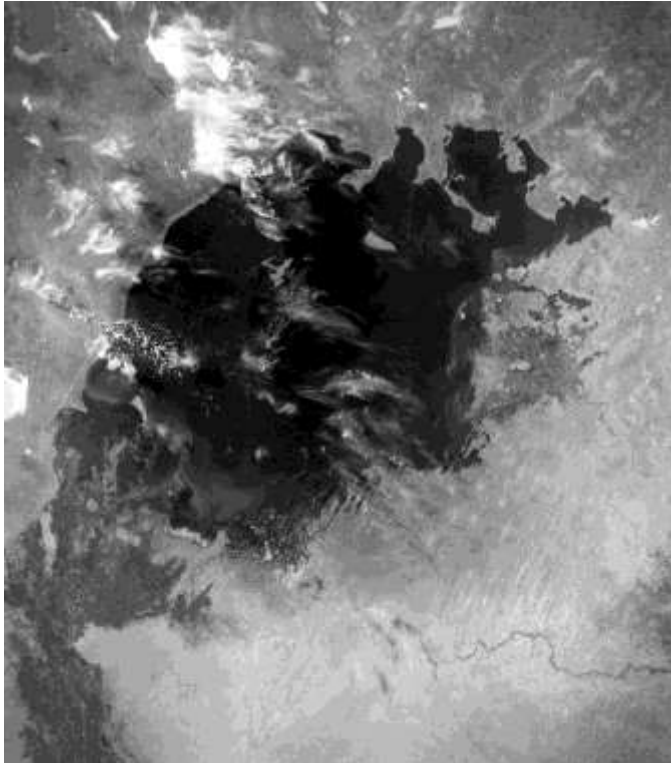


The construction of the world's largest artificial canal - the Karakum canal and the creation of huge irrigated areas throughout Central Asia - in accordance with **Stalin's plan for the transformation of nature** - was proclaimed as a victory over the desert!

However, 40 years later, nature took revenge - and instead of the conquered desert there was created a new one - **Aralkum**.

The Aral Sea Today

1964 – first NASA image



▽ Water level (Baltic Sea vertical datum)

▽ 53,4 m



Aral Sea in 1960

September 6, 2022

Image by: Samantha Cristoforetti, from Int. Space Station



▽ 41,7



Northern Sea
3130 km²

▽ 19,6 m



Western Sea
2350 km²

▽ 26,0 m



Big Sea
500 km²

Water surface of the Sea in the 1960 was about 68 900 km²
Maximum depth 69 m, Water transparency – upto 25 m.

Data from: Committee of Water Resources of Kazakhstan, Uzbek Hydromet Service and SIC ICWC

Some philosophy about How to make Water – One of the Moral Values

Moral values are system of understanding of the world, based on assessment of everything existing by the standpoint of good and evil, understanding of happiness, justice and love. This assessment allows us to link actions of people with the generally accepted system of social values and choose the so-called moral position for further steps or actions.

Water can and should create a climate of trust - if the right of access to water is added into list of moral values

The water crisis - associated with the growing shortage of fresh water – as I already mentioned is the revenge of Earth to Humanity for its unreasonable and sometimes immoral behavior. Climate change (that is, changes in the circulation of moisture and water balance over the planet) is precisely the response of the Earth to ignoring the needs of nature and following appeals - “take all what you can from nature”. By changing the climate, changing the direction and volume of moisture transfer, the Earth is trying to protect itself against the attempts of people to create more favorable conditions for their livelihoods.

Changing behavior requires at least two things: a more competent understanding of problems and a completely new culture of relationships around water, based on the moral principles.

Finding consensus should be based on a “Balance of Equity”

Decision makers should be clearly aware that water today is not a “political weapon”, but is a “subject for diplomacy”. With regard to water, there should be no “enemies”, but only “opponents” in dialogue to find a consensus. In the framework of the dialogue on water, there are no recriminations, the parties should have the ability to listen their opponents, to perceive their arguments.

Considering that each person chooses what meaning should be given to a particular phenomenon. In the framework of dialogue on water, first of all, it is necessary to find a mutually acceptable understanding of equity in relation to water.

It is clear that equity/justice consists of a system of dimensions, and therefore it is necessary to harmonize mutually acceptable indicators that determine the structure of equity and its dynamics in time and space.

Thanks for attention!



Savitsky Museum in Nukus:
The Art that Makes Us Better



«*Viam supervadet vadens cunctim*»
Walk together and you shall reach your goal

Agency of IFAS is located at:
Karasu-4, building 11 (5th floor), Tashkent city, 100187
Tel. (+998) 555-031-356
E-mail : info@aral.uz ; vadim_sokol@mail.ru