Carleton University

**Networks of Power:
A Feminist Political Ecology Analysis of the World Water Council**

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by

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Abstract

Although knowledge networks can be inclusive, democratic spaces to exchange information and determine policies, a critical analysis of the World Water Council reveals that knowledge networks can also be sites of power. This thesis explores the role of the two largest water corporations (Suez and Veolia) in the Council. It argues that Suez and Veolia not only influence trade and water policies but also contribute to a discourse that fills the theoretical gap between inadequate access to water and water privatization as a solution. A political ecology framework exposes how the Council uses a water scarcity discourse to justify the implementation of privatization policies. A feminist political ecology lens reveals that the Council's policy recommendations fail to reflect the experiences of women in the global South. Ultimately, Suez and Veolia's participation in the Council influence global power dynamics that advance the dominant neoliberal framework, which characterizes the current global political economy.

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List of Abbreviations

ACP	African Caribbean and Pacific States
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
AMEM	Aide à la Mère et à l'Enfance Malheureuse
BIT	Bilateral Investment Treaty
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (United Nations)
EU	European Union
EUWI	European Union Water Initiative
FAN	Freshwater Action Network
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCI	Green Cross International
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICSID	International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOC	International Organizing Committee (World Water Forum)
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MFI	Multilateral Financial Institutions
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
PSP	Private Sector Participation
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policies
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organizations
WTO	World Trade Organization

Introduction

There is increasing concern about water scarcity and water stress around the world.¹ Although there is debate on whether the world is experiencing water scarcity, there are nevertheless 1.1 billion people who lack adequate access to potable water and 2.6 billion people who lack access to adequate sanitation² (World Health Organization, 2008). The world's supply of freshwater is being polluted at an alarming rate (Barlow & Clarke, 2002, p. 26; Barlow, 2007; United Nations, 2007, p. 4). Within the last four decades, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and, more recently, the World Water Council (the Council) have promoted the private sector as a key player in the solution to inadequate access to water³ (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p.61; Winpenny, 2003; World Bank, 2008a). They argue that the private sector has the financial resources and, more recently, the expertise to supply the public with adequate access to water (Winpenny, 2003, p. 14; World Bank, 2008a).

¹ The United Nations (UN) defines water scarcity as “the point at which the aggregate impact of all users impinges on the supply or quality of water under prevailing institutional arrangements to the extent that the demand by all sectors, including the environment, cannot be satisfied fully” (2007, p. 4). The World Water Council defines water stress as “an imbalance between water use and water resources” (2007c). It rates water stress on a scale, with 0 representing no stress and 0.8 to 1 representing very high stress (World Water Council, 2007c).

² The World Health Organization outlines four levels of access: no access (walking distance is more than one kilometre or more than 30 minutes round trip, with less than five litres collected per capita per day), basic access (walking distance within one kilometre or within 30 minutes round trip, with less than 20 litres collected per capita per day), intermediate access (where water is provided with at least one on-plot tap, with access to approximately 50 litres per day) and optimal access (where water is supplied “through multiple taps within the house,” with access to 100-200 litres per capita per day) (2003, p. 13). The UN recommends a minimum of 50 litres of water for drinking and sanitation. Therefore, this thesis defines adequate access as having an intermediate level of access to water.

³ The World Bank and the World Water Council explicitly advocate that the private sector play a role in assisting populations to access water. The IMF implicitly promotes the role of the private sector in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, which aim to reduce poverty and assist countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

However, the introduction of the private sector and the subsequent privatization of water were critical to ameliorating the 1970s financial crises and in sustaining capitalism⁴ (Swyngedouw, 2006, pp. 48-49). Although this thesis seeks to examine water issues in general, it also examines the Council as an institution that advances neoliberal policies.⁵ The focus is on the role of the two largest water corporations, Suez and Veolia Environment (formerly Vivendi Environment), in the Council, and how they influence the Council's policy recommendations. The focus is limited to Suez and Veolia in order to provide a more thorough analysis of them and their role in the Council. A thorough analysis of other prominent actors, such as the World Bank and some of the regional development banks, is beyond the scope of this thesis. It should be noted, however, that this focus on Suez and Veolia has several limitations. It can skew the analysis of power relations among the more prominent actors within the Council and the influence that these actors have on preparatory processes, decisions and policies. It can also make it

⁴ Although water had been previously provided by the private sector, the 1970s marked the beginning of a mass trend to privatize water globally. Privatization entails the shift of public ownership and distribution of services to private ownership and distribution. This includes the "cessation of public programs and disengagement of government from specific kinds of responsibility; [and the] sale of public assets, including public lands, public infrastructure, and public enterprises" (Starr 1987).

⁵ Neoliberalism has its intellectual roots in writings by Freiderich Hayek and Milton Friedman. It emerged during the late 1970s and early 1980s with policies from the Thatcher and Reagan administrations. Bretton Woods institutions including the World Bank and IMF became "agents of a transnational neoliberalism" by promoting Structural Adjustment Policies and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 350). This thesis views neoliberalism as a policy framework and as an ideology (Larner, 2000). Neoliberalism is defined as the processes of extending free markets, promoting individualism, privatizing public services, reducing welfare programmes and limiting state intervention (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 350; Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 380). Scholars, such as Erik Swyngedouw, highlight the myth of the reduced role of the state in neoliberal policies (2004, p. 43). However, deregulation is a key feature in neoliberal discourse, particularly in the discourse of 1980s or what Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell call the "roll back" phase of neoliberalism (2002, p. 388). In the 1990s, when the negative economic and social consequences became hard to ignore, neoliberals began to promote the participation and inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups. Some scholars argue that this transformation marked a new phase of (neo)liberalism, which has been referred to as the Third Way, post-neoliberalism (Larner & Craig, 2005) and inclusive liberalism (Porter & Craig, 2004). This thesis draws from Peck and Tickell's analysis of this phase. They label it the "roll out" phase of neoliberalism to describe "the new forms of institutional building and government intervention" that were/are being advanced by "the neoliberal project" (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 389). There is a rich and diverse debate concerning the various forms and features of neoliberalism (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Larner, 2000; Mahon & MacDonald, 2008; Porter & Craig, 2004). However, a thorough analysis of these debates is beyond the scope of this thesis.

difficult to tell which actors are more powerful, in what ways and why. Finally, a purely agent-centred analysis may risk underemphasizing the role of international norms, social forces and wider structural features of the global economy. However, despite these limitations, an analysis of Suez and Veolia's role in the Council is nevertheless revealing and informative because of their prominent roles.

This thesis explores how the Council not only promotes policies that essentially privatize water provision but also contributes to a discourse that justifies the commodification of water.⁶ The implementation of the Council's policies by international financial institutions (IFIs), regional banks and governments creates and reinforces particular power dynamics. This introductory section provides a brief description of the problem and the research questions that are explored in this thesis. It then outlines the argument that this thesis makes. A feminist political ecology framework is summarized to show its relevance to the Council. The significance of this research is briefly described. This introduction concludes with a summary of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

1. The Problem

The Council, an "international multi-stakeholder platform," was created in 1996 against the backdrop of increasing water stress and scarcity (World Water Council, 2007c). Their primary objective is to exchange information on water issues⁷ (World Water Council, 2007c). The Council's membership includes a wide range of

⁶ Karl Polanyi noted that "commodities are...empirically defined as objects produced for sale on the market; markets...are empirically defined as actual contacts between buyers and sellers" (1944, p. 72). Polanyi argued that nature was a "fictitious commodity" because it failed to fall under the definition of a commodity (Polanyi, 1944, p. 72). Nevertheless, water is sold as a commodity. However, legal, economic and other changes must occur for water to be sold on the market. Therefore, this thesis defines the commodification of water as not only the sale of water on the market but also as the changes in law, infrastructure ownership and other processes that enable private actors to sell water for profit.

⁷ Although the Council addresses the provision of water services and transboundary water issues, this thesis focuses solely on the provision of water services to the public.

intergovernmental institutions, government ministries, corporations, civil society groups, water user organizations, professional associations and academic institutions. The Council organizes a World Water Forum every three years, with the next forum to be held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2009. These fora provide participants the opportunity to present, learn about and discuss a vast array of water issues and policy options.

The Council and its fora are an example of the increasing proliferation of knowledge networks created by states, international organizations (IOs) and civil society actors to address issues that transcend national boundaries.⁸ One of the few definitions of a knowledge network is “a system of coordinated research, study (and often graduate-level teaching), results dissemination and publication, intellectual exchange, and financing across national boundaries” (Parmar, 2002, p. 13). Knowledge networks possess several key characteristics. They produce and disseminate information, make policy recommendations, attract media attention, co-ordinate financing and advocate for change (Henry, Mohan, & Yanacopulos, 2004, p. 845; Stein et al., 2001, p. 7; Stone, 2002, p. 3; Stone, 2004 p. 3-5).

Knowledge networks are comprised of states, IOs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), associations and multinational corporations (MNCs). Some academics praise knowledge networks for being non-hierarchical, representative and

⁸ In addition to knowledge networks, there are also policy networks, transnational advocacy networks and issue networks. Global policy networks are generally tri-sectoral, including governments, corporations and civil society (Reinicke, 1999-2000). They primarily develop policies concerning global issues but also disseminate information (Reinicke, 1999-2000). There is overlap between policy networks and knowledge networks. The World Water Council can be categorized as both. However, for simplicity's sake, this thesis will use the term knowledge network to describe the Council. Transnational advocacy networks (TANs) are similar to social movements but have connections that cross national borders (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Stone, 2004). TANs include NGOs and other activists and do not focus on policy-making. Issue networks involve a variety of actors. The distinguishing characteristic of an issue network is that members are connected by their values, principled ideas and what they believe is right or wrong (Sikkink, 1993). Issue networks include human rights or environmental networks.

democratic spaces in which to exchange information and discuss policy options (Stein et al., 2001, p. 6; Stone, 2002, p. 7). Networks are considered desirable avenues to address global problems because the variety of professional and academic backgrounds, the multidisciplinary nature, and the multitude of ideologies result in debated and, therefore, legitimate policy options. However, some knowledge networks are sites of power imbalances that result in the exclusion of particular perspectives (Henry, Mohan & Yanacopulos, 2004, p. 850; Porter & Webb, 2007, p. 7). Although a variety of global actors are present, some actors have greater influence in knowledge networks resulting in the promotion of their policy recommendations to the exclusion of other recommendations (Dahan, Doh, & Gray, 2006, p. 1584; Henry, Mohan & Yanacopulos, 2004, p. 850).

This is a key criticism of the Council. The Council and fora's publications highlight the importance of diversity, women's participation, and the inclusion of civil society (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. xii; Winpenny, 2003, p. v; World Water Council, 2007c). However, NGOs, such as the Council of Canadians, and water activists, such as Ricardo Petrella, criticize the Council for being dominated by business interests (Barlow, 2006; Godoy, 2002; Vani, 2006). An examination of the Council members reveals that there is truth to this criticism. The president of the Council, Loïc Fauchon, is also the president of Société des Eaux de Marseille, a subsidiary of Suez. The alternate president, Charles-Louis de Maud'huy, has been the Advisor to the Chairman of Compagnie Générale des Eaux, a subsidiary of Veolia, since 1978. 41% of the Council members are from the business industry (World Water Council, 2006a, p. 20).

Critics of the Council argue that the Council promotes the commodification and privatization of water through Public-Private Partnerships (Barlow, 2006; Godoy, 2002; Vani, 2006). Although the Council's publications superficially note some debate over policy options, the publications not only exclude policies that oppose privatization but they also exclude criticism to the Council and for policies. This is problematic because the UN, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and various governments regard the Council as an authoritative voice on water issues. The Council's policies influence IO, IFI and government policies. If the Council promotes policy recommendations by private corporations, excluding civil society and other recommendations, the resulting policies are undemocratic and threaten the legitimacy of the Council.

Women's groups, water activists, labour unions and other civil society actors protest the Council's policies through rallies, alternative networks and other forms of resistance. The resistance to the Council reveals that the Council and the fora are also sites of power struggles and spaces that allow a variety of global actors to explore relevant issues, whether inside or outside of the Council and fora. This thesis does not explore the role of groups that oppose the Council. Leaving this analysis out may present Suez, Veolia and the Council as powerful forces that are generally not influenced by other actors. It also casts NGOs, indigenous groups, and women's groups as powerless and ineffectual. Although minimal, resistance against the Council has resulted in a few changes.⁹ However, an analysis of the role of groups that oppose the Council is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁹ See description of membership fees on page 54 and section four, *The Right to Water*, in chapter three of this thesis.

2. The Questions

This thesis examines the role of the two largest water corporations, Suez and Veolia, in the Council, their influence on international trade and water management policies, and the implications of their influence. This thesis addresses two key questions:

- What is Suez and Veolia's role in the World Water Council?
- What are the implications of their influence in the Council?

By exploring these questions, this thesis explores the (power) relations among global actors in knowledge networks. It highlights the need to examine critically how members of knowledge networks construct "the problem," shape policy recommendations and contribute to relevant discourses. This thesis views knowledge networks as global actors and critically examines the effects that their policies have on government, IFI and other actors' policies. Finally, it highlights the power dynamics reinforced and created by knowledge network policies.

3. The Argument

A critical analysis of the Council members and the organizing committee of the 4th World Water Forum reveals that Suez and Veolia dominate the Council. They play a key role in framing debates and therefore shaping policy recommendations. These policy recommendations maintain and advance the dominant neoliberal ideology that characterizes the current global political economy. Despite the Council's multi-stakeholder platform and the competing discourses surrounding the Council, an analysis of the Council and fora publications reveals that they exclude views and policy recommendations that oppose Public-Private Partnerships and water privatization. A feminist political ecology lens highlights that the construction of water problems and the

promotion of particular policies fail to consider women of the global South, particularly poor women of the South, and their relationship to water.

The Council can be categorized as a knowledge network because it produces and disseminates information and makes policy recommendations (Stone, 2002, p. 3).

Although knowledge networks are considered non-hierarchical, representative and democratic spaces by mainstream literature, the dominant positions of Suez and Veolia reveal the power imbalances surrounding the Council and fora. However, the Council's policy recommendations are legitimized because of the Council's perceived expertise on water, multi-stakeholder platform and democratic processes. Through the Council, Suez and Veolia not only influence trade and water policies but also contribute to a discourse that fills the theoretical gap between inadequate access to water and water privatization as a solution. Therefore, Suez and Veolia's participation in the Council has a significant impact on (re)producing power dynamics because of the neoliberal policies that the Council promotes.¹⁰

4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis draws largely from Maria Kaika and Erik Swyngedouw's analyses of water privatization (Kaika, 2003; Swyngedouw, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2006). Kaika and Swyngedouw use a social constructivist perspective to

¹⁰ The debates and definitions of power are complex and manifold. Positionality in a network and the ability to control resources (financial, economic, political and natural) can signify power. Power relations include "the power to control resources, the power to influence events, the power to participate in the economy to varying degrees and the power to exclude or marginalize" (Dicken et. al, 2001, p. 94). However, this thesis also views power as a practice (Dicken et. al, 2001, p. 93). Power refers to "the capacity to exercise that is realized...through the process of exercising" (Dicken et. al, 2001, p. 93). In other words, an act of power occurs when an actor makes a decision that influences events and processes. Simply possessing the ability to control resources does not necessarily denote power. Therefore, the (re)production of power dynamics refers to the creation or reinforcement of unequal relations that enable particular actors to exercise control over resources, influence events and exclude other actors from these and other processes.

analyze the problem of water scarcity. The basic premise to Swyngedouw's analysis of water privatization is that the problem of water scarcity is "socially produced" (Swyngedouw, 2006, p. 7). In other words, through water management policies, water is allocated and denied to particular groups of people. However, the constructed problem of scarcity justifies the implementation of privatization policies despite the policies failure to achieve their promised goals of improved access, efficiency and affordable services (Bakker, 2003a, p. 43, p. 44; Kaika, 2003, p. 929; Swyngedouw, 2006, p. 52).

A key weakness to Swyngedouw's analysis is that, while it acknowledges that power dynamics fall along gender and other lines, it does not provide an analysis of women's unique relationship to water and the uneven effects of water privatization on women. This thesis highlights how water management and water policies affect women and men differently using a feminist political ecology framework. It draws heavily from Dianne Rocheleau, Barbara Thomas-Slayter and Esther Wangari who were the first scholars to develop a comprehensive framework for feminist political ecology (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a). By highlighting women's unique water rights and responsibilities, feminist political ecology reveals that the Council and fora's problem definitions and subsequent policy recommendations exclude issues relevant to women of the global South. These issues include the challenges women face concerning HIV/AIDS and sexual violence during water gathering.

Both feminist political ecologists and political ecologists argue that environmental processes and ecological changes are intimately linked to cultural, economic, political and social processes. The "natural" and the "social" are intertwined (Rocheleau, Thomas-

Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 4; Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). Furthermore, “environmental and social changes co-determine each other” (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). These tenets assist in examining the Council and their policy recommendations in two ways.

First, applying this tenet highlights that existing power relations facilitate the ability of Suez and Veolia to influence the Council’s policy recommendations, which in turn influences water and trade policies. Swyngedouw argues that “it is these power geometries and social actors who carry them out that ultimately decide who will have access or control over natural resources” (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). Despite the appearance of consensus on the fora issues and policy recommendations, the range of problems and policy options are often “fragmented and contradictory” (Hajer, 1997, p. 15). Powerful actors, such as Suez and Veolia, have the ability to shape knowledge network processes in a way that includes and excludes particular actors. Gender, race, class and other differences play a role in who defines problems, how they are defined and what types of knowledge are valued (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 7; Thomas-Slayter, Wangari, & Rocheleau, 1996a, p. 292). Feminist political ecology exposes that power relations based on gender, class and ethnicity are reflected in the Council and fora’s decision-making processes and policies.

Second, changes to IFI or government policies, which determine methods of water allocation, shape power relations at global, national and local levels. Ecological change influences and structures the nature of political and social relationships that occur between people and groups in various settings (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). Water

privatization policies “undermine the stability or coherence of some social groups or places, while the sustainability of social groups and places elsewhere might be enhanced” (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). A privatized water system creates hierarchies of access to water based on people’s ability to pay. Privatizing water ensures that MNCs continuously benefit economically from water provision and gives them the power to permit or deny access. The access of the poorest segment of a population is often hindered when water is privatized, with women’s access being hindered the most (Mpoumou & Pearl, 2003, p. 4). In this way, feminist political ecology is useful to elucidating how water privatization creates and reinforces power dynamics, which sustain the dominant neoliberal framework.

This thesis makes modest contributions to several scholarly debates. First, it provides a sustained critique of the World Water Council. Despite the Council’s power in international relations, there has been minimal academic research on the Council.¹¹ Secondly, this research advances (feminist) political ecology scholarship by elucidating the relevance of (feminist) political ecology to global actors, particularly knowledge networks. Finally, it contributes to critical analyses of knowledge networks.

5. Chapter Outlines

Chapter one contextualizes water privatization in the trajectory of capitalism. Elements of Marx’s analysis of capitalism are highlighted to show how crises are inevitable in capitalism. David Harvey outlines methods that temporarily correct these crises. The privatization of water was a strategy implemented throughout the world in

¹¹ Matthias Finger and Jeremy Allouche provide a general description of the Council (2002, p. 41-46). Karen Bakker (2007) argues that the debate concerning the right to water at the Council would be more effectively advanced by civil society if they adopted the notion of the commons rather than the right to water.

order to ameliorate the 1970s financial crisis (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 48-49). The inclusion of water in Structural Adjustment Policies, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Bilateral Investment Treaties along with the attempt to include water in the General Agreement on Trade in Services was met with fierce resistance by civil society. Chapter one outlines the general debate between those who support and those who oppose water privatization. This chapter elaborates on the theoretical framework summarized above. The framework is informed by leading scholars, particularly Kaika and Swyngedouw, on water privatization and their analyses of the economic, social and political facets of water privatization in England and Wales (Bakker, 2003), Greece (Kaika, 2003), Argentina (Loftus & MacDonald, 2001), South Africa (MacDonald & Ruiters, 2005), Cameroon (Page, 2003) and Ecuador (Swyngedouw, 2004). The framework also draws on feminist political ecologists including Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter and Wangari (Jackson, 1998; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a; Thomas-Slayter, Wangari and Rocheleau, 1996). The chapter outlines the tendency of both feminist political ecology and political ecology to focus on local case studies. Analysis of the Council as a knowledge network contributes to feminist political ecology research at the global scale. Chapter one concludes with a description of knowledge networks.

Chapter two begins by describing the development of the Council. A political ecology lens elucidates how Suez' role in the creation of the Council reflects existing power relations. The chapter then provides a critical examination of the Council's objectives and activities. It moves on to assess how the Council and the fora secure their legitimacy with other global actors. Although members of the Council elect the members

of the Board of Governors, not all of the Council's members represent the public interest. Therefore, knowledge networks, such as the Council, must find legitimacy through other means. The Council finds legitimacy through its multi-stakeholder membership, its perceived democratic processes and its expertise on water issues.

Chapter two critically examines member organizations, Board of Directors, and decision-making processes to determine Suez and Veolia's powerful positions and their influence in the Council. It also explores the 4th Forum, its preparatory processes and the content of the fora. The key positions that Suez and Veolia hold enable them to influence which water issues are discussed, how problems are framed and consequently which policy recommendations are promoted. Chapter two elucidates how particular civil society groups and women of the South are largely left out of the Council and its fora. Although a variety of issues are discussed at the fora, the policy recommendations of the fora fail to include issues relevant to poor women of the South, particularly women's multiple roles concerning HIV/AIDS and sexual violence during water gathering.

Chapter three examines the discourses of Suez, Veolia, the World Bank, civil society and the Women's Environment and Development Organization including how they define water problems and their policy recommendations. This chapter examines *Financing Water For All* and *The Right to Water: From Concept to Implementation*, presented at the 3rd and 4th fora respectively. It analyzes how the policy recommendations fail to consider the realities of women of the South. The description of the competing discourses surrounding the Council and fora reveals the range in policy recommendations. However, these two documents have been the most salient and

influential policy documents. *Financing Water For All* has been the framework for IFI policies and Public-Private Partnerships in countries around the world, particularly in the global South (van Hofwegen, 2006; World Bank, 2003). This chapter also scrutinizes how the Council's contribution to the definition of the right to water conceptualizes the right under a liberal framework. Chapter three concludes by unraveling how the privatization policies, advanced by Suez and Veolia, shape power dynamics at local, national and global levels and maintains the dominant neoliberal framework that depicts the current global political economy.

The concluding section summarizes the important points and overarching argument of this thesis. It retraces Suez and Veolia's participation in the Council and fora which influences water management policies. The Council's policies influence government and IFI policies and reinforce the discourse that justifies the commodification and privatization of water as a means to secure access to water. The exclusion of women of the global South and their experiences is reiterated. This chapter emphasizes Suez and Veolia's subsequent ability to (re)create power dynamics through its participation in the Council. In addition to summarizing the previous chapters, the concluding section outlines potential areas of research.

Chapter I

Towards a Global Feminist Political Ecology

The World Water Council and its supporters describe the Council as the result of the culmination of demands for an international body devoted to water issues. However, this thesis explores how the Council advances neoliberal policies in the water sector. This chapter begins by contextualizing the creation of the Council by examining the commodification and privatization of water in the trajectory of capitalism. Water privatization assisted in ameliorating the 1970s financial crisis. The Council was created in the midst of the promotion of water privatization through Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and attempts to include water into the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). This chapter situates the Council within the debate on the commodification of water.

This chapter also develops the theoretical framework used to examine critically the World Water Council. It begins by reviewing the literature on the political ecology of water, drawing heavily from Kaika and Swyngedouw. Although Kaika and Swyngedouw advance insightful lenses from which to view the global trend of water privatization, their analyses fail to include the unique effects of water privatization on women. Feminist political ecologists, particularly Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter and Wangari, fill in this gap by highlighting women's unique relationship to nature and the discrepancy between women's natural resource rights and their responsibilities. Both strands of political ecology elucidate the relationship between environmental changes and social, economic and political process. (Feminist) political ecology has been particularly useful in

highlighting this relationship at local and national levels. However, there has been minimal research at the global level. A critical analysis of the members and discourses of the Council advances (feminist) political ecology research in this area. The result is a theoretical framework that is based on key tenets of feminist political ecology and political ecology that is useful to analyzing transnational knowledge networks such as the World Water Council.

1. Water in the Trajectory of Capitalism

In his penetrating critique of capitalism in *Capital*, Karl Marx uses a historical materialist approach to analyze the advent of capitalism, how profit is created, the conditions necessary to sustain capitalism and its inherent crises. This section examines the contradictions of capitalism. The conditions that are necessary to sustain capitalism also result in periodic crises. David Harvey's elaboration on Marx's analysis of capitalist crises outlines strategies that correct these crises. This section also examines the financial crisis of the 1970s, or the crisis of Fordism. A couple of Harvey's strategies explain why a campaign to commodify water intensified during the 1970s and 1980s. This analysis reveals that the privatization of water services was a strategy not only to ameliorate the crisis but also to sustain capitalism in general.

In *Capital*, Marx highlighted money as the final result of the circulation of commodities if "the material substance" was abstracted from this circulation (Marx, 1946). Money is the "first form in which capital appears" (Marx, 1906, p. 163). He noted that the circulation of commodities was the starting point of capital. Marx distinguished between two forms of circulation: commodity-money-commodity, wherein a person sells

to buy, and money-commodity-money, wherein a person buys to sell (Marx, 1906, p. 164).

The latter form is what Marx deemed the general formula of capital. He labeled the possessor of this form of money a capitalist and highlighted her goal as “[the] restless never-ending process of profit-making” (Marx, 1906, p. 170). Competition becomes the “external coercive laws” that require the capitalist to continuously extend her capital. In this sense, capitalism requires the perpetual increase of investment of capital (Marx, 1906, p. 649). The continuous investment of capital can only be achieved through progressive accumulation. However, in turn, progressive accumulation can only be secured when there is a surplus of labour, opportunities to acquire means of production and a market in which commodities are consumed (Harvey, 1975, p. 9). When these conditions are met, only then can the capitalist enter the cycle of (re)investing in capital, using labour forces to produce goods and extracting profit from these processes.

However, the increase of these necessary conditions eventually leads to crises. For example, a high surplus of labour manifests as high rates of unemployment. These crises can also take the form of “capital surpluses and lack of investment opportunities, falling rates of profit, lack of effective demand in the market, and so on, [and] can therefore be traced back to the basic tendency to overaccumulate” (Harvey, 1975, p. 10). These crises can be equated to either underconsumption or overproduction (Harvey, 1975, p. 10) and, in either case, result in a surplus or “plethora of capital” (Marx, 1993, p. 359). Since these conditions - a surplus of labour, opportunities to acquire the means of production and a market - are necessary to and produced by capitalism, crises are

inherent and inevitable in capitalism (Harvey, 1975, p. 9; Marx, 1906, p. 361).

Crises devalue capital in varying degrees. If capital remains in its geographical location, it is directly devalued (Harvey, 2004, p. 3). Geographical expansion of capital devalues fixed capital (Harvey, 2004, p. 3). In addition to the competitive nature of capitalism, which coerces the capitalist to extend her capital, the crises also require the capitalist to expand capital into new activities. In other words, there are two forces that require capital expansion.

In order to “correct” these crises and to sustain capitalism, capitalists must “[shift] the accumulation process onto a new and higher plane” through “more sophisticated machinery and equipment,” reducing wages, investing idle capital in new areas of production and/or “expanding effective demand” to clear the market of commodities (Harvey, 1975, p. 10). With a focus on the latter, Harvey explains that demand can be “constructed” through four, sometimes overlapping, methods. First, capital can enter or be invested in new areas of activities either by contorting existing activities into capitalist modes of production or by further deepening the division of labour through specialization so that a task once performed by a company is performed through another company specializing in that task (Harvey, 1975, p. 11). Second, market actors can produce “new social wants and needs” so that capital can be invested in new areas of production (Harvey, 1975, p. 11). Although this thesis focuses on the privatization of water provision, the creation of new social wants can be seen in the bottled water industry. By creating a need for cleaner water, capitalists create markets in which to sell water in a bottle. Third, fostering an increase in the population rate to facilitate long run

accumulation ensures that commodities are cleared in the market (Harvey, 1975, p. 11).

Finally, surplus capital can be invested or exported into new geographic areas,

“increasing foreign trade ... and expanding towards the creation of what Marx called ‘the world market’” (Harvey, 1975, p. 11).

The financial crisis of the 1970s, or the crisis of Fordism, created conditions that made foreign investment into water-related activities a necessary and lucrative strategy. The causes of the 1970s financial crisis are widely debated and include the increase in oil prices, globalization, technological advances, high government spending and tight government regulations (Lipietz, 2001, p. 22-23; Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 388). The 1970s were marked by stagflation, or high inflation rates and a rise in unemployment rates, and low economic growth. These conditions resulted in a surplus of capital.

There are several facets of the 1970s financial crisis that led to the increase in water commodification and privatization. The aging water infrastructures of Southern countries were ideal venues for capital investment (Swyngedouw, 2006, p. 49). As well, policy makers reconsidered the high government spending that marked the Ford era and became reluctant to invest financial resources into public services (Swyngedouw, 2006, p. 48). The most salient reason was the surplus of capital that needed new outlets or areas of activities in which to be invested (Swyngedouw, 2006, p. 49). Overall, these were compelling reasons to transfer once publicly provided water services to private corporations.

During the 1970s and 1980s, IFIs such as the World Bank and IMF imposed neoliberal policies that perpetuated or encouraged strategies that ‘fixed’ the financial

crisis. They imposed Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) as loan conditions on borrowing countries in the global South. SAPs required countries to privatize public services, including water, health care, electricity, transportation and education, which were normally provided by the state. Through SAPs, countries of the South became investment venues for idle capital. Countries were not only required to implement economic and fiscal policies that opened their markets to MNCs but were also discouraged from regulating health, environmental and human rights standards in their open markets.

Members of civil society criticized SAPs on several grounds including their threat to national sovereignty, their crippling effects on countries' economies and their role in eliminating necessary public services (Arrighi, 2002, p. 10). Beginning in the late 1990s, IFIs required countries to develop Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which IFIs claimed were an improvement to SAPs because countries participated in the development of the strategies. Nevertheless, critics of PRSPs argue that PRSPs are essentially no different from SAPs because they still encourage the privatization of services (Zack-Williams & Mohan, 2005). Although not all PRSPs require full privatization, at minimum, governments are encouraged to adopt Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in service sectors.¹² Critics argue that PPPs still have negative

¹² There are various types of Public-Private Partnerships. Design Build Operate (BDO) contracts require a private actor to design, build and eventually operate the sector. With Build Operate Transfer (BOT) contracts, the private actor designs, finances and builds one or more facilities, which they operate on a long-term basis. The private actor eventually devolves the facility to the government. Concessions, which can involve more than one private company, bestow operating and management responsibilities to the private sector for a specified time frame. Users pay private entities directly. As mentioned, privatization involves the partial or whole sale of assets wherein the private owner then operates and manages water provision (Veolia Environment, 2004, p. 35). Although there are distinctions between Public-Private Partnerships and privatization, facets of these water management systems overlap including their effects on people. The effects on people are described below. Therefore, at times, this thesis uses the terms interchangeably.

consequences. Legal, consulting and other financial costs are often absorbed by water users (Lobina, & Hall, 2003, p. 22). Contracts cannot adequately manage the complex relationships between public authorities and MNCs (Lobina & Hall, 2006, p. 6).

Corruption and price increases are common in these partnerships (Hall, 2001, p. 10; Loftus and MacDonald, 2001, p. 190; Swyngedouw, 2005, p. 96). Price increases hinder people's ability to access water, particularly the ability of the poor. Finally, PPPs pose an ideological problem because PPPs still commodify water (Barlow & Clarke, 2002).

In addition to commodifying and privatizing water through SAPs and PRSPs, there has been a concerted effort by some governments to commodify water through trade agreements including the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs). The creation of the GATS was a response to the increase in trade in services in the 1980s and 1990s. GATS, which entered into force on January 1, 1995, is a set of rules that govern international trade in services among World Trade Organization (WTO) state members. The aim of GATS is the progressive liberalization of markets¹³ (World Trade Organization, 1995). It outlines international trade rules such as most favoured nation treatment, national treatment and market access in service industries such as telecommunications, health care and water provision¹⁴

¹³ Bakker (2003) and Starr (1987) note the distinctions among liberalization, commercialization and partial privatization. Liberalization is the simple act of opening up national markets to foreign corporations. Commercialization is defined as the "reworking of the management institutions (rules, norms, and customs), and entails the introduction of markets as allocation mechanisms, market-stimulating decision-making techniques, and...neo-liberal principles in policymaking" (Bakker, 2003, p. 331). It should be noted that markets can be privatized without being liberalized or commercialized. Equally, a market can be liberalized or commercialized without being privatized. In the latter case, governments maintain ownership and control of public water infrastructure and continue to oversee programs and policies related to the distribution of water. Contracting out by the government to private companies would mark the "partial" privatization of the water services sector. Public-private partnerships are a form of "partial" privatization (Starr, 1987, p. 125).

¹⁴ Article II of GATS, MFN treatment, requires that every state member provide the most favourable treatment to all state members (World Trade Organization, 1995). As well, state members are required to

(Trebilcock & Howse, 2005, pp. 357-358). These trade rules allow foreign corporations access to the markets of WTO members and require WTO members to minimize or eliminate trade barriers including tariffs, health regulations and environmental laws (Lang, 2004, p. 802; World Trade Organization, 1995).

Each state member has a Schedule of Commitments that outlines which services are subject to GATS. The provision of water is categorized under environmental services. State members have been reluctant to include environmental services to their schedules. This reluctance stems from the uncertainty of how the application of GATS to the water sector would affect sustainable development and a population's ability to access potable water (Kirkpatrick & Parker, 2005, p. 9). However, because of water's integral relationship to many facets of society, the inclusion of some services may indirectly include water into members' GATS schedules (Varghese, 2006, p. 2). State representatives must be well versed in WTO rules as they may unknowingly include water in their schedules (Varghese, 2006, p. 2).

European state members have persistently requested that countries include the water services sector in their Schedules of Commitments (World Trade Organization, 1999; Varghese, 2006, p. 2). Their initial request included "water collection, purification and distribution services...; potable water treatment, purification and distribution including monitoring; removal, treatment and disposal of household, commercial and

promote market access allowing foreign companies to compete in market(s) outlined in their Schedule of Commitments (World Trade Organization, 1995). The rule of market access, stipulated in Article XVI, requires that each state member adhere to its "terms, limitations and conditions" outlined in its schedule and prohibits limitations that would inhibit market access, unless specified in a country's schedule (World Trade Organization, 1995). Article XVII, National Treatment, requires that a state member treat foreign and national service providers of "like services and service suppliers" equally (World Trade Organization, 1995). A state member cannot treat its own products better than another state's products (World Trade Organization, 1995). These obligations form the guiding rules to trade relations. Unjustifiable violations of these obligations have formed the basis of complaints lodged at the WTO Dispute Settlement Body. See Trebilcock and House (2005) for more information on international trade rules.

industrial sewage and other waste waters...; treatment, remediation of contaminated/polluted soil and water” and other environmental services (World Trade Organization, 1999, p. 3-5). The European Commission made another request to include sanitation and sewage services in February 2006 (Varghese, 2006, p. 2). The attempt to include water in GATS schedules is part of the trend to commodify and privatize water.

Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs), trade agreements negotiated between two countries, are also being used to regulate trade in water services. MNCs and their respective states are increasingly relying on BITs to lodge complaints against host states when host states prematurely cancel contracts or concessions despite reasons for cancellations (Peterson, 2004, p. 16). For example, in the Cochabamba water war, Bechtel relied on the BIT between Bolivia and Holland to lodge a complaint against the Bolivian government at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes for the cancellation of the Cochabamba concession (O'Neill, 2006, p. 372). The Bolivian government cancelled this concession because of the fierce public protest against the provision of water by Bechtel. Thousands of people participated in shutting the city down in 2000 to protest the water concession that resulted in severe price increases and inadequate access (O'Neill, 2006, p. 367). The use of BITs to govern water concessions signifies the commodification of water.

The commodification and privatization of water falls under Harvey's first and last mode of constructing demand, the systematic and progressive search for new areas of activities and investment of capital in new geographic areas. Since the 1970s financial crisis, IFIs and states have imposed, or in the case of the WTO attempted to impose,

policies and laws that commodify and privatize water provision. SAPs and PRSPs required borrowing countries to privatize water services. The inclusion of water in GATS would allow water to be traded as a service. BITs treat water as a commodity and govern the trade of water services. These policies and laws have been instrumental to transforming water as a public service into water as a commodity. They entrench the strategies of constructing demand, namely the need for new areas of activities and investment of capital in new geographic areas, into the global political economy.

The provision of water by governments, an already existing activity, has been contorted into capitalist modes of production so that water is a commodity provided by private water corporations. The privatization of water provides corporations with the opportunity to invest capital in water infrastructure in new geographic locations. These opportunities facilitate progressive accumulation and prevent capital devaluation. Although IFIs and some governments advocated the private sector as a solution to inadequate access to water, the commodification and privatization of water was a strategy not only to correct the 1970s financial crisis but also to sustain capitalism in general.

2. The Water Debates

The trend to commodify water has not gone uncontested. The commodification and privatization of water provision has resulted in a growing global movement of water associations, labour unions, environmental groups, indigenous groups, water activists and other members of civil society who oppose the commodification of water and the provision of water by commercial entities. The success of movements against water privatization varies throughout the world. Although there are regions that maintain or

convert to privatization models or PPPs, public opposition to water privatization has been successful in ensuring that local or national governments reject forms of privatization in other regions, (Kohl, 2006; Snitow, Kaufman, & Fox, 2007; Trawick, 2003) particularly in Latin America (Lobina & Hall, 2007).

While the debate is complex, nuanced and multifaceted, this section provides a brief and, at times, simplistic overview of the key arguments for and against private sector participation in water provision.¹⁵ The nature of the debate has changed over the last decade in three key ways. First, IFIs, some governments and the World Water Council, who did not previously acknowledge the right to water, have begun to acknowledge water as a human right. However, they argue that in order to secure the right to water, water must be priced accordingly (Dubreuil, 2006, p. 12). The significance of the Council's definition of the right to water is examined in chapter three. Second, beginning in 2003, IFIs, corporations and the Council no longer advocate for the role of the private sector in the water sector solely for their financial resources. Rather, they highlight the need for IFIs and governments to finance water infrastructure and mitigate risks for the private sector (Winpenny, 2003; World Bank, 2003). Finally, the term "privatization" is not used in World Bank or Council publications. It has been replaced by the terms Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) or Private Sector Participation (PSP). The changes and nuances in recent water discourses will be developed throughout the remaining chapters. The following overview will examine the key arguments prior to

¹⁵ Private sector participation can involve a number of actors including NGOs, small water vendors, and private, for-profit corporations at local, national or multinational levels. However, the contentiousness surrounding private sector participation stems from the operation and management of water services by private corporations, particularly MNCs. Therefore, private sector participation in this thesis refers mainly to the operation and management of water services by MNCs.

these changes. The purpose of this overview is to provide a base for the critical analysis of the Council's evolving discourse.

Proponents of PSP in water services argue that there are many benefits to treating water as a commodity. The commodification of nature is justified by property rights theorists, such as Garrett Hardin, as a way to prevent the "tragedy of the commons" or the destruction of common lands (Hardin, 1968). Through deductive reasoning, Hardin argued that Adam Smith was incorrect in assuming that individuals in a society, driven by their self-interest yet restrained by competition, would act to benefit society as a whole (Hardin, 1968, p. 1244). Based on his assumption that individuals were inherently greedy and self-interested, lacking internal mechanisms to control themselves, Hardin believed that permitting people unfettered freedom to land encouraged them to overuse and destroy land (Hardin, 1968, p. 1245). Property rights theorists argue that since private property renders owners responsible and accountable for the property, owners will be more likely to protect the property or natural resource (Lawson-Remer, 2006, p. 484). This argument is used to support PSP in water provision. Although product and process improvements may lead to an increase in prices, increased prices ensure that people value water and results in conservation and mindful use of water (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 19). Further, infrastructure would be better maintained because it would be lucrative for a company to maintain it.

In the water services sector, liberalization of markets increases foreign capital (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001, p. 4). An increase in capital expands water infrastructure thereby extending coverage to a greater portion of a

population (Rivera, 1996, p. 8). Since foreign companies have greater financial resources than some governments, infrastructure can be better maintained and water can be provided at a higher level of quality (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, p. 61, 2000; Rivera, 1996, p.8). PSP in the water services sector can increase funding for research and development on the purification of water, resulting in cleaner water and improved access of potable water to impoverished regions (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p.63).

In response to criticisms that price increases prevent poor populations from accessing water, the private sector can establish pricing schedules or pro-poor pricing to accommodate low-income customers (World Trade Organization, 2006, p. 91; World Bank, 2008a). As well, it is easier to regulate the private sector. Since the private sector is motivated by profit, regulations that make it financially attractive to keep prices low, such as “price caps,” provide strong incentives for the private sector to operate in the benefit of the customer (Foster, 2005, p. 5).

Although opponents of PSP recognize that some governments lack the financial resources to provide adequate access to potable water, they oppose PSP for several reasons. They affirm that water is a human right. Since water is necessary for human life and is part of the global commons, it is morally wrong for private corporations to profit from the provision of water (Barlow & Clarke, 2002; Hillary, 2003; Petrella, 2001; Shiva, 2002; Snitow et al., 2007). There is a growing global movement to entrench the right to water in national law international human rights law (Barlow & Clarke, 2002; Petrella, 2001; Shiva, 2002). Supporters of the right to water argue that water is necessary to uphold other human rights including those outlined in the International Covenant on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Petrova, 2006; Woodhouse, 2004). Others advocate that the right to water should be entrenched and upheld in domestic law (Pejan, 2004).

Opponents of PSP argue that the provision of water by the private sector hinders people's ability to access water, particularly poorer segments of a population (Holland, 2005; Kothari, 2002, p. 22). Case studies around the world reveal that the privatization of water led to high prices increases and prevented middle to lower classes from accessing water (Hillary, 2003; Lawson-Remer, 2006, p. 492). Price increases have soared anywhere from 35% to 500% of the pre-privatization price (Concannon & Griffiths, 2001; Hillary, 2003). The privatization of water has also resulted in private corporations "cherry-picking" higher income neighbourhoods in which to provide water (Bakker, 2003c, p. 329; Swyngedouw, 2005, p. 95). Various case studies demonstrate that infrastructure and service only improved for a portion of the population (Hillary, 2003). In other areas, water quality decreased and water became polluted and emitted a foul odour (Barlow, 2006; Snitow et al., 2007, p. 73).

Including water under GATS or BITs may infringe on state sovereignty. GATS contains Article XIV, a General Exceptions clause, which allows state members to enact national regulations or laws that uphold public morals, human safety, health and national security. However, the precarious ability of states to use Article XIV may result in states' inability to ensure potable water to vulnerable populations (Lang, 2004, p. 804). Health regulations and low-income subsidies may be interpreted as trade barriers (Lang, 2004, p.

811). As seen with the Cochabamba water war, the government was not able to ensure Cochabambians adequate access to water. The BIT between Bolivia and Holland required that Bolivia uphold the contract with Bechtel despite people's inability to access water. The BIT gave Bechtel the ability to lodge a complaint against the Bolivian government regardless of people's inability to access water (Democracy Centre, 2006). Because of international outcry, Bechtel only required the government to pay 30 cents of the \$50 million that Bechtel had originally sought (Democracy Centre, 2006). However, in a similar case, the Argentine government was required to pay \$165 240 753 to Azurix Corporation as compensation for prematurely cancelling their water contract, despite high price hikes and environmental damage (Azurix Corporation v. the Argentine Republic, 2006, p. 158).

Evidently, there is fervent protest against the privatization of water around the world. In the midst of this debate, the World Water Council was created to address water issues. The Council includes a variety of global actors who examine water issues and develop policy recommendations. However, this thesis examines Suez and Veolia's role in advancing neoliberal policies that require countries to privatize water. The following section describes the (feminist) political ecology lens used to elucidate the Council's water scarcity discourse and its failure to promote policies relevant to women of the South.

3. The Political Ecology of Water

Although the definitions and debates in political ecology are rich and evolving,¹⁶ this section develops a political ecology framework informed by scholars who are referred to as the ‘Oxford School.’¹⁷ The Oxford School consists of a group of leading scholars who research water privatization and who have explored its economic, social and political dimensions in England and Wales (Bakker 2003b), Greece (Kaika, 2003), Argentina (Loftus & MacDonald, 2001), South Africa (MacDonald & Ruiters, 2005), Cameroon (Page, 2003), and Ecuador (Swyngedouw, 2004). The Oxford School share similarities in their writing on water privatization in several respects.

First, as with other political ecologists, the Oxford School adopts a social constructivist approach to reality and to nature. Reality and nature are not objective or separate entities from humans. Rather, they are mediated and influenced by actions, perceptions, values and ideologies. Social constructivism underlies the Oxford School’s assertion that water scarcity is socially produced. This assertion can be unraveled two ways. First, Swyngedouw argues that “water is one of the least finite resources in the world. It is plentiful and virtually non-exhaustible” (Swyngedouw, 2003, p. 7). Although

¹⁶ The origins of political ecology are debated. Robbins labels Peter Alexeivich Kropotkin’s study of Russia’s Far East from the mid-1800s as the first writings on political ecology (2004, p. 17). Paulson, Gezon and Watts assert that the origins began in the 1970s with “journalist Alexander Cockburn, anthropologist Eric Wolf, and environmental scientist Grahame Beakhurst” who developed the term political ecology “to conceptualize the relations between political economy and nature.” (2003, p. 206) For debates within political ecology, see R. L. Bryant, (1998), Power, Knowledge and Political Ecology in the Third World: A Review, *Progress in Physical Geography*, 22; 79-94; R. L. Bryant & S. Baily, (1997), *Third World Political Ecology*, London: Routledge; A. Escobar et al., (1999), After Nature: Steps to an Antiesentialist Political Ecology [and comments and replies], *Current Anthropology*, 40(1), 1-30; and A. P. Vayda & B. B. Walters, (1999), Against Political Ecology, *Human Ecology*, 27(1), 167-179.

¹⁷ In his M.A. thesis, *Making People Good, Down to the Last Drop: Toward a Genealogy of the Government of Water*, Charles Gibney notes that no one has called these scholars the ‘Oxford School’ to date but does so because of their past or present affiliation to the School of Geography and the Environment at St. Peter’s College of Oxford University (Gibney, 2006, p. 20) I borrow this name and also include Barbara Rose Johnston and Greg Ruiters into the ‘Oxford School’ because of their similar theoretical approaches to water privatization.

he acknowledges that water quantity and quality vary from region to region, he asserts that “there is no evidence of global water shortages” (Swyngedouw, 2003, p. 8).

Although water stress and scarcity do exist in many regions of the world, the notion that water scarcity is socially produced is based on the argument that economic, political and social processes mediate water supply and access (Johnston, 2003, p. 85; Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). These processes determine the availability of water, who receives water, the conditions under which water is allocated and who participates in decision-making.

Karen Bakker argues that water scarcity is relative because scarcity “depends on such varied factors as population density and distribution, sanitary habits, water distribution systems, and customary leisure and amenity uses” (Bakker, 2003b, p. 29). Further, the degrees which people have adequate access to water are based on gender, class, ethnicity and other divisions (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 10). Therefore, water scarcity is socially produced.

Secondly, the Oxford School argues that a constructed problem of scarcity allows neoliberal institutions to implement privatization policies (Bakker, 2003a, p. 43; Kaika, 2003, p. 929; Swyngedouw, 2003, p. 8). A market economy cannot sustain itself without scarcity (Swyngedouw, 2003, p. 7). If absolute water scarcity does not exist, a scarcity discourse must be constructed. Governments and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, advance a water scarcity discourse that facilitates the implementation of seemingly neutral economic policies that shift ownership or provision of water services to private actors (Bakker, 2003a, p. 43; Kaika, 2003, p. 920; Swyngedouw, 2004).

The cause of water scarcity in the discourse varies depending on who participates in its construction. In England and Greece, the government warned of a drought (Bakker, 1999; Kaika, 2003). The World Water Council points to the decreasing supply of water and the increasing population. They stress that over one billion people already lack access to potable water and nearly three billion people lack access to adequate sanitation. The discourse often adopts a Malthusian undertone and warns that the world's increasing population exacerbates this problem because human demands for water will soar by 2025 (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 1). Further, an increase in water supply will be needed to produce food to feed the increased population and to accommodate their economic development (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 2). The crisis becomes the "challenge to overcome through the implementation of new projects," namely water privatization schemes (Kaika, 2003, p. 940). The crisis creates "the context in which the dominant neoliberal rhetoric and attitude" can be advanced in the water services sector (Kaika, 2003, p. 929).

In addition to the problem of water scarcity, the discourse can also involve a couple of other elements. Versions of the discourse argue that people do not value water, leading to wastage or overuse. In order for people to recognize its value, water needs to be commodified and priced accordingly (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 19). When the provision of water shifts from public to private provision, the discourse also involves classifying users as "consumers rather than citizens" (Bakker, 2003a, p. 42). Categorizing people as consumers facilitates the shift from receiving water as a public service to paying for water as a commodity.

Discourse is defined as the way in which people think and speak about “aspects of reality” by delimiting “a set of possible statements about a given area, and organizes and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process [*sic*] is to be talked about” (Kress, 1985, p. 7). A discourse is based on knowledge that is assumed or on assumptions that are invisible (Cheek, 2004, p. 1142). Stemming from these assumptions, discourse facilitates the perpetuation of particular worldviews, ideologies, values and interests. It facilitates the production of “knowledge” and determines what is “known” (Cheek, 2004, p. 1143). For these reasons, the ability of the Council to advance its discourses as “knowledge” places the Council in an extremely powerful position.

Political ecology highlights the connection between water problems and economic, political and social decisions. In cases of drought, the discourse fails to link scarcity with “social relations of the production and consumption of water” (Kaika, 2003, p. 935). The Council’s discourse also fails to articulate the impacts that Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) have had on people’s ability to access water in countries of the South. As mentioned above, SAPs required countries to implement privatization policies, hindering poor people’s ability to access water. The Council’s current discourse deplores the inability of people to access water and promotes privatization policies as a solution. However, the discourse omits the negative impacts of previous privatization policies. The discourse fails to conceive of water as being intertwined in various historical, social, cultural, economic and political processes. The “discursive construction of water as purely natural” separates water from its relationship to social and political processes (Kaika, 2003, p. 935). Kaika notes the effectiveness of this strategy: “Once

taken out of the social and political nexus in which they are positioned, the production, consumption and conservation of nature can be used to support almost any argument for or against privatization; for or against the commodification of water” (2003, p. 935).

Criticisms against the privatization of water expose the projects failure to overcome the crisis and achieve their promised goals of improved access, efficiency and affordable services. Rather, the projects enable “a number of actors to profit from a crisis situation” (Kaika, 2003, p. 948). Further, the commodification and privatization of water sustains and strengthens the dominant neoliberal framework (Kaika, 2003, p. 948). The construction of a crisis discourse “becomes a very powerful tool for acquiring public consensus over the privatization of yet another public utility” (Kaika, 2003, p. 949).

Political ecology exposes the relationship between environmental changes and economic, political and social processes and contexts. Socio-environmental change is not only facilitated by legal, historical, economic and political processes but also has cultural, economic, political and social consequences (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). The ability to affect environmental change results in the ability to change other facets of society. For this reason, water is intimately linked to power¹⁸ (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 2). Existing power dynamics determine who participates in decision-making concerning water and the varying degrees of participation. Swyngedouw argues that “it is these power geometries and social actors who carry [socio-environmental processes] out that ultimately decide who will have access or control over natural resources” (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23).

¹⁸ In addition to the Oxford school, several scholars examine the relationship between water and power. See M. R. Lowi, (1993), *Water and power: the politics of a scarce resource in the Jordan River Basin*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; K. A Wittfogel, (1957), *Oriental despotism : A comparative study of total power*, New Haven: Yale University Press; and D. Worster, (1986), *Rivers of empire: Water, aridity, and the growth of the American West*, New York: Pantheon Books.

Equally, the method of water allocation (re)creates “power geometries” (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). The divisions in these geometries fall along gender, ethnic and other lines (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 24). Different water management systems embed in a society different patterns of who gains from and who pays for, and who benefits and who suffers from water management (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 24). Political ecology examines the intricacies of the nature of social relationships that occur between people and groups, and how these are influenced and structured through processes of ecological change (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 24).

Although Swyngedouw and other Oxford School scholars acknowledge that power dynamics fall along gender and other lines, they do not uncover the way in which water privatization affects women and men differently. It is crucial to note the uneven impacts that natural resource management have on women and men of different races, classes and other dimensions of difference (Wallace & Coles, 2005, p. 8; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996a, p. 5). Therefore, this thesis incorporates tenets of feminist political ecology in its analysis of water provision.

4. Feminist Political Ecology

Feminist (or gendered) political ecology builds on political ecology by elucidating gender as a key factor in resource management. It combines facets of different theories including ecofeminism, feminist geography, socialist feminism and environmentalist thought. Feminist political ecology argues that real gender differences exist based on the “social interpretation of biology and social constructs of gender, which vary by culture, class, race, and place and are subject to individual and social change” (Rocheleau,

Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 3). In other words, while biological differences exist between sexes, gender and gender roles, which are constructed and ascribed, vary among cultures, classes, races and contexts. In this way, feminist political ecology falls within third wave feminism. Women experience different realities based on culture, class, race, ethnicity and other differences. Rather than making essentialist assertions about gender and sources of inequality, feminist political ecology sustains its focus on asking questions about the relationship between gender, nature and relevant cultural, economic, political and social processes (Jackson, 1998, p. 315). Rather than viewing women and men's existences as separate and distinct, feminist political ecology views their experiences as interrelated (Jackson, 1998, p. 315). The examination of women and men's interconnected relationship to nature facilitates the development of policies that address the root causes of gender inequality and foster genuine, long-term change.

Feminist political ecology elucidates several themes concerning nature, broadly, and water, specifically. The themes that are particularly relevant to the analysis of water provision are gendered sciences of survival and environmental rights and responsibilities (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, pp. 4). Along with most feminist theories, feminist political ecology views "knowledge" as gendered. It also adopts a social constructivist approach by highlighting how one's experience shapes her knowledge and reality. Since women's experiences occur in different spaces than men's, what women consider "knowledge" differs greatly from what men consider "knowledge." In other words, because women's experiences involve different activities, their concerns and knowledge involve different issues. What is considered knowledge is further

mediated by class, race and other dimensions of difference. Therefore, although matters of science are often advanced as objective truths, matters of science reflect the experiences of those who define them. A feminist critique of science is revealing because it questions what “science” is and who determines matters of science (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 7). Definitions of science, how environmental problems are framed and the types of knowledge examined vary depending on one’s gender, class or other dimension of difference (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 7). Therefore, gender is a key factor in the process of defining water issues.

Determining what environmental or water problems are becomes an act of power. Problem definition involves emphasizing, delimiting or excluding certain issues thereby ensuring that the issues relevant to a particular group are addressed. “Problems” reflect the experiences of those who define them. If gender, class and other dimensions of difference mediate knowledge, “problems” may not reflect the experiences of people from different contexts. Feminist political ecology echoes the assertion of political ecologists that environmental change is intimately linked to economic, political and social processes (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 4). In this way, addressing problems that reflect the experiences of the key members of the World Water Council has significant economic, political and social consequences. It advances particular ideologies, interests and values. For this reason, feminist political ecology is instrumental in revealing the implications of Suez and Veolia’s role in the Council.

Environmental rights and responsibilities vary based on gender, age and other dimensions of difference (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 12). Since

spaces are gendered, feminist political ecology facilitates an analysis of the problems and responsibilities of homes, workplaces, and other spaces, and how this affects water rights and responsibilities (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 4). Feminist political ecology scrutinizes “who controls and who determines rights over resources, the quality of the environment and the definition of a healthy and desirable environment” (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 10). Feminist political ecologists are concerned with gender in resource control and distribution, and how this intersects with race, class, ethnicity and national identity (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 5). Resource rights and responsibilities, which fall along gender lines, can be categorized into four areas: “control of resources,...access to resources,...use of resources,...and responsibilities to procure and/or manage resources for family or community use” (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 11). Elucidating women’s discrepant water rights and responsibilities highlights the unique problems faced by women of the South.

5. The ‘Local Trap’

While feminist political ecology and political ecology are extremely relevant and useful to the critical analysis of water privatization, research in these fields has fallen into what J. Christopher Brown and Mark Purcell term the ‘local trap’ (2005, p. 608). The unit of analysis of most (feminist) political ecology research has been at the local or national level. (Feminist) political ecology explores how “large economic and political systems” affect a locality’s cultural, economic, social and political contexts (Thomas-Slayter, Wangari & Rocheleau, 1996, p. 290). Most of the literature emphasizes the positive

impact of local initiatives; “local indigenous knowledge, community-based natural resource management, and greater local participation in development” are proposed as effective methods to address inequality (Brown & Purcell, 2005, p. 612). Political ecology began with the desire to unravel how “wider political-economic processes ...greatly influenced local outcomes” (Brown & Purcell, 2005, p. 611). However, there has been minimal research on global issues and actors (Bryant, 1998, p. 90; Stonich & Bailey, 2000, p. 25). This is significant gap in (feminist) political ecology because environmental changes and ecology “operate simultaneously at a range of scales”¹⁹ (Brown & Purcell, 2005, p. 612).

The literature by the Oxford School focuses on national or municipal case studies within global political-economic contexts (Bakker, 2003b; Kaika 2003; Loftus & MacDonald, 2001; Ruiters, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2004). Several of the Oxford School scholars provide insightful accounts on changes to the role of the state (Kaika 2003; Swyngedouw, 2006, p. 57). They elucidate the role of IFIs, including the World Bank or IMF, in influencing governments to adopt water privatization policies through loan conditions (MacDonald & Ruiters, 2005, p. 17; Swyngedouw, 2003, p. 10). However, the role of the state and IFIs are only part of the context in which privatization occurs at the municipal level. Swyngedouw describes the shift from “government to governance” and

¹⁹ Brown and Purcell also elucidate the tendency of political ecologists to analyze particular processes as inherently linked to specific scales (2005, p. 612). They argue that “political economy is not inherently “wider,” and culture and ecology are not inherently “local” (Brown & Purcell, 2005, p. 612). Political ecologists often view global and local scales as distinct entities. Although focusing on one scalar level limits a thorough examination of social or ecological phenomenon, (Brown & Purcell, 2005, p. 612) the length of this thesis prevents a thorough analysis at the local scale and analysis among scales. An analysis at the local scale would include a thorough analysis of environmental or ecological change. “Political ecology without the ‘ecology,’” or the lack of explanation on ecological processes is another weakness in (feminist) political ecology literature (Vayda & Walters, 1999, p. 168-169). This thesis also falls prey to these weaknesses because of length constraints. However, a feminist political ecology analysis of the World Water Council nevertheless contributes to a largely underdeveloped area in (feminist) political ecology.

highlights the emergence of “new institutional or regulatory bodies” that develop water and trade policies yet lack the traditional channels of accountability and democratic control (Swyngedouw, 2003, p.12). However, there is a lack of research and analysis on the role that emerging forms of governance, such as knowledge networks, play in structuring power dynamics through natural resource policies.

Raymond Bryant highlighted the need for research linking the organizational attributes of various global actors to their capacity to act in political-ecological conflicts (1998, p. 90). Minimal research has been “undertaken in the field on non-state actors such as businesses, multilateral institutions, nongovernmental organizations or local-level people's organizations” (Bryant, 1998, p. 90). Analyses of these actors would broaden the scope and breadth of (feminist) political ecology. Feminist political ecologists have examined people’s organization at the local level (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996b). There has also been some research conducted on the political ecology of organizations (Orssatto & Clegg, 1999; Orssatto, den Hond & Clegg, 2002). Finally, Susan Stonich and Conner Bailey applied a political ecology framework to transnational advocacy networks concerning the shrimp industry (2000). However, there has been minimal research overall on multilateral institutions or networks and the competing interests of actors within these forms of governance (Bryant, 1998, p. 90).

Research in (feminist) political ecology on knowledge networks and how they mediate power dynamics through resource management has been latent. This thesis is a modest contribution to a largely undeveloped area of analysis in both feminist political ecology and political ecology. Using a feminist political ecology framework, this thesis

interrogates the Council as a knowledge network and unravels its role in (re)producing global power dynamics. The remainder of this chapter describes knowledge networks and explains how feminist political ecology is useful to their analysis.

6. Knowledge Networks

The global nature of some current issues and the need for international cooperation on these issues has spawned different forms of global governance. James Rosenau defines global governance as “a summarizing phrase for all the sites in the world where efforts to exercise authority are undertaken” (Rosenau, 2002, p. 71). He outlines six types of governance based on structure (formal, informal and mixed) and processes (unidirectional, multidirectional, horizontal and vertical) (Rosenau, 2002, p. 81). The actors include governments, MNCs, international governmental organizations, (international) NGOs, markets, elite groups and mass publics (Rosenau, 2002, p. 80). The forms of governance include top-down, bottom-up, market governance, network governance, side-by-side governance and mobius-web governance²⁰ (Rosenau, 2002, p. 81).

This thesis categorizes the World Water Council as a form of network governance. More specifically, the World Water Council is categorized as a knowledge network. Knowledge networks consist of a range of actors including governments, NGOs, professional bodies, academic research groups and scientific communities (Stone, 2004, p. 3). They are involved with coordinating, publishing and disseminating research, intellectual exchange, networking and capacity building. The information exchange can be used to develop policies at local, national and international levels. They attract media attention, and government and donor support (Stone, 2004, p. 3).

²⁰ See Rosenau (2002) for a thorough description of the emerging forms of global governance.

Mainstream literature views knowledge networks as non-hierarchical, representative and democratic spaces to exchange information and discuss policy options (Reinicke, 1999-2000, p. 44; Stein et al., 2001, p. 6). Knowledge networks are considered a viable means to developing policies to global problems because the variety of professional and educational backgrounds of participants, the multidisciplinary nature, and the multitude of theoretical underpinnings enable participants to reach debated and therefore legitimate solutions. Aside from noting that power relations exist within networks, mainstream literature has failed to outline approaches or theories that critically analyze power relations within networks, the power relations that networks (re)produce and their relationship to the global political economy.

A critical analysis unravels whether a network is genuinely non-hierarchical and representative. William J. Drake and Kalypso Nicolaïdis explore the membership of epistemic communities by separating its membership into two tiers.²¹ The first tier consists of individuals with vested interests such as representatives from “governments, international agencies and private firms” (Drake & Nicolaïdis, 1992, p. 39). The second tier consists of individuals with “more purely intellectual” interests in the issue (Drake & Nicolaïdis, 1992, p. 39). They argue that the perceived independence of the second tier

²¹ Stone highlights three approaches in understanding knowledge networks (2004). One approach “is to analyze [knowledge networks] as epistemic communities.” (2004, p. 6) The term, epistemic community, was first coined by international relations theorist John Gerard Ruggie where he traces the term’s root to Michel Foucault’s term *epistemes*, which “refer[s] to a dominant way of looking at social reality, a set of shared symbols and references, mutual expectations and a mutual predictability of intention” (1975, p. 570). Ruggie develops this notion with the term epistemic communities, which refers to “the interrelated roles which grow up around an *episteme*, they delimit, for their members, the proper construction of social reality” (Ruggie, 1975, p. 570). Haas applies this term to international policy coordination. Haas defines epistemic communities as a “network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area” (1992, p. 3).

legitimizes the positions and “neutralizes” the vested interests of the first tier (Drake & Nicolaïdis, 1992, p. 39).

Dominant perspectives in a network may be mistaken for consensus or unified goals and interests (Hajer, 1997, p. 12). A critical examination of the backgrounds, values and discourse of all members dispels the myth of a unified voice or consensus. Despite the appearance of consensus on problems, the goals and discourse of members are often “fragmented and contradictory” (Hajer, 1997, p. 15). This thesis examines the processes that assist or hinder particular claims from being heard or particular solutions from being promoted.

Problems are “created” in the sense that aspects of a problem must be selected and framed to form “the problem” (Hajer, 1997, p. 15). The way in which a problem is defined determines the attention paid to particular aspects of a problem. It also determines the policies that are promoted (Hajer, 1997, p. 15). The notion that “policies are not only devised to solve problems, problems also have to be devised to be able to create policies” assists in revealing which actors have more power in influencing the problems that are investigated (Hajer, 1997, p. 15). A critical approach assists in revealing which actors are more powerful and how their ability to promote their discourse to the exclusion of others (re)produces power dynamics.

Analysis of knowledge networks generally focuses on the actors within the network and the actors’ agency (Henry, Mohan & Yanacopulos, 2004, p. 849).

Knowledge networks are not analyzed as actors that can influence and shape their environment (Henry, Mohan & Yanacopulos, 2004, p. 849). This thesis mediates between

examining the actors within the Council, particularly Suez and Veolia, and examining the Council as an actor. Feminist political ecology is useful to examining networks as actors in the global political economy and reveals the role that networks have in (re)producing power dynamics. The dynamics of networks vary. Networks can be counter-hegemonic, representative forces. As well, they can be spaces that reinforce dominant power structures or dominant worldviews (Henry, Mohan & Yanacopulos, 2004, p. 850; Leitner, 2002; Parmar, 2004). They can also be sites of power struggles among a range of actors. There has been minimal research on the role of knowledge networks at the global scale in feminist political ecology and political ecology. The influence that networks have on policies creates a need for careful analysis of these networks.

The analysis of the Council's water scarcity discourse demonstrates how the Council justifies and promotes water privatization policies. Examining who gains from and who loses in privatization policies assists in exposing how power relations are reinforced and created. Feminist political ecology reveals that the problems and policy recommendations outlined by the Council are not neutral and have uneven effects on women and men in the South. This thesis examines the different degrees of power that global actors, particularly MNCs, possess in knowledge networks such as the Council. Feminist political ecology reveals how existing power dynamics shape actors' abilities to participate in decision-making that determine water management at the global level. Political ecology emphasizes how "the environmental arena reflects the structured relations of power and inequality" (Stonich and Bailey, 2000, p. 25). Feminist political ecology assists in revealing how particular claims and experiences are excluded from the

Council and how the Council's policies fail to adequately address gender equality. A sustained analysis of the Council using a feminist political ecology framework unravels how power dynamics are (re)produced as well as the nature of the power dynamics.

Chapter II

The World Water Council

This chapter provides a critical analysis of not only key actors in the World Water Council but also actors whose voices are excluded from the Council's policies. This assessment reveals the perspectives and ideologies that inform the definition of water "problems" and the promotion of policy recommendations by various actors. This chapter reveals that Suez, Veolia and other actors who espouse neoliberal ideologies and policies dominate the Council.

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the emergence of the Council. Suez had a prominent role in the creation of the Council. Their ability to participate in the creation of a knowledge network on global water issues reflects power geometries highlighted by Swyngedouw (2004, p. 24). This chapter moves on to describe the Council's objectives and activities as well as its status in the international community. It also examines the three characteristics in which knowledge networks, such as the Council, base their legitimacy. These characteristics include their multi-stakeholder platform, democratic processes and expertise.

The chapter then explores the Council's membership and Suez and Veolia's powerful roles in the Council. It also examines several of the Council's IFI and NGO members. Suez and Veolia's influential roles are also apparent in the World Water Fora. By examining the preparatory processes of the 4th Forum, this chapter elucidates how Suez and Veolia shape the issues debated at the forum. Despite the Council's promotion of women, indigenous and civil society participation, their criticisms against water

privatization and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are largely left out of the fora's publications. A brief examination of issues that affect women in the South, such as women's multiple responsibilities in relation to HIV/AIDS as well as sexual violence during water gathering, demonstrates how the fora's issues and themes fail to include women of the South. This chapter argues that Suez and Veolia play a key role in framing debates on water issues which consequently shape the policy recommendations examined in chapter three. Women's groups, indigenous communities and NGOs have developed various strategies in response to their opposition to water privatization, the Council and their exclusion from the Council. These strategies are described at the end of this chapter.

1. The World Water Council

The idea of creating a World Water Council first emerged at the *UN Conference on Water at Mar del Plata* in 1977. Members of the international community, including representatives from international financial institutions (IFIs), the UN and the water sector, debated whether an existing international organization could act as a World Water Council or whether an entirely new organization needed to be created. They debated what organizational structure the Council would have and what its objectives and key activities would be. The Dublin Statement, one of the key documents from the 1992 *Conference on Water and the Environment*, called for the formal consideration of a World Water Council or Forum at the *UN Conference on Environment and Development* later that year (Southeastern Anatolia Project, 2005).

The International Water Resources Association took the initiative to devote a special session to the idea at the *VIII World Water Congress in Cairo* in 1994. The

special session was entitled, *Institutional Arrangements for International Cooperation in Water Resources*. Several scientific associations and international organizations (IOs) including UN agencies, the International Water Supply Association, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and the World Energy Council (WEC) participated in the special session. Papers presented at the special session examined various issues related to a World Water Council including reviews of existing institutions as potential candidates. The potential candidates included UN institutions, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and the International Commission for Irrigation and Drainage. Presenters highlighted key weaknesses to these organizations that prevented them from being a comprehensive organization on water (Grover & Jefferson, 1995, pp. 132-135). These weaknesses included limited financial resources, members who spoke as individuals rather than on behalf of their organizations, some of the organizations' ad-hoc status and their narrow foci on water issues (Grover & Jefferson, 1995, pp. 132-135).

Speakers from the World Bank and the WEC proposed that the World Water Council adopt a model similar to that of WEC (Grover & Jefferson, 1995, p. 126). WEC is a registered charity in London with the mission "[t]o promote the sustainable supply and use of energy for the greatest benefit of all people" (World Energy Council, 2008). WEC organizes triennial fora and includes industries, government ministries and other relevant stakeholders in its membership (Grover & Jefferson, 1995, p. 127). Suez, IBM, PriceWaterHouseCoopers and other corporations are members of the WEC Patron Programme because of the special contributions they have made to the WEC Foundation (World Energy Council, 2008). It is unclear what input Suez had on the presentation

made by the World Bank and WEC. However, Suez had a prominent role in the creation of the World Water Council from the beginning. After the special session, a founding committee for the World Water Council was formed. Dr. Mahmoud Abu-Zeid from the Ministry of Public and Water Resources of Egypt, René Coulomb from Suez, and Aly Shady from the Canadian International Development Agency were the three founding members (World Water Council, 1996, Article 6).

The ability of Suez to influence water management decisions demonstrates that environmental changes, including changes to water management systems, are facilitated by legal, historical, economic and political processes (Sywngedouw, 2004, p. 23). If water is intimately linked to power, the ability of Suez to participate in the founding of the World Water Council is a reflection of existing global power dynamics. Existing power geometries determine who participates in decision-making concerning water and the varying degrees of their participation (Sywngedouw, 2004, p. 24). Suez' prominent role in the inception of the Council reveals their already powerful role in international relations.

The World Water Council was formally created in 1996 as “an international multi-stakeholder platform” with the mission “to promote awareness, build political commitment and trigger action on critical water issues at all levels” (World Water Council, 2007c). The Council's objectives are:

1. to identify critical water issues of local, regional and global importance on the basis of ongoing assessments of the state of water;
2. to raise awareness about critical water issues at all levels of decision-making, from the highest authorities to the general public;
3. to develop a common strategic vision on integrated water resources management on a sustainable basis, and to promote the implementation of effective policies and strategies worldwide;

4. to provide advice and relevant information to institutions and decision-makers on the development and implementation of policies and strategies for sustainable water resources management, with due respect for the environment and social and gender equity; and
 5. to contribute to the resolution of issues related to transboundary waters.
- (World Water Council, 1996, Article 2)

The Council is mandated to achieve these objectives through a variety of activities including organizing the triennial World Water Forum, disseminating publications, training and creating an international network among stakeholders (World Water Council, 1996, Article 3). Based on its objectives and activities, the Council falls within the definition of a knowledge network outlined in the first chapter.

The World Water Council is highly regarded by many members of the international community. It is internationally recognized as a key actor in freshwater resources and water management issues (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, 2002, p. 10; Swaminathan, 1998, Section V). In 2002, UNESCO granted the Council consultative status. Consequently, the Council can “designate official representatives to the UN headquarters in New York and their offices in Geneva and Vienna” (World Water Council, 2006a, p. 5). This status also allows the Council to participate in the UN’s debate or “reflection” on global water issues (World Water Council, 2006a, p. 5). In the same year, UNESCO recognized its “operational relations” with the Council (World Water Council, 2006a, p. 5).

The World Health Organization’s Water Sanitation and Health programme also has ties with the Council (World Health Organization, 2008). The Food and Agriculture Organization refers to the Council’s *World Water Vision* and the Council itself for information on water issues (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,

2008). Since its creation in 1996, the Council has established itself as a global expert on water issues and is highly respected by members of the UN and other IOs.

As a knowledge network on water, the Council's mandate empowers it to make policy recommendations at international, national and local levels. Although country representatives or national citizens do not elect Council members, the Council nevertheless has the power to effect significant changes in trade and water policies. Swyngedouw notes this shift from "government to governance" (Swyngedouw, 2003, p. 12). New forms of global governance, such as knowledge networks, lack traditional channels of accountability and democratic control found in state apparatuses (Swyngedouw, 2003, p. 12). Although state channels are not always effective means to ensuring accountability or democracy, citizens nevertheless have claims to these channels. The lack of elected representation and the lack of formal channels threaten the legitimacy of knowledge networks. Therefore, knowledge networks, such as the Council, base their legitimacy on other features. The Council draws its legitimacy from three perceived features: its multi-stakeholder platform, its democratic processes and its expertise in water issues.

The Council highlights its multi-stakeholder memberships as a key feature (World Water Council, 2007c). The members are categorized into five colleges: governments and government authorities; intergovernmental institutions; enterprises and facilities; civil society organizations and water user associations; and professional and academic institutions.²² The fora publications highlight the participation of NGOs, women, youth and aboriginals as key strengths of the fora. This participation by traditionally

²² See the World Water Council's Biennial Report 2004-2005 for a thorough description of the colleges (2006, p. 19-20).

marginalized actors is not only a pillar to the Council and fora's perceived democratic processes but also to their overall legitimacy. Their participation forms a crucial part to the Council's identity. The fora, which will be examined in further detail below, are platforms for democratic debates on water issues. The Council argues that the participation of a variety of global actors at the fora facilitates a thorough discussion on a range of water issues. The policy recommendations, which the Council claims are the consensus of fora participants, are legitimized because they appear to result from democratic debate. However, a critical analysis of the Council members, the fora's preparatory processes and the fora sessions reveal that the inclusion of these traditionally excluded groups is superficial.

Council members are stakeholders and actors in various water fields. The Council consists of water experts from policy, advocacy, scientific, academic and corporate circles at local, national and international levels. The Council bases its expertise in this wide-ranging membership. However, this chapter unpacks how the Council's expertise is filtered through relations of gender and class. A neoliberal ideology informs problem definition processes and the policies recommended by the Council.

Knowledge networks, such as the Council, draw their legitimacy from the perception of a non-hierarchical, representative and democratic structure. However, by critically examining the Council's characteristics and policy recommendations, this thesis explores how Suez and Veolia use the Council to promote policies that primarily benefit themselves, IFIs and some government officials. Suez and Veolia's role in the Council enables them to influence water and trade policies and contribute to a neoliberal

discourse that promotes PPPs as a logical solution to inadequate access to water. The following section interrogates the Council's membership and reveals that the Council's membership mainly includes corporations, IFIs, and other organizations that promote neoliberal policies under the guise of PPPs.

2. The World Water Council's Multi-Stakeholder Membership

The Council accepts organizations that have "an interest in water and water-related issues, and which accepts the mission and objectives of the World Water Council" (World Water Council, 2006c, p. 6). A critical analysis of the Council's membership reveals that it is mainly comprised of organizations that support water commodification. This section examines the characteristics of the Council members based on GDP and college type. It briefly examines the discourses of Suez, Veolia and civil society members. Although there is a range of views among the Council, this section demonstrates how the majority of the Council's members advance a neoliberal view on water. This section also critically examines prominent actors outside of the Council and their different perspectives. Many of these actors criticize the exclusionary nature of the Council and fora. However, it should be noted that some NGO groups refuse to join the Council or participate in the fora because of the policies that the Council and fora promote (Joffe-Block, 2006). Although the Council may not exclude those who oppose PPPs from joining the Council or participating in the fora, the Council nevertheless excludes their policy recommendations from Council and fora recommendations. Therefore, reference to the Council and fora's exclusionary nature mainly refers to the way in which the Council and fora's policies fail to include the policies of its critics.

Despite the Council's claims of being a representative platform, the Council's membership is highly concentrated in wealthy countries.²³ 59% of members come from countries with a GDP of over \$20,000 USD (World Water Council, 2006a, p. 8). Approximately 38% of members are from countries with a GDP of under \$20,000 yet over \$2,500 and approximately 3% of members are from countries with a GDP of under \$2,500 (World Water Council, 2006a, p. 8). Evidently, there is a low membership among poor countries. The membership fees are a likely disincentive for organizations from poor countries. Prior to 2004, membership fees were €1000 for every member (World Water Council, 2006a, p. 6). However, after criticism that the Council had exorbitant membership fees, the Council created a fee structure that based fees on a country's GDP.²⁴

The Council also has a Membership Solidarity Fund which provides subsidies of €210 to "organisations from countries with the lowest GDP or from countries not yet represented within the Council" (from World Water Council, *Membership Solidarity Fund*). Priority is given to local authorities and civil society organizations (from World Water Council, *Membership Solidarity Fund*). Although the Fund assists some

²³ In terms of nationality, approximately 39% of the member organizations originate from France, Turkey and Japan, with a breakdown of approximately 13% from each of these three countries. The remaining organizations originate from a variety of countries or are considered international organizations. Approximately 8% are international organizations, associations and institutions. Countries such as Canada, Egypt, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Spain and the US each have approximately six to ten organizations as members. Countries including Algeria, Australia, Benin, Brazil, Germany, India, Italy, Kenya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Switzerland each have two to four member organizations. Countries such as Belgium, Bolivia, Burkino Faso, Denmark, Greece, Iraq, Niger, Norway, Sweden, Nigeria, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Senegal, Singapore, Syria, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan have only one member organization in the Council. These figures are based on a thorough review of the 254 member organizations listed in the Council's members' directory found at http://www.uneterre.net/wwc/visu_membre_w.php.

²⁴ The fee structure can be found in the World Water Council Biennial Report 2004-2005. Countries whose GDP is less than \$1,000 pay €250; countries whose GDP is between \$1000 and \$2,500 pay €430; countries whose GDP is between \$2,500 and \$7,500 pay €595; countries whose GDP is between \$7,500 and \$20,000 pay €760; and countries whose GDP over \$20,000 and international organizations pay €930.

organizations, membership fees still exclude small organizations that have minimal funding. Organizations from poor countries, such as Bolivia and Ecuador, have to pay annual fees of €595, an equivalent of \$945.93 USD²⁵ (World Water Council, 2007a). Although organizations would be given €210 (or \$250 USD), they would still be required to pay €385 or \$695.93.

While the fee structure and Fund assists some organizations, it does little for small NGOs and groups that have minimal financial resources regardless of the country's GDP. Despite the recent fee structure and the other initiatives,²⁶ the fees are barriers to poor countries. The fees shape the Council's membership by only admitting organizations with financial resources, particularly from wealthier nations. Consequently, this filters the "expertise" and representation by class, nationality, race, and as will be shown, gender. This supports feminist political ecologists argument that class, nationality and gender mediate knowledge (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 7).

The Council categorizes its members into colleges. The five colleges mentioned above were introduced in 2003 in order to include a wider variety of global actors (World Water Council, 2006a, p. 19). In the Council, 17% are from governments, 5% of the members are from intergovernmental organizations, 41% are from the business industry, 10 % are from civil society and 27% are from professional and academic institutions (World Water Council, 2006a, p. 20). The Council's multi-stakeholder membership is a pillar of its claims to legitimacy. Although the Council has a variety of members, an examination of the key members reveals that many of the members support PPPs.

²⁵ Based on the exchange rate of 1.5898 for 1 US dollar from the European Central Bank on April 21, 2008.

²⁶ The Council's Triennial Report 2000-2003 also described an initiative called the Grass-Root NGOs Initiative, which waived two years of membership fees for six grassroots NGOs "active on water and gender issues" (World Water Council, 2004, p. 22). However, there is no further information on the website or in any other publications that states which organizations received this funding.

3. Suez and Veolia in the World Water Council

Suez has been operating for approximately 150 years and has two main sectors: energy and environment. Suez Environment claims to be the largest water multinational corporation worldwide. Some of its main water subsidiaries are Lyonnnaise des Eaux (France), Agbar (Spain) and United Water (United States). Suez Environment's total revenue for 2006 was €11.4 billion (Suez, 2008c). At the end of 2005, Suez was "present in more than 50 countries and operating in 26 countries" (Suez, 2008c). 76% of Suez' activities are in Europe, "6.7% in South America, 6.15% in North America, 4.44% in Asia Pacific and 4.28% in Africa and the Middle East" (Suez, 2008c).

Suez' priorities are similar to the Council's priorities. As part of the global trend among MNCs to incorporate principles of corporate social responsibility, Suez highlights local partnerships or PPPs, inclusive participation, adequate access, sustainability, "water for all" and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as key priorities (Suez, 2008c). Suez emphasizes its expertise in water as a means to achieve the MDGs (Suez, 2008a, p. 74).

Suez' board of directors and executives have several connections to European politicians and representatives of international organizations such as the UN and the World Bank (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005a, p. 21). Gérard Mestrallet, Suez chairman and CEO, held positions in the French ministries of transport, economy and finance (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005a, p. 13). Edmond Alphandéry, a member of the Board of Directors, was the Minister of the Economy from March 1993 to May 1995 (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005a, p. 13). Valérie Bernis, Suez' only female executive, was the

Special Press Advisor in the French Ministry of Economics, Finance and Privatization from 1986 through 1988 (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005a, p. 13).²⁷

Suez is active in global business associations, UN initiatives and other IOs. It is a participant in the UN Global Compact, UNESCO, CSR Europe, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development,²⁸ the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, the European Roundtable of Industrialists, the European Services Forum²⁹ and World Water Council (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005a, p. 21). Despite Suez' prominent role in the Council, there is no information on its website about its participation in the Council (Suez, 2008c).

Veolia has been operating for over 150 years under various names. It also claims to be the largest water MNC worldwide. In 2003, the same year that Henri Proglio became CEO, Vivendi Environment changed its name to Veolia Environment. In 2006, Veolia's revenue closed at € 10.1 billion (Veolia Environment, 2008c). It operates in 59 countries and boasts of providing 67 million people with water services and 49 million people with wastewater services (Veolia Environment, 2008c). Veolia's four sectors are broken down into water (34%), waste (28%), energy services (21%) and transportation (17%) (Veolia Environment, 2008c). It mainly operates in Europe with 44% of its activities in France, 36% in the rest of Europe, 8% in North America and 7% in the Asia-

²⁷ Despite its emphasis on inclusive participation and the MDGs, the third of which is promoting gender equality and empowering women, Suez' board of directors and executives are predominantly male. Anne Lauvergeon is the only female out of the 12 Board of Directors (Suez, 2008b). Similarly, Valérie Bernis is the only female out of Suez' ten executives (Suez, 2008b).

²⁸ The WBCSD is a corporate association. It "sees large corporations as the best avenue for 'sustainable development' and believes that companies like [Veolia Environment] should be the leaders in the meeting the MDGs for water" (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005a). Shell, Texaco and BP are also part of the WBCSD (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005a).

²⁹ The European Services Forum is an "influential lobby group...that promotes liberalization of service markets" (Chandra, Girard, & Puscas, 2005b).

Pacific (Veolia Environment, 2008c).

Veolia also advances principles of corporate social responsibility by making the MDGs, “safeguarding public health,” conserving water and protecting the environment key priorities (Veolia Environment, 2008c). They highlight their expertise as an asset to achieving the MDGs and promoting public health (Veolia Environment, 2008c). Veolia also promotes women’s rights. The Veolia Foundation makes donations to the Cœur des Haltes Center, a hostel for disadvantaged women (Veolia Environment, 2008b).

However, Veolia’s Board of Directors fails to reflect Veolia’s goal of promoting gender equality. All of Veolia’s fourteen Board of Directors are male. Véronique Rouzaud is the only female on the eight member executive board (Veolia Environment, 2008a).

Like Suez, Veolia has connections to European politicians and UN organizations. For example, Daniel Bouton, who is a member of Veolia’s Board of Directors, held numerous positions in French government ministries such as the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005b, p. 17). Denis Gasquet, a member of Veolia’s executive, “held a number of positions in the French Government’s Office National des Forêts” (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005b, p. 17). Veolia has close ties to UNESCO. In October 2002, both Vivendi and Suez sponsored a UNESCO conference on the legal framework for water. The conference resulted in a report bearing the logos of UNESCO, the Academie de l’Eau and the two companies. At the 3rd World Water Forum, Vivendi’s representative was introduced as representing Vivendi and UNESCO (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005b, p. 19). Veolia is also a participant of the UN Global Compact, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the

European Services Forum and the World Water Council (Chandra, Girard & Puscas, 2005b, p. 19). Despite Veolia's prominent role in the Council, they also do not promote their role on their website (Veolia, 2008c).

Suez and Veolia have a strong presence in the Council. They are members of the Global Water Partnership, a sister organization of the Council. The Council's Directory of Members shows that Suez and its subsidiaries make up 7 out of the 254 members and Veolia and its subsidiaries make up 4 out of the 254 members (World Water Council, 2008). This does not include member associations such as Aquafed and the International Water Association of which Suez and Veolia are both a part. Suez is also a member of the International Hydropower Association, another Council member (International Hydropower Association, 2005). Suez and Veolia have a dominant presence in the Council in this sense because each Council member receives one vote in Council assemblies. If Suez has seven member organizations in the Council, it has seven votes. Suez and Veolia multi-member presence enables them to strategically vote on issues.

In addition to Suez and Veolia's multi-member presence, they also hold powerful positions in the Board of Governors. Council members elect 35 of the 36 Board of Governors with the City of Marseilles as a permanent member. The members of the Board have a wide variety of backgrounds and are drawn from the five colleges.³⁰ Loïc Fauchon has been the president of the Council since 2005. He is also the president of Société des Eaux de Marseille, a subsidiary of Suez. This gives Suez a tremendous amount of power in the Council since the president implements General Assembly and

³⁰ The World Water Council's web page, *Board of Governors*, states that four board members are from intergovernmental institutions. Ten are governments and government authorities. Eight board members represent the enterprises and facilities college. Five are from civil society or water user organizations. Finally, 11 board members are representatives from professional and academic institutions.

the Board of Governors' decisions, authorizes expenditures, convenes Council meetings, and delegates powers to other members (World Water Council, 1996). The Board of Governors makes all key decisions for the Council and has "the broadest powers to act in the name of the Council" (World Water Council, 1996, Article 14). They rule on membership fees as well as on admissions to and exclusions from the Council.

Board meetings are held once a year. Each governor has one vote and can vote by proxy (World Water Council, 1996, Article 13). The president has the deciding vote in cases of ties (World Water Council, 1996, Article 13). The General Assembly holds ordinary meetings with all Council members once every three years. Extraordinary assemblies are held to vote on changes to the constitution. Votes are "cast by a show of hands" but can be done in secret when "requested by at least one half of the members present or represented, and is necessary whenever the vote concerns individuals or individual members" (World Water Council, 1996, Article 19). The president also has the deciding vote in assembly meetings.

The alternate president is Charles-Louis de Maud'huy who has been working at Compagnie Générale des Eaux, a subsidiary of Veolia, as Advisor to the Chairman since 1978 (from World Water Council, *Board of governors*). As well, founding member René Coulomb is an alternate for Daniel Loudière from Société Hydrotechnique de France, a Board member from the professional and academic institutions college (from World Water Council, *Board of governors*). Coulomb was the Vice-President of the Council from 1996-2003, the former Director for Suez-Lyonnaise and the Chairman of the Suez Corporate Philanthropy and Sponsorship (Suez, 2002, p. 22). Although, Maud'huy and

Coloumb are alternates, Suez and Veolia nevertheless hold important positions in the Board. Although the ten headquarters staff is comprised of seven women, men dominate the Board of Governors. In 2004, only 3 of the 32 board members were women (Interagency Task Force on Gender and Water, 2004, p. 11). In 2008, the number had increased to four women of the 35 Board members with three female alternates (World Water Council, 2007c). Despite the emphasis on the importance of women's inclusion and participation in the Council's publications, the Council fails to apply that priority to its own decision-making processes.

Suez and Veolia play extraordinarily influential roles in the Council. They represent or form a part of at least fourteen members in the Council. They also hold powerful positions, with Suez' representative as the president and Veolia's representative as the alternate president. The following section examines other key Council members, including IFIs and civil society groups, who also advance neoliberal views on water.

4. Other Members in the World Water Council

In addition to UN agencies and other IOs, the first college includes IFIs such as the World Bank's Water Resources Management Unit and regional banks such as the African Development Bank. The World Bank is comprised of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Development Association. The two World Bank institutions provide loans and grants to middle-income and poor countries for development of education, infrastructure and other services (World Bank, 2008b). The Africa Development Bank provides loans and technical assistance to countries in Africa in order to reduce poverty and "promote social and economic

development” (African Development Bank, 2008a).

These financial institutions argue that the global problem of inadequate access to water stems from an increasing population, a decreasing supply of potable water, and, more recently, inadequate financing and water infrastructure (World Bank, 2008a). They argue that people’s inadequate access to potable water can be improved through PPPs (African Development Bank, 2008b; World Bank, 2008a). These IFI not only promote water privatization, through PPPs, as a solution but also require borrowing countries to privatize water as loan conditions (Barlow & Clarke, 2002; Public Services International Research Unit, 2000). As will be explored in chapter three, these financial institutions play key roles in influencing governments to adopt privatization models and in creating a discourse that promotes PPPs as a logical solution.

The Council highlights its civil society groups as important members in its multi-stakeholder platform. Although a few Council members focus on improving women’s access to water, it is unclear whether they represent the concerns and realities of women of the global South and whether the water management methods they propose adequately address the barriers that women in the South face. Aide à la Mère et à l’Enfance Malheureuse (AMEM), ARI Social Participation and Development Foundation, Green Cross International, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Committee of the Red Cross are among the Council’s civil society members. The following examination reveals that although these civil society members have varying views on water, the way that they define water problems and the policies that they recommend fall within a neoliberal framework of water

management.

AMEM is an NGO in Benin that assists “women and children in disadvantaged areas” by improving access to potable water and sanitation among other objectives.³¹ Their activities include raising awareness and supporting “socio-economic initiatives ... [and] women groups activities to reduce povert[y]” (World Water Council, 2008). AMEM does not have a website and no further information was available on them. So, although their activities appear to be useful in improving access to water, it is unclear what methods AMEM promotes for improving access. The remaining NGOs support PPPs as solutions to inadequate access and do not critically examine how PPPs can hinder access to water. It is unknown whether AMEM’s perspective differs from the dominant policy recommendations. Therefore, their presence in the Council as an NGO does not necessarily represent an alternative perspective.

The ARI Social Participation and Development Foundation is “an independent social movement” which “aims to involve youth in security issues and to raise political and social awareness on water-related issues”³² (World Water Council, 2008). They seek “to integrate local and national producers into a more market-driven environment, to increase efficiency in energy and natural resource use, and to strengthen Turkey’s engagement in international markets by forming product stock-markets” (World Water Council, 2008). Although they are an NGO, they support the dominant view in the

³¹ The World Water Council’s *List of members* stated that “AMEM is a non governmental organisation which aims to improve the life conditions of communities through promoting access to drinking water and sanitation facilities adapted for women and children in disadvantaged areas. AMEM aims to support the sustainable and equitable development of Benin through several actions of social mobilization among which: 1) Permit to rural population to access safe drinking water and to dispose of sanitation facilities, which includes water works, sanitation [*sic*] facilities construction, ect... [*sic*] 2) Support socio-economic initiatives within communities 3) Support women groups activities to reduce poverties 4) raise awareness [*sic*] in rural areas” (2008).

³² Their website (www.ari.org.tr/) is in Turkish and provided little information in English. Therefore, it was difficult for the author to ascertain whether they supported PPPs or water privatization.

Council that neoliberal markets are an efficient and viable resource allocation method.

President Mikhail Gorbachev and Swiss National Council MP Roland Wiederkehr created Green Cross International (GCI) in 1993. The NGO applied the model of the International Committee of the Red Cross on emergency responses to environmental issues. The mission of GCI is to assist in “cultivating a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility in humanity’s relationship with nature” (Green Cross International, 2008). The organization’s activities range from advocacy to training. GCI supports the right to water and had a lead role in drafting a framework convention on the right to water in 2005 (Green Cross International et al., 2005). The draft convention recognized water as a human right, a public good and as “part of the common heritage of humanity” (Green Cross International et al. 2005). It noted the instrumental role of water in achieving the MDGs. The draft outlined principles important to securing the right to water right including principles of sustainability, equality, national sovereignty, responsibility and transparency (Green Cross International et al. 2005).

However, Friends of the Right to Water³³ criticized the draft convention for several reasons. Most importantly, the convention not only supported the commodification of water but also equated the human right to water to commercial rights to water (Shrybman, 2005, p. 1). Friends of the Right to Water argued that “the central role played by international financial institutions, such as the World Bank”, which require borrowing countries to privatize water as loan conditions, should be highlighted and addressed (Shrybman, 2005, p. 2). In addition to promoting the commodification of

³³ Friends of the Right to Water is a network of organizations spearheaded by the Council of Canadians’ Blue Planet Project. They actively protest against the World Water Council and their policy recommendations. Further information on Friends of the Right to Water is provided below. As well, see <<http://www.blueplanetproject.net/>> for more information.

water, the draft convention was inadequate for upholding the right to water in several respects. The draft convention failed to outline “international legal remedies” where the right to water is denied by the state and by the private sector (Shrybman, 2005, p. 8). It also did not provide a method for determining which international treaties or conventions took precedence when they conflicted with each other (Shrybman, 2005, p. 2). This is particularly important because a convention stipulating a human right to water will likely conflict with investment treaties or trade agreements, which may not currently include water but could in the future (Hillary, 2003).

Although GCI does not support privatization or the “deregulation of water resources and services management,” they do see international, national and local corporations as having an important role in solving the problem of inadequate access to water (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006, p. 69). GCI supports PPPs and believes that private sector projects “must be placed under the control of public authorities, with full respect for the fundamental principles of the human right to water” (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006, p. 69). GCI is a key civil society member in the Council. They are one of the five civil society organizations on the Board of Governors.³⁴ However, although they promote the right to water, they uphold the dominant neoliberal view in the Council by advocating PPPs as a means of securing the right to water. As will be shown in chapter three, the Council adopts this definition of the human right to water in the 4th Forum.

³⁴ The Japan Water Forum, PSEau and the World Conservation Union are also civil society members on the Board. The Japan Water Forum is a network of NGOs, corporations, government and governments. There are over 60 corporate members including Veolia. Dierre-Frédéric Teniere-Bouchot, the representative for PSEau, was the former CEO of Frenche Agence de L'eau Seine-Normandi and is a member of the Camdessus Panel. The World Conservation Union and the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Sri Lanka “launched The Raising Environmental Consciousness in Society” in January 2008. The partnership encourages PPPs in Sri Lanka. See <http://cms.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/asia/asia_where_work/srilanka/news/index.cfm>.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is as “an independent, neutral organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of war and armed violence” (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2008). However, ICRC’s donors and some of its activities reveal that it is not a neutral NGO when it comes to water. In 2006, ABB Ltd., Zurich Financial Services and five other corporations created ICRC’s Corporate Support Group (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2005). ABB Ltd. owns Envio Group, which provides water treatment technology and services. According to ICRC’s 2006 annual report, contributions from private sources amounted to 2.1% of their overall contributions (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2007b). However, the ICRC aimed to increase corporate funding to 3% “in the framework of a broader attempt to diversify our funding sources” (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2005). It is difficult to determine whether ABB Ltd.’s contributions to ICRC enable them to influence ICRC’s activities. However, receiving funding from corporations weakens their perception of neutrality.

ICRC and the French Red Cross have links to Veolia through Waterforce. Waterforce was founded by Veolia Environment to provide emergency relief, development aid and training in humanitarian aid with partners such as UNICEF, the ICRC, the French Red Cross, and French ministries (Veolia Water, 2004, p. 3). In times of natural disasters and humanitarian crises, potable water supplies are threatened. Veolia’s assistance in providing potable water to affected populations is generous. However, in addition to providing humanitarian assistance, Veolia also creates agreements and long-term partnerships with local governments through the Waterdev

Program (Veolia Water, 2004). While Waterforce, ICRC and other personnel may complete the initial work on a volunteer basis, long standing partnerships with Veolia are commercial contracts in which Veolia provides water and sanitation to people. One agreement, involving Waterforce, Veolia Environment, Amendis, the Moroccan Ministry of Education, UNICEF and Greater Lyon, was a contract to construct or refurbish water and sanitation networks in 30 schools (Veolia Water, 2004, p. 12). Although Veolia claims that Waterforce provides humanitarian assistance, Veolia's motivations are questionable when its volunteer work produces contracts for Veolia. ICRC's partnership with Veolia may stem from its priority to provide assistance, despite funding sources. Their partnership may provide ICRC with low-cost means to providing humanitarian assistance. However, they join the majority of Council members who view water as a commodity and support the commercial provision of water (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2003; International Committee of the Red Cross, 2007a).

Neither GCI nor the ICRC are strong advocates for water privatization. However, they do support the commodification of water and a role for the private sector in water provision. This in itself is not problematic. Their presence is part of the Council's multi-stakeholder membership. It is important for the World Water Council to have a range of civil society members that have differing views on water provision, policy options and the role of the private sector. However, out of the 254 organizations listed in the member directory, the major NGOs support PPPs and the commodification of water. Although the Council may welcome groups that oppose PPPs into their membership, the absence of these groups nevertheless calls into question the Council's self-portrayal as a

representative and diverse network.

The NGOs in the Council play a pivotal role. As the “intellectual” tier of epistemic communities legitimized the vested interests of the corporate and government tier, (Drake & Nicolaïdis, 1992, p. 39) these NGOs legitimize the corporate members of the Council. The exclusionary nature of the Council is also reflected in the World Water Fora. The following section outlines the preparatory processes of the 4th Forum including the selection of fora issues. It reveals how Suez and Veolia influenced the selection of issues, which fail to include the experiences of women of the global South.

5. The World Water Fora

There have been four World Water Fora held to date. The 1st World Water Forum was held in Marrakech (1997), the 2nd Forum in the Hague (2000), the 3rd Forum in Kyoto (2003) and the 4th Forum in Mexico City (2006). The Council and the hosting city are primarily responsible for organizing the World Water Fora. The Council and the Turkish government are currently in the process of organizing the 5th World Water Forum, entitled *Bridging Divides for Water*, which will be held in Istanbul in 2009. The following section critically examines the preparatory processes of the 4th Forum to highlight Suez and Veolia’s influential roles in the preparatory processes of the fora. Suez and Veolia play key roles in framing the issues for debate. Their ability to shape the issues for debate influences the policy recommendations promoted by the Council, which will be examined in chapter three.

The aim of 4th World Water Forum, which was entitled *Local Actions for a Global Challenge*, was including participation from various stakeholders at all stages and

facilitating action on water management at the local level (4th World Water Forum, 2008b). The International Organizing Committee (IOC) included the World Water Council, the Secretariat (created by the Mexican government), the National Steering Committee, beacons organizations, regional committees and sponsors.³⁵ There were numerous preparatory activities held throughout the world prior to the forum. During the European Preparatory Process, a meeting was held in Paris on February 2, 2005. The purpose of the meeting was “to present the preparatory process and the thematic framework; to examine the initiatives proposed to be undertaken by the participants; [and] to define the themes which may be tackled in the European process and presented at the Forum” (World Water Council, 2005b).

Suez had a strong presence at this meeting. Nine suggestions and initiatives for the Forum thematic framework were discussed among 29 participants. René Coulomb from Suez presented on “European specificity through the European Framework Directive on Water,” which was one of the issues to be developed for the forum (World Water Council, 2005b, p. 1). Gérald Payen, former Vice-President of Suez, proposed the ACP European Initiative (World Water Council, 2005b, p. 2). The Global Water Partnership, of which both Suez and Veolia are a part, presented on “Euromediterranean issues” (World Water Council, 2005b, p. 2). The other participants included Charles-Louis de Maud’huy, the Council’s alternate president from Veolia and representatives from Green Cross International, UNESCO, Programme Solidarité Eau (PSEau) and Water Aid (World Water Council, 2005a).

³⁵ The sponsors included: “the Government of Japan; Grupo Modelo, renowned Mexican beer producer of leading brands like Corona, Modelo and Victoria; Aeromexico, the newest member of the largest global airline alliance, Sky Team, which include Air France, Delta, KLM and NorthWest Airlines; Coca Cola Company, Mexico; and recently, the Telmex Foundation and Grupo Carso.” For more information see <http://www.worldwaterforum4.org.mx/home/organizers_10.asp?lan=>>.

PSEau is a network that facilitates knowledge exchange on water issues. While they are a civil society organization, PSEau's representative Pierre-Frédéric Tenière-Bouchot, was the former CEO of Agence de L'eau Seine-Normandi, a French water company, and a member of the Camdessus Panel. The Camdessus Report *Financing Water For All*, which will be explored in detail in chapter three, is a controversial document that calls for PPPs, risk assurance, and government and IFI financing on water. Therefore, PSEau's presence at this meeting does not represent civil society members who criticize or oppose the PPPs.

Water Aid is a British NGO that was initially funded by water corporations (Wallace & Coles, 2005, p. 13). It is also a part of the Global Water Partnership along with Suez and Veolia. Although they have improved their consideration of local contexts in water provision, Water Aid does not offer any alternative perspectives because they support PPPs and the commodification of water (WaterAid, 2008). Further, although it is involved with some progressive country programmes that incorporate gender issues into water provision, these successes are mainly the work of individuals and do not reflect the policy of WaterAid as a whole (Wallace & Coles, 2005, p. 13).

The IOC, along with international, national and local water organizations, developed the thematic frameworks that initiated debate on water issues at the forum. There were five themes that represented "important challenges and problems faced by the global water polity" (4th World Water Forum, 2008a). They were: Water for Growth and Development; Implementing Integrated Water Resources Management; Water Supply and Sanitation for All; Water Management for Food and Environment; and Risk

Management. The five crosscutting perspectives included: New Models for Financing Local Water Initiatives; Institutional Development and Political Processes; Capacity-building and Social Learning; Applications of Science; Technology and Knowledge; and Targeting, Monitoring and Implementation Assessment. Beacon and baseline documents on these themes, written by various organizations, served as “reference point for discussion”³⁶ (Grey & Sadoff, 2006, p. 8). Discussion topics focused on the link between financing initiatives as a way of alleviating poverty and achieving the MDGs, “mechanisms for effective and efficient water allocation,” convincing decision-makers of the need for investment, infrastructure development and the inclusion of various stakeholders in decision-making processes (4th World Water Forum, 2008a). As will be shown in chapter three, these themes are key features in the Council and Suez’ discourse.

The issues within the five themes fail to reflect many of the experiences of poor women the global South. The baseline document for *Water for Growth and Development* had a special focus on “Water, Poverty and Gender.” It pointed out that gendered assumptions of policy makers “impact the vulnerability and productivity of poor women and men across a range of sectors” (Grey & Sadoff, 2006, p. 24). For example, the document highlighted the lack of recognition of women’s work as economic activity and “as sources of economic growth” (Grey & Sadoff, 2006, p.24). The authors also recognized that discussion and policy development on water as a commodity fails to consider what they call “‘minor’ water uses, such as livestock watering, homestead gardens, fisheries and small-scale industry” of low-income households (Grey & Sadoff,

³⁶ The Senior Water Advisor and Lead Economist at the World Bank wrote the baseline document for Water Growth and Development. UNDP, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, the Comisión Nacional del Agua and a coordinating group (formerly the Secretariat of the United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Water and Sanitation) wrote the baseline document for Water Supply and Sanitation for All. For more information, see <<http://www.worldwaterforum4.org.mx/home/procesotematico.asp?lan=>>>.

2006, p.24). The special attention paid to gender in water management and distribution highlights the varying needs among different water users (Grey & Sadoff, 2006, p. 24). The baseline document for *Water Supply and Sanitation for All* also recognized that women are the principal water gatherers and the health effects stemming from this responsibility. For example, since “water containers typically hold 20 liters of water and weigh 20 kilograms, carrying such heavy loads, commonly on the head or back, for long distances each day can result in headaches, fatigue, and pain or even serious injury to the head” (UNDP, 2006, p. 92).

These are important issues concerning women of the South. However, the inclusion of women in the Council and fora publications does not go beyond stating that women need to be included and merely highlighting issues that concern women in water management. There is a range of water issues that greatly affect women of the global South that were excluded from debate at the fora. For example, the publications assume that the MDGs are adequate benchmarks for access to water and gender equality. However, MDGs are not adequate benchmarks for access to water because the indicator for access is coverage (Wallace & Wilson, 2005, p. 116). Although piping may exist and water may be available for purchase, people still cannot access water if they cannot afford to pay for it. However, under the MDGs, water available for purchase is equated to access to water (Wallace & Wilson, 2005, p. 116). Further, MDGs do not consider or address the historical and geographical roots of gender inequality and how it affects access to water. In order to incorporate a gendered perspective, the Council and fora need to (re)examine the MDGs to see how they help and hinder gender equity in water

provision.

Further, although a couple of the baseline documents recognized women as primary water gatherers and the long distances they walk to gather water, the majority of the fora sessions failed to include issues that affect the realities of (poor) women. Supporters of PPPs or water privatization argue that private sector involvement would end women's need to walk long distances for water. However, this argument fails to consider the lack of financial resources of many women in the South. In privatized systems, women have to choose between using water to cook, wash clothes or clean the home (Woods, 2006). Rural women are exposed to the risk of sexual violence while walking long distances to fetch water for the household (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2003a). Only 1 out of the 206 topic sessions of the 4th Forum examined the problem of violence during water gathering or use of defecation areas (World Water Council, 2006b, Session FT 3.12). The policies recommended will be examined in chapter three.

In addition to being water gatherers, women are also primary caregivers. In communities that are seriously affected by HIV/AIDS, women must care for the sick and work to replace the sick (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005). Women face unique challenges in caring for the sick, fetching water and other responsibilities (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2003a). The increasing spread of HIV/AIDS throughout the South means that an increasing amount of women are faced with these issues.

Finally, despite the responsibilities that women have related to water, they have very few water rights in some areas (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a). The

status of women is particularly low in poor communities, limiting their rights to water. (Wallace & Cole, 2005, p. 8) There is a discrepancy between women's responsibilities that require water and their lack of water rights (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, pp. 12-13). In some communities, water is allocated according to ancestral rights that are deeply entwined with a region's history (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 12). In other areas, water is allocated based on legal rights (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 12). Transforming these allocation methods into privatization models raises interesting issues. Examining how this transformation interacts with women's limited rights, yet numerous responsibilities, is a complex and important issue that reflects women's realities.

These are only some issues that greatly affect women of the South yet have not been adequately debated at the fora sessions. Although chapter three provides a more thorough analysis of some of these issues and potential policy recommendations, this section simply contrasts the issues discussed at the forum against issues that affect women of the South. The stark contrast reflects the notion that knowledge is filtered through gender, class and other dimensions of difference (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 8). Since the experiences of members of the IOC and women of the South occur in entirely different spaces, the concerns of women of the South differs greatly from the concerns of people in the IOC. A feminist critique of the problems defined by the forum reveals that the gender, ethnicity and class structure the problem definition process (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 7).

The Council's membership and the preparatory processes filter the differing views

on water management. Global actors such as Suez, Veolia and the World Bank play particularly powerful roles in the Council. Women of the South and civil society groups who oppose the commodification of water are largely excluded from the Council. This demonstrates Swyngedouw's insight that power geometries and powerful actors determine who make decisions concerning natural resources (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 24). These power geometries not only dictate who creates knowledge networks such as the Council but also dictates who participates in them and to what degree. The Council's membership and the selection of fora issues are a clear reflection of these power geometries.

Despite acknowledging women and their unique relationship to water, the Council and the fora publications do not adequately address many issues that affect women of the South. Women's groups and other civil society members recognize their exclusion in the Council. The following section examines how particular groups are excluded at the fora and the ways in which they have expressed their opposition.

6. Sites of Struggle

The fora normally take place in March over the course of five days. Sessions are held on the pre-determined themes with a variety of presenters from industry, government ministries and other relevant stakeholders. The size of the fora has increased dramatically since the first two fora. The Hague hosted the 2nd Forum for 5, 700 participants. There were 20, 000 participants and 206 sessions at the last forum in Mexico City. The increase of participants attending the fora has been matched by an increase in opposition to the fora. The opposition includes governments, indigenous communities,

women's groups, water associations, water activists, unions and other members of civil society. Protesters oppose the fora because the fora publications promote PPPs and the commodification of water. The exclusion of particular civil society members in the ministerial conferences and the majority of the fora sessions are also points of contention. This section introduces key actors who are excluded in the fora and how they are excluded. The discourses of some of these actors will be examined in chapter three. This section mainly highlights the ways in which civil society members have expressed their opposition in the fora as well as outside of the fora.

During a preparatory meeting in Monterrey, Mexico in 2005, the organizing committee, World Water Council, NGOs such as the Freshwater Action Network (FAN) and other committees met to select 150 sessions out of the 550 registered sessions (Morley, 2005). The organizing committee had already completed the first screening and eliminated sessions that were "i) too technical ii) too local iii) [and had a] low capacity to convene" (Morley, 2005). Participants of the meeting were allowed to review those eliminated and bring them back for reconsideration. FAN representative Danielle Morley brought back several NGO presentations that had been eliminated such as presentations by Sarasvati Research Centre, Lokayan and the South Asian Network on Rivers and People (Morley, 2005). Rescuing these sessions was difficult because there was a quota of five NGO sessions for the 4th Forum (Morley, 2005). Nevertheless, Morley was successful in adding a few more NGO sessions (Morley, 2005).

At the 4th Forum, there was a wide range of topics including financing initiatives, various types of water management, Public-Private partnerships, the right to water,

indigenous approaches, free trade agreements, MDGs and women (4th World Water Forum, 2006b). There were sessions such as “Securing the Right to Water: From the Local to the Global, Civil Society Perspectives” that criticized PPPs and promoted alternative policy options such as Public-Public Partnerships (4th World Water Forum, 2006e). However, despite the inclusion of women, indigenous and civil society in some of the sessions, many of the session presenters promoted private sector involvement or PPPs (World Water Council, 2006b).

In addition to civil society groups that were excluded inside the fora, there were also civil society members who were not able to attend because of forum costs. Registration fees for the forum ranged from \$240-600 USD. Membership fees, for a registration fees and travel costs prevent women who have little or no financial resources, or whom Nicole Doerr labels “women without.”³⁷ “Women without” are excluded from Council membership and from participating in the fora. She highlights how “the internal practice of decision-making in...organisation process reproduces and implicitly normalises multiple discriminations in terms of class, race and gender” (Doerr, 2007, p. 72). The lack of financial resources of “women without” increases their need to participate in discussions that influence water policies that could potentially commodify water in their community. Although the Council claims to be representative, some government members do not represent the interest of their poor population. As well, the NGOs in the Council support commodifying water, which hinders adequate access to water for women without financial resources. Council and fora costs continually prevent

³⁷ Doerr defines “women without” as “activists who lack financial resources and/or have problems participating in transnational meetings because of border or visa restrictions” (2007, p. 72). The concept of “women without” is inspired in respect to the French notion ‘sans’ (for ‘without’) that has been invented by activists in political struggles for access to citizenship or social rights (e.g. in the movements of the ‘sans papiers’)” (2007, p. 72).

“women without” from participating in discussions that have the potential to affect them significantly. The resulting policies, which promote water commodification and privatization, prevent “women without” from accessing water. Their inability to access water has further implications, which will be unraveled in chapter three.

There are a variety of forms of resistance against the fora including protest rallies, networks, alternative fora, a water tribunal at the 4th Forum and declarations by the opposition. Protests are organized to coincide with the fora in the hosting cities and in other cities around the world. 20,000 protesters including the Council of Canadians’ Blue Planet Project, Development and Peace, KAIROS, and the Canadian Union of Public Employees marched on the inaugural day of the Mexico Forum (Vani, 2006).

There are several networks that oppose the fora such as the Water is for Life Network and Friends of the Right to Water. Friends of the Right to Water include various local, national and international organizations such as the Blue Planet Project, Heinrich Böll Foundation, CHORE, Red Vida, Bread for the World, FIAN, Alliance Sud, Food and Water Watch, and Corporate Accountability International. Some of these organizations attended the fora and were even participants in the few NGO panels that opposed PPPs at the 4th Forum (4th World Water Forum, 2006e).

Alternative fora were held in opposition to the World Water Fora, providing a platform for debate of issues and policies excluded at the World Water Fora. The First Latin American Audience of the Water Tribunal was held to highlight the lack of an international tribunal that hears cases against MNCs that violate human rights and other international laws (Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2006). In opposition to the Kyoto Forum, a

People's World Water Forum was held in Florence, Italy. At the Mexico Forum, the International Forum in the Defense of Water was co-sponsored by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and organized by the Coalition of Mexican Organizations for the Right to Water. Various indigenous groups and women's groups including Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) participated in this alternative forum.

WEDO was founded in 1991 by a group of female activists who aimed to apply the "vision [and] demands of the global women's movement to the international policy arena" (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2003b, p. 2). Their foci reflect concepts from feminist political ecology. WEDO recognizes women's unique relationship to water and advocates for gender equity in water issues. They recognize that gender equity must be incorporated in all facets of society including health, education, economics and decision-making (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2003a). The analysis of the competing discourse in chapter three relies heavily on WEDO as a representative of the concerns of women of the South.

At the end of every forum, a ministerial conference is held exclusively for government officials. The government officials discuss and develop a ministerial declaration that outlines ways forward. These declarations have effects in the home countries of the government officials and also influences UN policies. Civil society groups criticize the conferences for being exclusionary and undemocratic. In protest to the ministerial declarations and the fora publications, various civil society groups have drafted their own declarations expressing their demands and concerns. For example, many NGOs, including WEDO, opposed the World Water Vision Statement that was

adopted at the Hague Forum. An alternative statement entitled *Water is Life – A Civil Society World Water Vision for Action* was drafted and endorsed by 292 NGOs, rejecting the *World Water Vision* statement and the notion that water is a commodity (Water is Life: A Civil Society World Water Vision for Action, 2000).

At the Kyoto forum, indigenous delegates drafted the *Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration*, which “calls for indigenous peoples' right to water and self-determination” (Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration, 2003). The alternative forum held in Mexico also produced the *Declaration of the Indigenous Peoples Parallel Forum of the 4th World Water Forum* (Tlatokan Atlahuak Declaration, 2006). WEDO organized a Women's Caucus at the Mexico Forum that produced the *Women's Caucus Declaration*. The Declaration made “15 action recommendations and [identified] key issues related to gender roles and water access, implementation of international commitments, and the human right to water” (Women's Caucus Declaration, 2006). Finally, government representatives from Bolivia, Cuba, Uruguay and Venezuela drafted a Complementary Ministerial Declaration. They reaffirmed their belief in the human right to water and expressed their concerns about including water in trade agreements (Complementary Declaration of the Fourth World Water Forum, 2006).

The fervent protest by some governments, indigenous communities, women's groups, and other NGOs reflects the exclusive nature of the fora, which claim to be inclusive, representative and democratic. Although the fora are spaces to debate water issues, the key fora publications fail to include a range of civil society perspectives. By critically examining the Council members and the preparatory processes, this chapter

elucidates the dominant perspectives in the Council. Contrasting the majority of issues debated at the fora with concerns of civil society groups and women of the South demonstrates how the exclusive nature of Council and fora.

Suez and Veolia play influential roles in the Council and fora. Their ability to frame the issues debated at the fora also enables them to shape the policy recommendations examined in the next chapter. The following chapter explores how the neoliberal policy recommendations not only shape government and IFI policies but also reinforce the Council's discourse that links inadequate access to water to Public-Private Partnerships. Chapter three demonstrates how Suez and Veolia's ability to influence the adoption of neoliberal policies perpetuates the exclusion of women and their concerns in water and trade policies. This results in the (re)production of power dynamics that fall along gender, class and ethnic lines.

Chapter III

The Competing Discourses

This chapter examines the policy recommendations from the last three fora, namely the *World Water Vision* from the 2nd Forum, the *Report of the World Panel on Financing Water Infrastructure: Financing Water for All* from the 3rd Forum and the *Right to Water: From Concept to Implementation* from the 4th Forum. This chapter explores the evolving discourse used to justify the Council's policy recommendations. The construction of a crisis - water scarcity - legitimizes the neoliberal policies advanced by the Council. *Financing Water for All* has had far-reaching effects and has influenced the policies of the World Bank, regional banks and governments. The Council now recognizes the right to water but argues that the right to water can be upheld through a number of ways including private sector participation. The Council's definition of the right to water defines water under the liberal conception of human rights.

This chapter also compares the Council's discourse and policy recommendations with civil society members, particularly the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). WEDO promotes gender equality in global policy arenas and focuses on the needs of women of the global South. WEDO's perspective reflects feminist political ecology. Analyzing gender equality and water using a feminist political ecology framework exposes the Council's failure to address the experiences of women in the South despite their assurances that they support women's equality and participation.

Through the Council, Suez and Veolia not only influence trade and water policies but also contribute to the discourse that fills the theoretical gap between inadequate

access to water and Public-Private Partnerships as a solution. Their failure to include the experiences of women of the South reinforces power dynamics that perpetuate the dominant neoliberal framework and sustain capitalism as a whole. This chapter concludes by examining the nature of the power dynamics produced by PPPs.

1. Producing Water Scarcity

In the first two fora, the Council advanced a typical neoliberal discourse to justify the privatization of water. The production of scarcity coupled with government failure, including the lack of political will and inadequate financial resources, highlighted the need for the private sector to fill in the government's failing and manage the scarce resource of water (Bakker, 2003a, p. 40; Swyngedouw, 2003, p. 8). The *World Water Vision* (the Vision), the key document of the 2nd Forum, outlined the problem of water scarcity and promoted water privatization as a solution. The Vision described the world's water crisis and stresses that over one billion people lack access to potable water and nearly three billion people lack access to adequate sanitation. The world's increasing population exacerbates this problem because human demands for water "could be 10% higher in 2025 than in 1995" (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 1). Further, an increased supply of water will be needed to produce food to feed the growing population and to accommodate their economic development (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 2).

The Vision pointed to the lack of financial resources as the primary barrier hindering people's access to water. Considering population increases, pollution control, sewerage compliance and water supply and sanitation needs, a minimum of \$180 billion is needed in investments by 2025 – an increase of approximately \$100 billion from the

\$70 - 80 billion that was being invested in water supply at the time of the Vision (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, pp. 06-61). The Vision highlighted the potential of the international private sector to be a large contributor to water investment. The Vision promoted the private sector as the potential “main source of finance” (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 61). That way, governments could use their financial resources to provide “public goods (such as flood management and environmental protection) and...subsidies to low-income and disadvantaged women and men” (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 64). This is a salient point in the Council’s water scarcity discourse. The Vision carved out a role for the international private sector as an investor and provider of water services. The government’s role, which previously included being the largest contributor to water services, was refined to include environmental protection and provision of subsidies.

The Vision also highlighted the need for “new institutional mechanisms” including pricing of water services at full cost (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 61). The Vision argued that providing water “at low cost, or for free does not provide the right incentive to users” (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 41). The commodification of water is justified by water scarcity and the need to conserve water (Bakker, 2003a, p. 42; Kaika, 2003, p. 929; Swyngedouw, 2003, p. 8). By pricing water, users attribute greater value to water and will ensure that water is “used wisely, or conserved and recycled” (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 19). Although the discourse of water as a commodity began with the Dublin Statement from the 1992 *Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development*, the Vision firmly reinforced the notion that water was a commodity. It

linked paying full prices for water to the likelihood that users would conserve it and use it wisely.

Despite the Vision's repeated claims that NGOs and women participated in the creation of the Vision, representatives who supported neoliberal policies such as water privatization dominated the drafting process of the Vision. The Global Water Partnership, of which Suez and Veolia are members, had a key role in the Vision process (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. xiv). The World Water Commission was the main body that drafted the Vision. The Commission included: Jérôme Monod, former Suez Chairman; Robert S. McNamara, former World Bank President; Enrique Iglesias, former Inter-American Development Bank President; and Mohamed T. El-Ashry, Chief Environmental Advisor of the World Bank (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003b). As a result, the Vision advocated the commodification and privatization of water as the most effective and efficient way of addressing water scarcity (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. 19). Suez and Veolia's influential roles in drafting the Vision enabled them to shape policy recommendations and discourse on water.

The construction of a water scarcity discourse enabled the Council to advance privatization policies. A political ecology framework reveals what the Council included and excluded in their discourse. Political ecology elucidates the relationship between environmental problems and economic, political and social decisions (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). The Council warned of scarce water resources, an increasing population and the wasteful habits of those who failed to acknowledge the value of water. The Council failed to highlight other reasons that hindered people's inability to access water or that

diminished water supplies within a region. For example, as mentioned in chapter one, Structural Adjustment Policies severely hindered poor people's ability to access water. Virtual water, or water that is used in the production of commodities, makes up 15% of the world's water consumption. The production of meat unsustainably uses nearly three times as much as water needed to support a vegetarian diet. Global warming, the use of pesticides, deforestation and urban sprawl are other causes of the decrease in potable water (Barlow and Clarke, 2002; Johnston, 2003, pp. 75-78). Despite these causes, the Council emphasized causes that could be solved through the commodification of water.

The failure of people to acknowledge the value of water could theoretically be solved by pricing water. However, the pollution of water by industrial chemicals or pesticides would require the reduction or elimination of the use of chemicals and pesticides, which threatens some industries. The Council's failure to problematize these processes strategically reinforces the dominant neoliberal framework. Therefore, the problem was constructed in such a way so as to be able to promote particular policies (Hajer, 1997, p. 15). Rather than critically examining how the global dominant neoliberal framework affects access to water and water supplies, the Council devised problems in such a way that its policy recommendations reinforced the dominant neoliberal framework.

2. The Camdessus Report

At the 3rd World Water Forum, there was a particularly strong emphasis on achieving the MDGs, or more specifically reducing the number of people who lack access to potable water and basic sanitation.³⁸ In order to achieve the MDGs, the Council

³⁸ The MDGs are eight development goals that address poverty, gender equality, education and other development issues. Goal Seven, *Ensure Environmental Sustainability*, requires that countries "reduce by

argued that more investments in infrastructure were needed. However, the water services sector is a sector infused with risks that act as disincentives for much needed investments (Winpenny, 2003, p. 17). Rather than advocate for an increased role for the international private sector, the Council began to advocate infrastructure financing by governments, IFIs and regional banks to provide incentive for private sector participation.

The Council, the Global Water Partnership and the 3rd Forum created the World Panel on Financing Water Infrastructure in 2001. The central goal of the Panel was to determine “how to find the appropriate financial resources for the achievement of the two Millennium Development Goals for water access and sanitation” (Winpenny, 2003, p. vii). The *Report of the World Panel on Financing Water Infrastructure: Financing Water for All*, or the Camdessus Report, was most salient document of the 3rd Forum.

Although the Panel was comprised of 21 representatives from government, international development finance agencies, commercial banks, water companies and NGOs active in the water sector, (Winpenny, 2003, p. vii) the Panel representatives mainly espoused neoliberal policies. The chair of Panel was Michel Camdessus, former Managing Director of the IMF. As well, former presidents of regional developments banks were on the Panel including Omar Kabbai of the African Development Bank and Tadao Chino of the Asian Development Bank (Winpenny, 2003, p. ix). William Alexander, Group Chief Executive of Thames Water, and Gérard Payen, Senior Executive-Vice-President of Suez, were also on the Panel (Winpenny, 2003, p. ix).

The Camdessus Report outlined several reasons that hinder the one billion people from accessing potable water, some of which are reiterations of the Vision. First, the

half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.” See <http://www.un.org/millennium goals/goals.html>.

financial resources invested in water infrastructure were insufficient; the Report required that financial resources at least be doubled (Winpenny, 2003, p. 13). The Panel proposed over 80 policies aimed at governments at all levels, NGOs, banks, and multilateral organizations to facilitate an increase in funding for water infrastructure (Winpenny, 2003). The policies called for the increased role of NGOs and the inclusion of water policies in countries' PRSPs. However, the Report mainly centered around three key themes, which were echoed by the forum's Ministerial Declaration. They included: increasing finance from various non-corporate global actors, mitigating risk for corporate actors and a refined role of the private sector (Winpenny, 2003).

The Report repeated the dominant neoliberal discourse and highlighted the failings of governments. The Report listed several government weaknesses including the low priority governments ascribe to water issues, "poor management structures,...[and] an inadequate general legal framework" (Winpenny, 2003, p. 9). The Report noted governments' consensus on international commitments but also pointed to their lack of financial commitments (Winpenny, 2003, p. 9). National governments need to increase funding to sub-sovereign bodies including local governments and water utilities (Winpenny, 2003, p. 16). The Panel's discourse departed from the typical neoliberal discourse by highlighting that international loans and official aid had been decreasing. The World Bank and regional banks are noted for being reluctant to finance water projects because of "hostility to such schemes" (Winpenny, 2003, p. 7). The Panel further elucidated various risks, including foreign exchange risk and political risks, as disincentives to financial investments and international loans. IFIs and regional banks

that do not lend to sub-sovereign bodies should reorient their policies in order to do so (Winpenny, 2003, p. 26). The Report promoted financing from government, IFI and regional banks rather than promoting the international private sector as a solution to the lack of financial resources.

The Report maintained that the role of large MNCs was smaller than perceived, stating that MNCs only “serve around 3% of the developing world’s population” (Winpenny, 2003, p. 32). The Panel highlighted companies reluctance to invest “in emerging and developing markets” because of the associated risks (Winpenny, 2003, p. 32). MNCs had the “skills and experience” instrumental to achieving the MDGs. However, sovereign or political risks including “nationalization, expropriation, currency convertibility, breach of contract, war and riot” were disincentives to financing (Winpenny, 2003, p. 27).

The Panel recommended several methods to mitigate risk. They suggested that “sustainable cost recovery” would be an incentive for investments. Water providers should develop policies that enable them to secure or recover revenues, operating expenses and financing costs (Winpenny, 2003, p. 48). The policies would ensure that MNCs had a means of recovering costs including projected profits. This essentially guaranteed that MNCs receive profits, even in cases where a contract was cancelled because of environmental damage or populations’ inability to access water (Sridhar, 2003).

Governments must mitigate risk to encourage the role of MNCs. The Report encouraged PPPs and the financing of water projects using public and private funds

(Winpenny, 2003, p. 22). Although the Council previously promoted PPPs, the Camdessus Report recommended that governments create a Revolving Fund that would “finance the preparation and structuring costs of complex projects” (Winpenny, 2003, p. 22). The Fund would finance large fixed costs that were disincentives to private companies (Winpenny, 2003, p. 22). These policies would ensure “predictable and transparent regulatory frameworks that protect the interests of investors and consumers alike” (World Water Council, 2004, p. 10). This would essentially result in governments financing infrastructure with MNCs managing water provision (Lobina & Hall, 2007).

In its Triennial Report, the Council acknowledged that PPPs were one of the key controversies of the 3rd Forum (World Water Council, 2004, p. 12). They noted that the debate stemmed from the “ideological nature with the ‘anti-privatisation’ groups, which [were] very sensitive to globalisation and liberalisation of trade” (World Water Council, 2004, p. 12). However, the Council indicated that there was a distinction between privatization and PPPs. The Council affirmed that they do not support “real privatization,” which would mean that the private sector owned water resources and developed pricing policies (World Water Council, 2004, p. 12). Rather, the Council encouraged the development of a wide range of water management frameworks that would involve local authorities and consider local capacities and contexts (World Water Council, 2004, p. 12).

The Camdessus Report highlighted other risks associated with the water sector such as “unpredictable government behaviour,” which prevented water projects from achieving their full potential (Winpenny, 2003, p. 33). The Report recommended that

governments provide “securities and/or by insurance and guarantee instruments [*sic*] offered by [Multilateral Financial Institutions or] MFIs and other agencies” (Winpenny, 2003, p. 34). MFIs should also reformulate their risk coverage policies to include political risks (Winpenny, 2003, p. 34). The Report encouraged investors to use MFIs such as the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), a member of the World Bank Group, and the World Bank’s Partial Risk Guarantees to protect themselves against “unpredictable government behaviour” (Winpenny, 2003, p. 34). MIGA offers coverage for breaches of contracts in concession agreements, transfer restrictions, political instability and violence (from Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, *Guarantees*). The Panel recommended that these agencies re-evaluate their internal policies to include covering risks in the water sector (Winpenny, 2003, p. 18). Equally, the Report encouraged governments to “facilitate the entry of” financial guarantee agencies into domestic markets (Winpenny, 2003, p. 17).

The introduction of financial guarantee agencies is a striking feature of the Camdessus Report. The Report delegates the lucrative provision of water services to MNCs while governments, IFIs and regional banks fund expensive infrastructure costs. Guarantee agencies secure MNCs profits regardless of the reasons for contract termination. MIGA offers a dispute resolution mechanism that allows investors to seek damages if a host country breaches its contract. This is problematic because if a situation similar to the one in Cochabamba or Buenos Aires arose and the government ended its contract because people were unable to access water, the government may be required to pay compensation to the MNC. Although this already occurs through the International

Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes with Bilateral Investment Treaties, this entrenches dispute resolution in the water contract. Although dispute resolution policies are common in contracts, it is the nature of the dispute resolution process that is problematic. MIGA has been accused of disregarding human rights and impacts on local communities in its projects (Bretton Woods Project, 2007). The Camdessus Report reinforces MNCs abilities to recover costs, including projected profits, at the expense of people's ability to access water. Agencies such as MIGA "shield the companies from risks and wrap them in a protective financial cocoon" (Public Citizen, 2005, p. 4).

The policies in the Camdessus Report are strikingly similar to Suez and Veolia's corporate strategies. Suez emphasizes the importance of achieving the MDGs and elucidates their ability to assist in achieving the goals (Suez, 2003a, p. 56; Suez, 2004, p. 65). Veolia emphasizes the fact that one out of six people do not have access to safe drinking water (Veolia Environment, 2008). They pledge their commitment "to safeguarding public health and protecting people's environment by defining technical, economic, organizational and rate solutions tailored to each situation" (Veolia Environment, 2008). Suez highlights the "technological expertise of private operators, [and] the innovative quality of the solutions they can provide" (Suez, n.d.).

Despite Suez and Veolia's fervent strategy to penetrate water markets in the late 1990s, both companies realized the risks associated with providing water services. Suez highlights the "high risks" associated with providing water in countries of the South including currency exchange risks and the possibility of breaches of contract by government authorities (Suez, 2004, p. 84; Suez, 2005, p.97). There is a clear emphasis

on reducing risk in emerging countries and ensuring profit in Suez' 2003 Annual Report (Suez, 2004, p. 84). In fact, in 2003, Suez announced that it was terminating contracts in developing countries where the return on capital was lower than 13% (Lobina & Hall, 2007, p. 4; Suez, 2004, p. 94). They stated that they would reduce "exposure to emerging countries by reducing investments and freezing financing in strong currencies" (Suez, 2003b). In particular, after several high profile cases in Latin America involving fierce public opposition, Suez began withdrawing and terminating contracts in Latin America. In 2007, Suez announced it had completely withdrawn from Latin America (Lobina & Hall, 2007, p. 4). Veolia also terminated contracts in Argentina and Venezuela by 2007 and only continued contracts in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico (Lobina & Hall, 2007, p. 5). They began to focus on more lucrative markets in Europe, particularly France, Belgium and Eastern Europe, North America, and China (Suez, 2006, p. 48; Suez, 2007, p. 58; Suez, 2008a, p. 34; Veolia Environment, 2006, p. 41; Veolia Environment, 2007, p. 55; Veolia Environment, 2008, p. 12).

The recommendations in the Camdessus Report are aimed at countries of the South including those in Latin America, Africa and Asia (Winpenny, 2003, p. vii). The focus on countries of the South is interesting to note because of Suez and Veolia's strategies to reduce exposure in the global South. Suez noted that risks "must be controlled before it is possible to consider operations in those countries" (Suez, 2004, p. 65). Suez' 2003-2004 strategic priorities included "seek[ing] appropriate means for a balanced sharing of risk" with "international authorities" (Suez, 2003a, p. 26).

The Camdessus Report not only addresses Suez' strategic priorities but goes

beyond a “balanced sharing of risk” by minimizing or eliminating most risks for MNCs. MNCs now only operate in countries of the South under strict conditions. Host government, IFIs or regional banks must finance infrastructure. Profit must be guaranteed through cost recovery policies. As well, risk agencies must mitigate risks including violence and premature contract termination. The Camdessus Report develops a framework that meets these strict conditions.

Although Suez and Veolia’s discourses differ slightly from the Camdessus Report, there are nevertheless striking similarities among them. The Report refines the dominant neoliberal discourse. While water scarcity still forms the backdrop for the need to involve international private corporations, the discourse has shifted to highlight the skills and expertise of MNCs and their potential in assisting the international community in achieving the MDGs. The MDGs are the “challenge to overcome through the implementation” of privatization projects (Kaika, 2003, p. 940).

The discourse casts Suez and other MNCs in a role of wanting to offer their skills and expertise to achieve the MDGs but being deterred by various risks. The Camdessus Report not only shapes government, IFIs and regional banks’ policies but also creates a discourse that justifies risk mitigation and cost recovery. Risks must be reduced in emerging countries so that international private companies can assist the international community in achieving the MDGs. The discourse frames risks, such as breaches of contracts or violence, as occurrences to avoid. However, a critical approach uncovers these “risks” as people’s opposition to the effects of the commodification of water. In the cases of Buenos Aires and Cochabamba, the governments breached their contracts

because of mass protests against people's inability to access clean water. By framing these "risks" as hindrances to MNCs willingness to assist in achieving the MDGs, the discourse reinforces a capitalist framework by valuing profit over access to water, human rights and environmental standards. This discourse not only justifies Suez and Veolia's involvement in water provision but also legitimizes their provision of the most lucrative activities in the water sector.

Discourse delimits "a set of possible statements about a given area" and advances a worldview based on multiple assumptions. (Kress, 1985, p. 7) At the most basic level, the Council's water scarcity discourse assumes that a market mechanism is an efficient and fair method of natural resource allocation. It presumes that capitalist economic development is a legitimate goal for which to strive. It takes for granted that people may not have the financial resources to pay for water. The discourse also assumes that the ability of MNCs to provide water justifies profiting from it. It ignores that the commodification of water is morally and ideologically questionable. The discourse also assumes that poverty and lack of access to water are isolated problems. It fails to link the lack of access to economic, historical, political and social processes. The problem of inadequate access to water is framed in a way that omits causes that hinder access mentioned above. Poverty and inadequate access to water are isolated from historical events, political decisions or economic processes. Political ecology elucidates the link between poverty and historical events, economic policies or political decisions. For example, Structural Adjustment Policies are blamed as the cause for extreme poverty. Privatization of farming land contributed to the problem of slums and urban poverty.

The Council promotes a discourse that reinforces the dominant neoliberal framework. Through their policies, they advance the notion that entities, including natural resources, should be commodified. Economic development and corporate profit are valued over human rights and environmental standards. The Report has had sweeping effects. The following section demonstrates how these policies are infused through World Bank, regional banks and government policies.

3. The Influence of the Camdessus Report

The Camdessus Report is one of the most controversial yet influential documents of all the World Water Fora. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) praised the Report for its ambitious strategy to address international water finance as a whole and to solicit much needed funding (from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *OECD Global Forum on Sustainable Development*). The OECD regards the Report as “an authoritative statement” and praises it for its “coherent philosophy and set of principles” (from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *OECD Global Forum on Sustainable Development*, p. 5). The Camdessus Report “has become a reference point and yardstick against which all parties can measure themselves” (from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *OECD Global Forum on Sustainable Development*, p. 5).

The Camdessus Report had a very clear impact on the World Bank. Immediately following the Camdessus Report, the World Bank drafted an action plan based on numerous recommendations outlined in the Report. The World Bank conceded with the Council’s rationale that infrastructure development in countries of the South is

instrumental to achieving the MDGs (World Bank, 2003b, p. 2). The action plan emphasized six themes crucial to improving people's access to water including "facilitating engagement across the public-private spectrum, developing a larger water supply and sanitation project pipeline,...strengthening donor coordination,... improving sector knowledge,...increasing the Bank Group's role in financing sub-sovereign entities, ...[and] increasing the deployment of risk mitigation instruments" (World Bank, 2003b, p. 3). The Bank committed to a number of actions addressing the themes and "encourag[ing] joint IFC/MIGA/Bank missions for certain sectors/countries" (World Bank, 2003b, p. 19).

The World Bank supported the recommendations in the Camdessus Report but included several caveats. It stated that it could not fill the gap for financing infrastructure and highlighted the importance of contributions from "regional development banks, foreign commercial banks [and] local capital markets" (World Bank, 2003a, p. 4). Nevertheless, they committed themselves to "revitalizing" their infrastructure financing since infrastructure development is "a key contributor to achieving the MDGs" (World Bank, 2003a, p. 9). The action plan revealed the World Bank's reluctance to play a leading role in financing water infrastructure. Nevertheless, the Camdessus had a clear impact on the World Bank's loan and financing policies.

The regional development banks also refocused their priorities to fund water infrastructure. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has placed financing infrastructure as a key priority. Financing infrastructure is one of the spotlights on the IDB's Water and Sanitation web page (Inter-American Development Bank, 2008b). The

IDB pledged \$20 million to financing infrastructure projects that have “a high probability of reaching financial closing, ” facilitate private investments, encourage “sustainable public-private partnerships” and are “high-risk” (Inter-American Development Bank, 2008a). The African Development Bank (AfDB) also reoriented its priorities to include financing infrastructure based on the Camdessus Report. The AfDB confirmed the importance of financing water infrastructure in order to achieve not only the MDGs but also the African Water Vision³⁹ (African Development Bank, 2008b). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) developed the Water Financing Programme 2006-2010 in response to the Camdessus Report. They pledged to double capital flows to the water sector before 2010 in order to assist in achieving the MDGs and other water-related goals (Asian Development Bank, 2008).

A striking feature of the Camdessus Report is its recommendations on involving guarantee agencies in the water sector. The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) minimizes risks for investors “by insuring eligible projects against losses” (from Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, *Guarantees*). MIGA protects investors against risks including currency transfer restrictions, civil disturbance, expropriation and breach of contract (from Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, *Guarantees*). They also provide coverage for infrastructure projects and PPPs so that local governments and other sub-sovereign entities are obliged “to fulfill their end of contractual agreements” (from Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, *Guarantees*).

³⁹ The African Water Vision is a set of goals to be achieved by 2025. The African Vision advocates information sharing, the adoption of financing and cost recovery methods and other policies found in the World Water Vision. See Economic Commission for Africa et. al, (n.d.), *The African Water Vision 2025: Equitable and Sustainable Use of Water for Socioeconomic Development*, Addis Ababa: Economic Commission for Africa.

MIGA has increased the number of insured water projects since the Camdessus Report. Prior to the Report, there was only one water project that was insured by MIGA, the water contract between International Water Services and Guayaquil, Ecuador (from Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, *Projects*). Since the Report, MIGA has insured eight projects with five projects in China, one in Jordan and two in the Russian Federation (from Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, *Projects*). The guarantee holders include Suez, Compagnie Générale des Eaux, a subsidiary of Veolia, and several other water corporations (from Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, *Projects*).

The Camdessus Report has also influenced the European Union's (EU) work on water projects. The EU Water Initiative (EUWI) was created at the 2002 *World Summit on Sustainable Development* to fund water projects in countries of the South. The EU committed €1.4 billion from development aid funding to finance PPPs in Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003a). The organization and work of the EU Water Initiative and the Camdessus Panel occurred simultaneously. There was concerted "efforts...to ensure coordination between the two initiatives" (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003a). For example, Michel Camdessus briefed EUWI participants on the initial recommendations of the Financing Water Infrastructure Panel (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003a). Equally, the panel was supplied with the EUWI's draft plans (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003a). The overlapping membership of the Panel and EUWI also ensured the similarities between the two projects. James Winpenny, who primarily wrote the Camdessus Report, was a member of the EUWI finance panel. Suez, Thames and Veolia were members of the Panel and

participated in discussions on the EUWI (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003a).

The EUWI facilitated the role of the private sector in water provision by providing funding for PPPs. A project funded in Johannesburg drew harsh criticism because the fund essentially subsidized the privatization of water services (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003a). Since the privatization of water services hindered poor populations ability to access water, the project failed to achieve its declared goal of improving access to water (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003a). Nevertheless, the EU pledged an additional €1 billion to continue funding water projects under the EU Water Fund in 2003 (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2003a; European Commission, 2003). In 2005, another € 500 million was made available by the EU Commission under the EU Water Facility to fund further projects in African, Caribbean and Pacific states (European Commission, 2008). The funding, used to invest in basic infrastructure, is a springboard that facilitates the development of PPPs (European Commission, 2008).

A critical examination of knowledge networks not only reveals the sweeping influence that the Council's recommendations had but also the powerful positions of Suez, Veolia and the Council among other global actors. The Report's influence exposes the power embedded in the ability to construct and advance discourses. By advancing a neoliberal discourse, Suez, Veolia and other actors (re)entrench a neoliberal ideology into the actions, thoughts and speech of global actors. The Report influenced global actors to reorient infrastructure financing that have significant effects on people's ability to access water. The policies advance the commodification trend into the water sector. They also embed in institutions the value of profit over access to water.

The changes that resulted from the Report confirm the relationship between socio-environmental and economic, political and social processes (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). Suez and Veolia's ability to enact change in water management exposes their powerful roles in the global community and confirms the notion that water is intimately linked with power (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 2). The reorientation of the World Bank, regional banks, MIGA and governments signified economic and political decisions in order to implement the Camdessus recommendations.⁴⁰

In addition to influencing the nature of water contracts, the Council has also begun to contribute to the debate on the right to water. The following section examines the Council's definition of the right to water. It exposes how their definition encompasses the right to water under a liberal conception of human rights, which complements the dominant neoliberal framework.

4. The Right to Water

In 2002, the UN issued General Comment No. 15 on the right to water. Despite the promotion of water as a human right by civil society members, this section argues that the Comment problematically defines the right to water under the liberal conception of human rights. Human rights, as conceived by the dominant rights discourse, promote individualistic rights and fail to outline any clear duties or responsibilities (Addis, 1991, p. 631; Robinson, 2003, p. 90). The dominant human rights discourse fails to situate human rights within relationships among people (Robinson, 2003, p. 94). The discourse scripts people as free and rational individuals who "pursue their own ends in life"

⁴⁰ The changes in the policies of the World Bank, regional banks, MIGA and governments have further implications at local and other levels but are beyond the scope of the thesis. Some implications are briefly described in the concluding section.

(Robinson, 2003, p. 89). The Council's recent recognition of the right to water reinforces the right under this liberal framework.

The UN's Comment draws on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as the legal basis for the right to water. It stipulates that "the human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses" (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2005, Article 2). The Comment further outlines principles including non-discrimination and equality (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2005, Articles 13-16). The Comment affirms that "water should be treated as a social and cultural good, and not primarily as an economic good" (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2005, Article 11). The UN's reference to water as an economic good, however subtle, reinforces the notion that water is also a commodity. As well, the Comment suggests several options in water provision including private provision of water. The UN's neutral inclusion of PSP hides the ideological controversy surrounding the commodification of water.

The Council only began to acknowledge a right to water at the 3rd Forum. Prior to that, the Council and fora publications only regarded water as a basic human need. (Cosgrove & Rijsberman, 2000, p. xix; World Water Council, 1997). At the 3rd Forum, the Council contended that if countries did not entrench the right to water into their legal frameworks, citizens could not enjoy this right (World Water Council, 2003). Although the Council changed their position, it remained ambiguous. They maintained that the issue was in need of debate and stated that the "precise scope of the right to water and its

implications for its application in social, cultural, economic and environmental terms requires further investigation” (World Water Council, 2003).

The Council’s recognition of the right to water became more explicit at the 4th Forum. In his inauguration speech, Lic Fauchon, president of the Council, unabashedly declared “that the right to water is an indispensable element of human dignity” (Fauchon, 2006). Although the right to water still was not recognized in the Ministerial Declaration, there were three sessions that examined the right to water. “Securing The Right to Water; From the Local to the Global, Civil Society Perspectives” was a panel of speakers, chaired by Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians, who opposed PPPs and the commodification of water, and promoted Public-Public Partnerships. The two other panels, “The Right to Water: What Does It Mean and How to Implement It” and “Human Right to Water,” fell in line with the Forum’s neoliberal ideology and promoted the commodification of water as a way to secure the right to water.

The Council presented *The Right to Water: From Concept to Implementation* at the 4th Forum. Although it has not been as influential as the Camdessus Report, it nonetheless contributes to the international debate on the definition of the right to water. In *The Right to Water*, the Council explores key challenges to upholding the right to water, the definition of the right to water and case studies in which the right to water has been entrenched in national constitutions. The key barriers to realizing the right to water are the lack of commitment of some centralized governments and lack of clarity on the right to water. The Council echoes elements of the General Comment on the right to water. They acknowledge that water is not only a public or common good but also an

economic good. The Council argues that the right to water does not mean that it is free but rather that the price of water be affordable (Dubreuil, 2006, p. 12).

The provision of affordable water can be interpreted two ways. Water can be either provided as a public good or as a commodity. In the former scenario, people may pay user fees simply to maintain infrastructure and assist with other necessary costs. In the latter scenario, water is provided as a commodity. People pay for water and their payments contribute not only to maintenance and other costs but also to the suppliers' profit margin. The need for people to pay for water does not necessarily render water a commodity. However, the Council fails to address this distinction. This failure equates payment for water with profiting from water. This is a key point of contention among civil society groups who oppose water privatization (Barlow, 2002; Petrella, 2001). The Council fails to address the ideological debate on the commodification of water. The Council's discourse on the right to water posits that providing water through a market system will secure one's right to water.

The Comment and the Council adopt a state-centric view on right to water. States have the primary responsibility of upholding this right. In *The Right to Water*, the Council explores whether water should be provided by a public or private entity. They argue that "as long as the standards set out in General Comment No. 15 are upheld" and as long as public authorities "exercise effective control over the water services," public authorities can delegate water management to public, private or semi-private entities (Dubreuil, 2006, p. 13). *The Right to Water* emphasizes that water provision is under government authority and that governments must choose "the most appropriate

management method – public, private or mixed” (Dubreuil, 2006, p. 14). Even when a private actor is delegated the task of providing water, states must adopt the necessary measures to ensuring affordable access⁴¹ (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2005). Further, the Council fails to acknowledge the significance of the provision of water by private entities. In this way, the publication subtly includes PPPs and private provision as one of the many unproblematic choices. Their definition of the right to water reinforces the notion of water as a commodity and normalizes the provision of water by private actors.

The Comment and Council not only contribute to the discourse on treating water as a commodity but also define the right under a liberal conception of human rights. The Comment fails to outline any concrete responsibilities or methods for states or private actors to provide people with water. While civil and political rights (or “negative” rights) have traditionally sidelined economic, social and cultural rights (“positive” rights), the UN’s promotion of the right to water, a positive right, nevertheless defines the right to water under a “negative rights” or liberal framework. While the state must develop a water management system that makes water available, people are conceived as free individuals who must ensure their own access. There is a problematic gap between a person’s right to water and the state’s duty to uphold the right.

The right to water under the liberal conception of human rights is bound to fail in ensuring access to poor people. Without clear duties to supply water, poor people will have difficulty accessing water. The liberal human rights framework is necessary to the neoliberal framework of the global political economy (Evans, 2005, p. 1057). The

⁴¹ Ratner outlines compelling reasons why MNCs should be responsible for upholding human rights (2001). As providers of water, MNCs have the power to permit or deny access to water. Therefore, it is critical to examine the legal responsibilities of corporations in upholding the right to water. (Shrybman, 2005).

dominant neoliberal framework creates markets in which free and rational individuals can purchase water in order to secure their right to water. In this way, the Council's contribution to the definition of human rights plays a significant role in reinforcing the dominant neoliberal framework.

5. Civil Society Discourses

Despite the dominant neoliberal discourses of the Council, there is a wide range of discourses on water management. The following section describes the discourses of Green Cross International (GCI), indigenous groups and activists. This survey of discourses elucidates Suez and Veolia's powerful ability to construct and advance discourses that promote water privatization as the consensus of the fora by excluding competing ideologies, views and interests in the fora publications.

Green Cross International uses a discourse similar to Suez, Veolia and the Council's discourse. However, they depart from the water scarcity discourse by asserting that there is "plenty of water" (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006, p. 68). GCI points to the "inefficiency of the water management" as the source of water shortages and inadequate access (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006, p. 68). They promote the "consolidation of civil society" and "legally binding mechanisms" to ensure adequate access (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006, p. 68).

Aside from arguing that water is abundant, their position is in line with Suez, Veolia and the Council's positions. GCI does not support water privatization (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006). They oppose the "deregulation of water resources and services management" and affirm that governments should still control water

services (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006, p. 69). Although they see a role for local, national and international corporations in alleviating water, they do not view the private sector as the solution to water shortages (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006, p. 69). GCI believes that local communities should have the choice to involve private entities and should only do so when it is “the most reasonable option from the ecological, social and economic standpoints” (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006, p. 69). However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, GCI supports PPPs and the commodification of water.

During the 3rd and 4th Fora, indigenous groups outlined their positions and recommendations in the *Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration* and the *Declaration of the Indigenous Peoples Parallel Forum of the 4th World Water Forum*. The discourse of the indigenous Declarations differs drastically from the Council and GCI's discourse. The indigenous groups, including Agua Sustenable and Ojibway Nation, believe that since Mother Earth provides water freely, water should not be privatized or commodified. The communities believe that water is a living entity that is alive “through the actions of the local people” (World Water Council, 2006b, Session FT 1.15).

Both declarations pointed to numerous causes of water shortages and degradation including pollution of water by chemical and pesticides, ocean dumping, mining of natural resources, mining of groundwater, damming water systems, “unsustainable economic, resource and recreational development,” and the privatization of water (Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration, 2003; Tlatokan Atlahuak Declaration,

2006). The indigenous declarations also highlighted the governance of their waters “by imposed economic, foreign and colonial domination as well as trade agreements and commercial practices” that separate them from the environment (Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration, 2003).

The indigenous communities affirmed that water is sacred. They emphasized that water and land constitute the “fundamental physical, cultural, and spiritual basis for [their] existence” (Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration, 2003). The declarations demanded the right to self-determination in order to preserve water and life. They believe their ability to “exercise full authority and control” over water would assist in preserving it (Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration, 2003; Tlatokan Atlahuak Declaration, 2006). The indigenous groups asserted that governments must recognize “indigenous peoples interests [*sic*] on water and customary uses” (Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration, 2003; Tlatokan Atlahuak Declaration, 2006). They argued that their “traditional knowledge developed over the millennia should not be compromised by an over-reliance on a relatively recent and narrowly defined western reductionist scientific methods and standards [*sic*]” (Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration, 2003; Tlatokan Atlahuak Declaration, 2006). The declarations outlined several demands including “free prior and informed consent and consultation by cultural appropriate [*sic*] means in all-decision making matters,” the discontinuation of development activities that deplete and pollute the environment and the cessation of conditional loans from IFIs and regional banks which require “water privatization or ‘full cost recovery’” (Indigenous Peoples' Kyoto Water Declaration, 2003; Tlatokan Atlahuak Declaration, 2006).

Along with the indigenous declarations, “activists from social movements, non-governmental organizations and networks” drafted the *Joint Declaration of the Movements in Defense of Water* (the Joint Declaration) at the 4th Forum. Although the perspectives varied among the activists, the *Joint Declaration* echoed many of the criticisms and concerns outlined in the indigenous declarations. The *Joint Declaration* pointed to the commodification of water as a key hindrance to the ability to access water (Joint Declaration of the Movements in Defense of Water, 2006). It rejected “all forms of privatization, including public-private partnerships,” “the neoliberal, consumerist development model” and the fora itself (Joint Declaration of the Movements in Defense of Water, 2006). They demanded the exclusion of water in trade agreements and the “abolition of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes” (Joint Declaration of the Movements in Defense of Water, 2006). The activists asserted that water, as a human right, should be free. They recommended the development of strategies that would procure funds for “public, social, cooperative and participatory water management” (Joint Declaration of the Movements in Defense of Water, 2006). Finally, the *Joint Declaration* demanded that businesses and governments provide redress for the harm caused by “contamination and lack of access to water services” (Joint Declaration of the Movements in Defense of Water, 2006).

The discourse of the indigenous communities and the water activists greatly contrasts with the Council’s discourse. It is important to note that some civil society members include water scarcity as part of their discourse (Barlow and Clarke, 2002; Petrella, 2001; Shiva, 2002). However, many members of civil society see the

privatization of water, including PPPs, as a cause of water shortages or inadequate access. The fora publications fail to examine critically how the commodification of services affects people's ability to access to water. Although some of the publications note the controversy on the policy recommendations, the discourses that oppose the commodification of water are not adequately represented in the fora publications.

The survey of civil society discourse exposes facets of water issues that are omitted in the Council's discourse. By excluding these concerns, the Council constructs a view on water issues that paves the way to privatization policies. The policies are legitimized because they are portrayed as debated issues among a multi-stakeholder platform. The deliberate exclusion of alternative views and criticisms creates the guise of consensus. In this way, the Council is an extremely powerful organization. They have the ability to advance a strategically constructed view of water that secures the implementation of privatization policies around the world, which maintains and advances the dominant neoliberal order.

6. WEDO and Women of the Global South

The Council repeatedly claims that women's equality is a central priority. They frequently highlight the importance of including women in the fora's processes and in water management processes. The Camdessus Report argued that women's participation in managing society, an "inversion" in conventional methods, would "require a corresponding inversion in financial architecture" (Winpenny, 2003, p. v). The 4th Forum held several Women for Water meetings and several sessions that examined gender and water issues. Despite the claims of the inclusion of women in the fora, an examination of

several issues important to women in the South demonstrates that the Council largely excludes women of the South in their policy recommendations. The following section examines women's unique relationship to water, women's water responsibilities with regards to HIV/AIDS, and sexual violence during water gathering.

The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) are active participants in the World Water Fora. WEDO organized the Women's Caucus during the 4th Forum. They attribute water shortages and people's inability to access clean water to a number of causes including pollution by organic and chemical substances, destruction of "wetlands, flood plains and coastal ecosystems," deforestation, damming of rivers and climate change (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004). They point to neoliberal policies, such as PPPs, as barriers to people's ability to access basic necessities. WEDO also scrutinizes the especially harmful impacts of neoliberal policies on women and girls.

WEDO opposes the privatization of water, even under the "guise of public/private partnerships" (Carrión, 2005). There is a power imbalance in PPPs due to a "weakened public sector and an emboldened private sector" providing the private sector with "advantages and opportunities for increasing their control of assets and services" (Carrión, 2005). Commercial entities often introduce "user fees" that "jeopardize access by the poor" (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2005). They point to experiences in Cochabamba, Atlanta and Dar es Salaam as examples of how the commercialization of water provision has hindered safe and affordable access to water (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004).

WEDO asserts that policies and “public actions are [often not] gender-neutral in their effects” (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 5). They argue that privatization policies perpetuate “gender inequalities by relying on traditional gender roles that have made women and girls responsible for and the main suppliers of water to their families and households” (Mpoumou & Pearl, 2003, p. 2). Women’s unequal standing in some societies hampers their ability to participate in social processes that affect their ability to access water. WEDO advocates a gender perspective on water, the environment and development. It is crucial to consider and incorporate the “contributions, needs and visions of women” since they are so often excluded in environmental issues and policy-making (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 5). WEDO’s position on water and the environment reflects the application of feminist political ecology tenets at the global level. Therefore, they do not believe in a divided and separate existence between women and men (Jackson, 1998, p. 315; Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 5). In order to achieve gender equality, policy changes must target women and men’s interconnected relationships (Jackson, 1998, p. 315; Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 5). Lasting gender equality stems from a “profound change in socio-economic organization of societies” (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004). Changes need to occur “not only in the way women work, live and care for the other members of the households, but also in the way men do, and in the way their respective roles in the family and community are articulated with the need to earn a living” (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 5).

The participation of women at many levels of society and at all stages of decision-making would ameliorate women's ability to access water. Women's participation "could lead to services that respond more effectively to men's and women's different demands and capacities" (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004). Women's involvement even in community-based projects is minimal; "men usually make the decisions, chairing the local water users' association or water committee...while women linger in the background doing the hard work, as treasurers, of collecting water fees" (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 60).

However, gender inequality is reflected and embedded in many different social, cultural and other processes. In order to address gender inequality, members of a society need to scrutinize that which can be taken for granted at "personal, community and institutional levels" (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 5). If "social and cultural contexts determine gender relations," gender equality must be addressed through different social and cultural processes (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 5). For example, patriarchal views are taught to children and are difficult to change quickly. As well, people are socialized to disregard women's unpaid work as legitimate work.

Gender inequality manifests in women's relationship with water. Women are often primarily responsible for water gathering and other household duties. Their household and reproductive responsibilities that involve water include cleaning, bathing, cooking, childbearing, care giving, raising small livestock, growing food and providing water to drink (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 62).

Women also need water to produce economic goods “including agriculture and micro-enterprise” (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 62).

However, because of gender inequality, women are excluded in varying degrees in “land tenure, access to water, participation, resource control, capacity and skill development, marketing and commercial linkages” which negatively impacts their ability to access water for their varying needs (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 62). Despite women’s numerous responsibilities involving water, it is often elder men who make decisions concerning the allocation of resources and rights to resources (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996, p. 12).

The negative impacts of price hikes, service cut-offs and the decrease in water quality are felt most by women because of their numerous responsibilities involving water (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 66). Poor quality water exposes women to water-borne diseases, chemicals and other pollutants. Two-thirds of “the world’s blind are women who have been infected, directly or through their children, with trachoma, a blinding bacterial eye infection occurring in communities with limited access to water” (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 64). Any illness, whether water-borne or not, adversely affects women because of their water gathering and caring responsibilities (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 62). The examination of water and HIV/AIDS demonstrates how privatization of water exacerbates women’s challenges concerning water.

The cases of new HIV/AIDS infections have decreased since 2001. Nevertheless, in 2007, there were still an estimated 33.2 million people living with HIV and an

estimated 2.5 million newly infected people (World Health Organization, 2007). 68% of people who have HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa and an estimated 1.6 million people with HIV live in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (World Health Organization, 2007). This places an increased burden on women in these regions for several reasons. Women are most often the primary caregivers and therefore have added responsibilities in caring for the sick. Further, more water is needed to care for HIV/AIDS patients. So, although there is an increased need for water, women have less time to do so. This situation is exacerbated for women who “are infected and ill themselves” (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004).

A woman in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa spoke of the daily challenges of caring for her daughter who was infected with HIV/AIDS:

Having to care for an AIDS patient means obtaining at least three 25-litre drums of water a day. The patient has to be bathed daily and sores dressed. If there is diarrhoea the patient's blanket and clothing also have to be washed every day.

Since my daughter became sick we have to fetch five drums (of water) per day. My son has stopped going to school because I can't do this work alone. He has to fetch water and also cook food that the family will eat. I only cook food for my sick daughter and spend most of my time looking after her. I do her washing daily; a big towel, nightdress, underwear, and I give her a bath. You are always tired. You have to be nice [to the patient] always. No free time for you! Some people even lose their jobs because they have to care for sick people. You must love the sick person more than your husband and spend most of your time with that person. (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, pp. 185-186)

A person with HIV/AIDS must consume at least two litres of clean water daily (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 185). People with HIV/AIDS experience diarrhea, night sweats and urinary complications. They also require a liquid diet because they are commonly inflicted with oral thrush making it difficult to swallow (Hutchings & Buijs,

2005, p. 185). Women in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa made porridge and tea for the sick. However, the milk, needed for its calcium, would often curdle because of the saline water (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 186). A traditional wild vegetable called *imifino*, high in nutrient content, grows quickly yet requires water to grow (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 185). Water is also needed to clean genital sores and open sores on lower limbs, a common occurrence, to prevent further infections (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 185). Clothes and bedding must also be washed more frequently.

In addition to the KwaZulu-Natal women's additional responsibilities, they also faced challenges associated with the social stigma of being HIV infected or caring for someone who was HIV infected. For example, some women who were treated at a local clinic were denied access to communal water and *imifino*-collecting activities (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 185). Some experience physical violence, loss of employment opportunities and rejection by their families (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 185).

In 1997, water provision in KwaZulu Natal was privatized and pre-paid water meters were installed. The above challenges are exacerbated when water is provided by a commercial entity. Families may not be able to afford water under normal circumstances. This challenge only intensifies in cases where a family member is sick. There are less people in the family working yet more water is needed. The family may also have to pay for medical services for the sick. The KwaZulu-Natal women that were interviewed had several recommendations for the South African government (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005). They suggested that the government "provide financial and other assistance to family caregivers to ease their load" (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 187).

Further, more clinics and medical staff were needed particularly in isolated communities (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 187). Some clinics lacked medical supplies and (affordable) medicine including aspirin, often needed to relieve pain (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 187). Many isolated communities did not have access to antiretroviral drugs that the government was supplying (Hutchings & Buijs, 2005, p. 187).

Since there are approximately 33.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS, most of who are in countries of the South, this scenario is a stark reality for many women in the global South. Although the circumstances vary, the women still face an increased need for water that they may not be able to afford. Their caring responsibilities also multiply. The Camdessus recommendations, which promote increasing infrastructure financing in order to facilitate private sector participation, do not address the realities of these women. Fora sessions examining how to increase public funds so that women caring for family members with HIV/AIDS pay little or no cost for water and medical services would address the experiences of many women in the South.

Evidently, environmental changes, such as changes to water distribution methods, affect social, economic and political facets of a society (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). The privatization of water provision has dire effects on poor women of the South, particularly those who must care for family members who are infected with HIV/AIDS. The privatization of water creates financial barriers to already poor women. In this way, power relations are reinforced because these women, who must care for the sick, are inhibited from participating in economic, political or social activities that may increase their power. MNCs or private companies participate in creating policies that enable them

to systematically profit from people's need for water. In sum, Suez and Veolia's ability to influence the implementation of privatization policies reinforces power dynamics.

Sexual violence during water gathering is another issue that arises from women's unique relationship to water. Women who lack access to on-site water sources and sanitation must walk long distances to gather water, bathe or use toilets. Women experience sexual violence during water-gathering trips or when using toilets in isolated areas (Bapat & Agarwal, 2003; Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2003, p. 64). This risk was the focal point of a session entitled "Safe, Accessible, Private and Nearby: Making Services Work for Women - the Key to Meeting the MDG Water and Sanitation Target" at 4th Forum.⁴² The long distances that women have to travel to gather water or use public toilets is not only dangerous but time consuming. This time could be spent on "other activities, including training, growing food and income generation" (World Water Council, 2006b, Session FT 3.12).

The session had several policy recommendations including the promotion of "multi-stakeholder partnerships among...NGOs, municipal authorities, private sector and donors," equal participation among women and men "in planning, design, location and monitoring of facilities" and "partnerships with development finance agencies" to increase funding for "pro-poor and community training and empowerment processes" (World Water Council, 2006b, Session FT 3.12). There were presentations from groups such as Gender and Water Alliance and Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centre who opposed water privatization. They proposed community-based initiatives to

⁴² This session was convened by the Earth Institute: Columbia University, UNDP Administrator from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Interagency Gender and Water Task Force (UN/DESA).

improve access to water and sanitation. Although there were many recommendations, a key message to the session was involving the private sector (World Water Council, 2006b, Session FT 3.12). If water is provided on-site by a private entity, women will no longer have to walk long distances and experience sexual violence.

However, proximate water sources and women's participation only narrowly addresses the problem. Low-income women may not be able to afford the increased prices of on-site water sources. Women living in slums do not have property in which to install on-site taps (Bapat & Agarwal, 2003). Some live illegally on private property or beside train tracks (Bapat & Agarwal, 2003). In 2001, approximately 1 billion people or 32% of the world's urban population were living in slums (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2003). 81% of them are living in countries of the South, with 50% in South-central and Eastern Asia, 17% in sub-Saharan Africa and 14% in Latin America (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2003). The policies promoted by the Council fail to capture the experiences of slum dwellers that make up a considerably large portion of the world's urban population.

Although improving access to water and sanitation is critical to gender equality, it is also important to scrutinize larger social structures or customs that contribute to gender inequality. Promoting on-site taps to eliminate the distances women walk so they can concentrate on other activities including income-generation not only sidesteps but also reinforces several problems. Feminist political ecology highlights women's many responsibilities related to water. Promoting income-generating activities perpetuates the devaluation of women's unpaid work. By portraying water gathering as an activity to be

replaced by income-generating activities, it renders water gathering as an activity that lacks (economic) value. Although economic activities are necessary to generate income, pegging economic activity as a goal to be pursued over unpaid work undervalues women's responsibilities that do not generate income. The lack of value for women's work supports notions of the inferiority of women's activities to men's activities, which reinforce the power relations within patriarchal frameworks.

Traditional roles are preserved because women are still considered the primary water-gatherers (Joshi, 2005, p. 135). It is important to examine why water gathering is the primary responsibility of women. Feminist political ecology views gender roles, particularly in relation to the environment, as “[derived] from the social interpretation of biology and social constructs of gender which vary by culture, class, race, and place and are subject to individual and social change” (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 4). In other words, women's responsibilities as primary water gatherers are “socially allocated” and mediated by culture, race and class (Joshi, 2005, p. 141; Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, 5). Communities need to address how men can be included in household responsibilities. Interrogating gender roles not only alleviates the burden of household responsibilities on women but also facilitates genuine gender equality (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004).

Although women's participation is instrumental to gender equality, that alone does not address gender inequality. Simply calling for the inclusion of women in decision-making fails to address the “complexity of inequality within communities”

(Joshi, 2005, p. 136). Further, women may have ways to participate in decision-making that are influential but do not meet Western expectations of participation. Although feminist political ecology opposes the commodification of water, it questions the assumption that visibility and participation are always desired and that they are equated with influence (Jackson, 1998, p. 317). Although this thesis argues that the Council's policies affect IFI and national policies, it is important to note the agency of women (Jackson, 1998, p. 313). Paula Roark's study in Burkino Faso revealed that although women were excluded from decision-making, "decisions about digging new wells were made in prior women's meetings" (quoted in Jackson, 1998, p. 317). Further, although women did not speak at elders' council meetings, "it was almost unheard of for the council not to concur with women's petition or request" (quoted in Jackson, 1998, p. 317). Advocating for participation alone may ignore the nuances of various decision-making processes.

Violence against women reflects inequality in a society, which is infused in many social and cultural processes. Often when sexual violence during water gathering is examined, sexual violence is portrayed as a risk that is inevitable. However, in order to achieve genuine gender equality, it is important to scrutinize why men commit acts of sexual violence against women. Rape and other forms of sexual violence occur for a range of reasons including "gender power inequalities, status within male peer groups and climate of male sexual entitlement" (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002, p. 1238). Rape is also a consequence of "a very violent society, poverty, alcohol and drug use; and at a society level, a general tolerance towards rape" (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002, p. 1238).

Notions of sexual entitlement and of male dominance result from “the dominant social constructions of masculinity” (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002, p. 1238). Simply promoting women’s participation and minimizing women’s walking distances does little to address the social constructions and beliefs that result in sexual violence during water gathering. In order to achieve lasting gender equality, it is important to examine the beliefs, social norms and moral understandings that cause men to commit acts of sexual violence against women. Failure to acknowledge the social and political processes that cause, support or ignore violence against women perpetuates structural inequalities between women and men.

In sum, the policies promoted by the Council and fora only narrowly address the problems experienced by women of the South, if at all. The ability of Suez and Veolia to construct discourses that fail to include meaningfully the experiences of women of the South reflects global power dynamics. The examination of women’s water and caring responsibilities and the sexual violence they experience during water gathering exposes significant gaps in the Council’s discourse. Despite these gaps, the Council has been successful in influencing global actors to implement policies that facilitate the privatization of water. A (feminist) political ecology lens elucidates the economic, political and social consequences of environmental changes. Privatization policies perpetually prohibit poor women from adequately accessing basic necessities. They also exclude poor women from participating in economic and political decisions, such as those in the Council, that determine their access to natural resources. The policies fail to address gender inequality that manifests as sexual violence against women and reinforces

the uneven distribution of household responsibilities. They continue to devalue women's unpaid work by requiring women to participate in paid work in order to pay for water. In this way, the Council's policies, influenced by Suez and Veolia's, (re)produce unequal relations among global actors including MNCs, IFIs, high-level government officials and women and men of the South.

7. The (Re)production of Power Dynamics

There is little critical evaluation of the Council and fora's policies in the Council and fora publications. Instead, the publications promote neoliberal policies that commodify and privatize water in varying degrees. The policies are not gender neutral. They have significant effects on women of the South. At the same time, the Council excludes women by failing to include issues relevant to them. Suez and Veolia's promotion of neoliberal policies, through the Council, has significant implications including creating patterns of access, (re)producing power dynamics and perpetuating the dominant neoliberal framework in the global political economy.

Both feminist political ecologists and political ecologists argue that environmental processes and ecological change are intimately linked to cultural, economic, political and social processes (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 4; Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). Applying this tenet to the Council highlights that the ability of Suez and Veolia to influence the Council's policy recommendations is facilitated by existing power relations. Power dynamics enable particular actors to make policies or decisions that transform the way in which natural resources are allocated (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 24). This chapter unraveled the key role that Suez and Veolia played in constructing a crisis

discourse. A survey of civil society discourses revealed the deliberate exclusion of particular facets of water issues. The exclusion of issues important to women of the South revealed that gender, race, ethnicity and other dimensions of difference shape knowledge and discourses. Evidently, processes of knowledge networks are infused with power dynamics that assist some claims in being expressed to the exclusion of others.

Equally, the decision to privatize water has economic, political and social consequences (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 4; Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). The changes that Suez and Veolia influence alter the existing power relations and ensure that “private actors and companies become much more powerful voices” (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 41). A privatized water system creates hierarchies of access to water based on people’s ability to pay. Class, race, gender, ethnicity and nationality structure these hierarchies (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 24). The increases in price that often accompany private provision seriously hinder the ability of lower classes to access water. Although the Council’s publications refer to people’s “willingness to pay,” they fail to examine the barrier of people’s inability to pay. Poor families end up using a majority of their income for water leaving minimal financial resources for other needs. Although women’s access are hindered most by privatization, “better-off women might have private wells for irrigation and domestic purposes, resources to buy safe water or treat unsafe water and domestic help to bring water from other sources” (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 64). Lower class females do not have these options and must drink contaminated water (Women's Environment & Development Organization, 2004, p. 64). Drinking contaminated water can cause serious

illnesses creating further economic, physical and other challenges.

The inability to access clean water hinders women from participating in social, economic and cultural activities. For example, a Bolivian girl and her family were unable to wash their clothes after water provision was privatized in El Alto, Bolivia (Woods, 2006). She was ostracized and marginalized by others in her community. Equally, a person may be unable to obtain employment because she lacks clean clothes. People who do not have the financial means to acquire water are prevented from enjoying other activities such as education, which in turn hinders them from further accessing additional financial resources and social, cultural and economic opportunities.

The commodification and privatization of water also creates patterns that allocate profit to commercial entities and enable them to influence government officials, IFI representatives and other powerful actors. Suez, Veolia and other water MNCs continuously benefit economically in PPPs. The act of privatizing water creates patterns of political participation some of which “[operate] outside traditional political, democratic channels” (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 45). The decision to privatize water includes particular groups in the decision and subsequent or related decisions, while other groups are excluded at varying degrees (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 45). These hierarchies and patterns of access to financial, natural and political resources reinforce the relationships necessary in capitalism.

The hierarchies and patterns are (re)produced through policies that Suez and Veolia advocate through the Council. Suez and Veolia not only influence trade and water policies but also contribute to the discourse that fills the theoretical gap between

inadequate access to water and water privatization as a solution. The policies are legitimized because of the Council's perceived expertise on water and their multi-stakeholder platform. Suez and Veolia's participation in the Council has a significant impact on (re)producing power dynamics because of the neo-liberal policies that the Council promotes. Therefore, despite the perception that the World Water Council is a non-hierarchical, representative and democratic knowledge network on water issues, they play a key role in advancing neoliberal policies and (re)producing power relations necessary to sustaining capitalism.

Conclusion

Knowledge networks are global structures and actors that are infused by power relations. Mainstream literature on knowledge networks promote them as non-hierarchical, representative and democratic spaces that foster awareness and develop policy options on global issues. However, this critical analysis of the World Water Council revealed that knowledge networks can promote particular ideologies, interests and values while excluding competing ideologies, interests and values.

This thesis situated the World Water Council in the trajectory of capitalism. The privatization of water was a strategy that IFIs such as the World Bank and IMF foisted on countries of the global South. Pro-privatization institutions argued that transferring water to the private sector addressed the lack of financial resources that hindered adequate access to water. However, chapter one explored how water privatization ameliorated the 1970s financial crisis. The Council was created as a knowledge network in which to debate global water issues. The Council and fora are sites of power struggles and spaces that enable global actors to debate water issues. Nevertheless, the Council has also become a network that promotes and advances neoliberal policies that secure the privatization of water.

Although the focus on Suez and Veolia prevented an analysis of the other prominent actors, this thesis nevertheless revealed Suez and Veolia's powerful positions in the Council. Suez' representative, Loïc Fauchon, and Veolia's representative, Charles-Louis de Maud'huy, are the president and vice-president of the Council, respectively. Chapter two revealed that Suez and Veolia had powerful roles in the preparatory processes of the World Water Fora. Their dominant positions enabled them to shape the

issues debated at the fora and to promote particular policy options. Their influential roles demonstrated that global power dynamics facilitated the ability of powerful global actors to make decisions concerning natural resources (Swyngedouw, 2004, p. 23). However, the Council policies were viewed as legitimate because of the Council's self-portrayal as an expert, multi-stakeholder platform that facilitated democratic debate on water issues. Although there were NGOs within the Council's membership, a critical analysis of the key NGOs, namely Green Cross International and the International Committee of the Red Cross, revealed that these NGOs supported PPPs and the commodification of water.

The Council participated in constructing a water scarcity discourse that justified the provision of water by the private sector. Achieving the MDGs became a primary goal of the Council at the 3rd Forum. The Camdessus Panel drafted the Camdessus Report in which they claimed to develop policies that would assist in achieving the MDGs. MNCs were scripted as global actors that not only had the desire but also the expertise to assist in achieving the MDGs. However, the Council painted the water sector as a sector infused with risks, such as "governments unpredictable behaviour," riots and violence, which deterred MNCs from providing their assistance. This discourse created the context that justified the introduction of financial guarantee agencies such as MIGA into the water sector. It also justified financing infrastructure by governments, IFIs and regional banks while allowing MNCs to operate the more lucrative water management activities. The water scarcity discourse separated water scarcity and inadequate access to water from historical events, economic decisions or political processes. This strategy enabled the Council to propose policies that essentially privatized water as methods to achieve the

MDGs.

In this way, discourses are very powerful. They shape the way issues are talked about and acted upon (Kress, 1985, p. 7). They infuse people's speech, thoughts and actions with "particular worldviews, ideologies, values and interests" (Kress, 1985, p. 7). A (feminist) political ecology lens elucidated the intimate relationship between ecological changes and economic, political and social processes. The influence that the Camdessus Report had reinforced the neoliberal ideology into the policy changes made by governments, regional banks and IFIs. These policy changes not only advanced the water scarcity discourse but also reinforced social relations that perpetuate capitalist frameworks.

By advancing particular ideologies, values and interests, discourses delimit and omit facets of an issue, competing discourses and relevant processes. This thesis provided an overview of the competing discourses among civil society groups. Water activists and indigenous groups exposed environmental processes, such as mining and pesticide use, which threatened the world's supply of potable water. They pointed to neoliberal policies, such as mass resource extraction and water privatization, which hampered people's ability to access water. The exclusion of particular civil society members reflected global power dynamics that infused the knowledge network. These power dynamics fell along gender, race, class and ideological lines.

This thesis examined two key issues that affect women of the South and their relationship to water. A feminist political ecology lens assisted in revealing that water management policies have uneven effects on women in different classes. Feminist

political ecology elucidated women's unique relationship to water. Although women have many (household) responsibilities, they had fewer water rights than men. These responsibilities created unique challenges for women in the South. Chapter three examined how HIV/AIDS affected women, their caring roles, and their responsibilities involving water. Since women were primary caregivers, they were more likely to care for the sick. Family members infected with HIV/AIDS required more water for drinking, washing and other needs. Although more water was needed, women had less time to gather water. This situation was exacerbated where water was provided by the private sector. Poor women's ability to obtain clean water was significantly hindered by their inability to pay for it.

Women's water gathering responsibilities also expose them to the risk of sexual violence. While the Council proposed on-site taps and greater participation by women, these policy recommendations failed to address not only the reality of many women of the South but also gender inequality in societies. On-site taps are not an option for slum dwellers. On-site taps also do not address people's inability to pay for water. Finally, they reinforce women's roles as water gatherers. Gender inequality reflected in the uneven distribution of household responsibilities is perpetuated. Sexual violence can reflect notions of sexual entitlement and male dominance, which are manifestations of "the dominant social constructions of masculinity" (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002, p. 1238). Chapter three exposed how these water issues concerning women of the South were largely omitted from the fora sessions. Where issues were examined, the fora's recommendations still failed to adequately reflect women's experiences in the South.

Feminist political ecologists argue that one's experiences shape her knowledge and reality (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter & Wangari, 1996a, p. 8). This notion is demonstrated by the stark contrast between the fora recommendations and the issues relevant to women of the South. It appears obvious to state that the experiences of Suez and Veolia's representatives occur in entirely different spaces than the women of the global South. However, this contrast has significant implications. This thesis explored how Suez and Veolia's participated in the construction of discourses that delimited and excluded the experiences of women of the South. In this way, they advanced their values and interests to the exclusion of poor women. This thesis argued that through the Council, Suez and Veolia participated in constructing discourse that facilitated the implementation of privatization policies. It contended that the policies structure and reinforce social relations, and economic and political processes that create and reinforce global power dynamics. These global power dynamics not only determine access to natural resources and political processes but also reinforce the dominant neoliberal framework that depicts the global political economy.

This thesis raises several topical issues related to global governance, water and (feminist) political ecology. Research concerning other actors' roles in and around the Council would provide a better understanding of the power dynamics among the various actors. Moreover, researching the Council and its prominent actors without a specific focus on Suez and Veolia would provide a clearer picture of the power dynamics among the powerful actors. This type of analysis may be able to better explain which actors are more powerful, in what ways and why.

Further, research into the roles of the NGOs that oppose the Council would reveal the role that they have in (re)producing power dynamics. There are some NGOs who refuse to join the Council and participate in the fora because of the policies that the Council and fora promote. So, although some civil society actors criticize the Council and fora for its exclusionary nature, it would be interesting to explore if and how the refusal of these NGOs to participate in the Council perpetuate the Council's exclusionary nature. As well, to what extent does their refusal (re)produce existing power relations? It would also be interesting to explore the implications of the alternative networks and activities of those opposed to the Council. Research into the role of the critics of the Council would provide a better understanding of the role that they have in influencing the Council. Overall, do knowledge networks help excluded actors advance their causes, despite existing power relations? If so, in what ways? Does the exposure and access to government and IFI officials assist "anti-privatization" movements?

Although this thesis alluded to the effects that privatization policies have on people at the local level, an analysis of the diffused effects was beyond the scope of this thesis. Feminist political ecology and political ecology are useful lenses from which to view environmental changes and decisions concerning natural resources. Brown & Purcell note the "local trap" to which these theoretical frameworks fall prey. (2005, p. 608) (Feminist) political ecologists often view global and local scales as distinct entities. Since this thesis was a modest contribution to feminist political ecology at the global level, it also fell prey to distinguishing global and local as separate entities.

Brown & Purcell suggest a multi-scalar approach to political ecology (2005,

p. 612). Such an approach would explore the relationship between the various scales and how the relationships structure environmental changes and related economic, political and social processes. A multi-scalar approach to feminist political ecology would not only examine the discourses and policies advanced by global actors, it would also examine their effects on women and men in social and cultural processes at the local level. For example, water has unique cultural, religious and social meanings in societies. Examining how water privatization alters the cultural and religious meaning of water would reveal the relationship between global policies and social processes. Tracing the influence that powerful global actors have on global policies and on processes at national and local levels reveals the influence that global actors have through transnational networks. Although the global actors' influence may be diffused through networks, their influence nevertheless has the ability to alter cultural and social facets of a society. A multi-scalar approach might also explore how the resistance to privatization policies affects national politics and global power dynamics. By developing multi-scalar approaches to feminist political ecology and political ecology, they become particularly useful lenses to research natural resource allocation.

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