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# Mapping cultural water heritage in Latin America from a perspective of the human right to water

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UNESCO Chair | Water, Heritage and Sustainable Development

**BEYOND**  
**MUSEUMS** Tools for Promoting the Natural  
and Cultural Water Heritage

*5 Nov 2021*



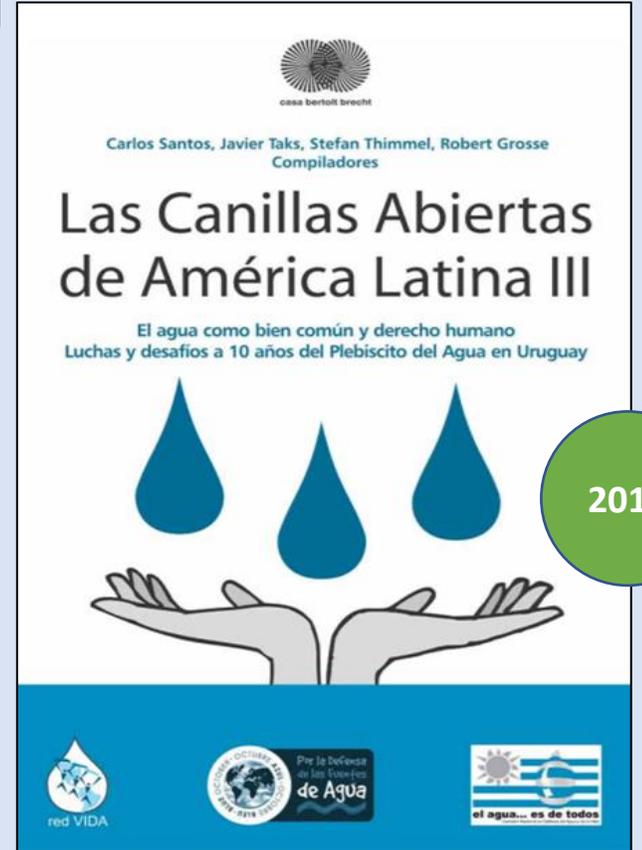
2000



2010



2004



2014



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Cátedra UNESCO  
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UNIVERSIDAD  
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- **2015- Chairman – Themes: Human right to water and sanitation; Global culture of the water crisis; (dis)Encounter between cosmovision and ontologies; Arts and water**



Workshops  
with GCO

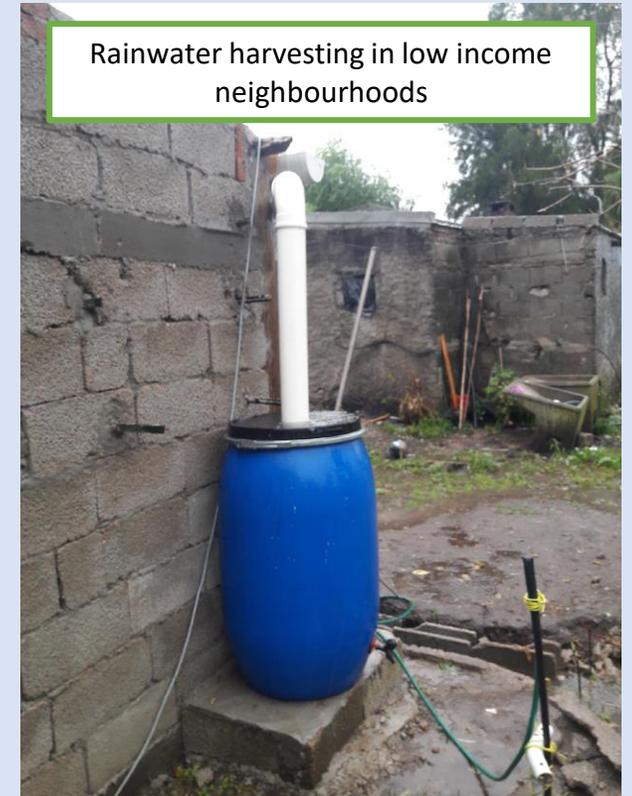


Back to the tap  
campaign



International seminars

LEO HELLER



Rainwater harvesting in low income  
neighbourhoods

# UNESCO Chair on ¿Water and Culture?

- According to Lisa Hiwasaki, two groups of activities by UN System:
  - *water cultures* = links between water and particular indigenous groups + artistic expressions inspired by water
  - *water and cultural diversity* = water cultures + governance, power, and rights.
- “Discussions of water and cultural diversity bring to the fore issues that are often omitted in discussions on water and culture - most notably (a) social and political institutions that govern water use; (b) contested uses of water; and (c) the human right to water, which are all interlinked issues.” (:525-6)



## **My argument:**

The experiences of LAC social movements for the HRWS are a water cultural heritage to be promoted



But a question for Water Museums and beyond: how can we educate, communicate and discuss the dilemmas and conflicts of the HRWS for a new ethical vision?

**Fig. 1. A diagrammatic illustration of the historical development of water management paradigms.** Shading intensity indicates the degree of dominance of a paradigm relative to others.

	Spiritual–religious paradigm	Aesthetic–recreational paradigm	Legal–ethical paradigm	Hydraulic engineering paradigm	Scientific paradigm	Economic–financial paradigm	Ecological paradigm	Managerial paradigm
Hunting-gathering	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	White	White	White	White	Light Gray	White
Early agriculture	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	White	White	White	White	Light Gray	White
Early state societies	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	White	White	Light Gray	Medium Gray
Commercial proto-industrial societies	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Medium Gray	Medium Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Medium Gray
Early industrial-scientific societies	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Medium Gray
Advanced industrial states	Light Gray	Medium Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Medium Gray	Medium Gray
Global financial systems	Light Gray	Medium Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray

# Water as...

- Natural resource to be managed (Managerial paradigm)
- Commodity or economic good (Economic-financial paradigm)
- Human rights and water as a public good (Legal-ethical paradigm)
- Common Good (Legal-ethical paradigm)
- Living entity and subject of rights (Spiritual and religion paradigm)

# Water as commodity or economic value

- Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic asset. Following this principle, it is especially crucial to recognize the basic right of all human beings to have access to drinking water and sanitation at affordable price. Past failure to recognize the economic value of water led to wastage and to uses that were harmful to the environment. To manage water as an economic asset is an important path to the achievement of efficient and equitable use, and to the encouragement of the conservation and protection of water resources. (Dublin declaration, 1992)

# Water as a fundamental human right

- The human right to water entitles everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use, while the right to sanitation entitles everyone to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, and socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity. Those rights shall be delivered in a participatory, accountable and non-discriminatory manner.

(Source: Human Right 2 Water)

# Water as commons

- Water is a flow resource essential for life and ecosystem health; no substitutable and tightly bound to communities and ecosystems through the hydrological cycle ... collective management by communities is not only preferable but also necessary (Bakker 2007)

## Common Good

Situated

Embedded in social life

Sacred

## HRW (Public good)

Universal

Individual or collective

Anthropocentric

## Economic Good

Placeless

Domesticated

Commodified

Based on: Bakker, Karen (2007) The “Commons” Versus the “Commodity”: Alter-globalization, Anti-privatization and the Human Right to Water in the Global South. Antipode.

## Common Good

Situated

Embedded in social life

Sacred

## Commodity perspective

### HRW (Public good)

Universal

Individual or collective

Anthropocentric

### Economic Good

Placeless

Domesticated

Commodified

Dwelling perspective

**Common Good**

Situated  
Embedded in social life  
Sacred

**HRW (Public good)**

Universal  
Individual or collective  
Anthropocentric

**Economic Good**

Placeless  
Domesticated  
Commodified

# Independent Rapporteur UN for the HRWS

- Global water crisis, structural flaws in development
  - the unsustainability of the aquatic ecosystems
  - the poverty, inequality and discrimination that prevail under the current socioeconomic order.
- In addition, factors that aggravate that global crisis:
  - the commodification and financialization of water
  - climate change
  - the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has deepened inequalities and extended poverty.
- Challenges for the mandate:
  - (1) clarifying ways to promote democratic water and sanitation governance [ie. community and indigenous based water management]
  - (2) furthering the realization of the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, focusing on restoring the sustainability of aquatic ecosystems
  - (3) promoting water as a key to collaboration and peace.



# Mapping Cultural water heritage



LAC experiences based on the dwelling perspective are a water cultural heritage to be promoted



2003

<https://laredvida.org/>



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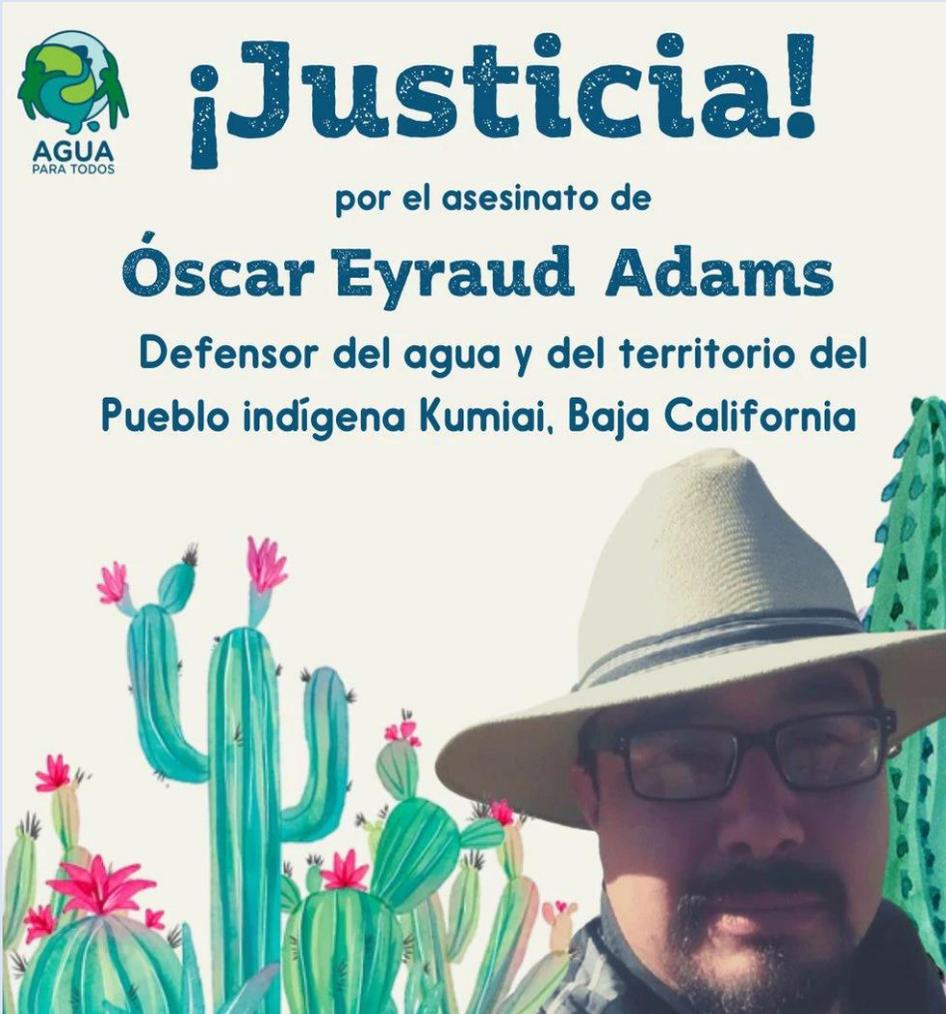
# Plataforma de Acuerdos Público Comunitarios de Las Americas

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# Mexico

- Citizens' proposal for a Water General Law



# Chile

- New Constitutional Law





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