

Environmental injustices in border regions – case study of water quality and inland excess water

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Abstract

Environmental injustices are newly researched topics in the post socialist countries. The term refers to a situation where environment-related occasions or processes - such as floods or contaminated water - affect mainly deprived people. These injustices evolve ex ante and ex post as well. Revealing evidences of territorial distribution, understanding processes leading to unjust and recognition of the situation by the concerned population is crucial to solve problems.

Since environmental harms cannot be stopped on borders, eliminating them needs cross border cooperation. By the new Territorial Agenda and Horizont 2020 Programs the European Union takes the stress on cooperation, participative planning and social inclusion which is highly recommended in reaching environmental justice as well.

The issue of water quality has always been a priority for developed countries. Fresh and clean water is an initial human right which is strictly regulated in the EU since the Council Directive 98/83/EC entered into force. The accession of the post socialist countries to the EU started fast legal harmonization process in these countries, despite in several settlement water quality standards has not been fulfilled yet. The lack of financial possibilities of local authorities people are supplied with contaminated water. In Hungary, Békés County there are still more than 25% of the settlements and 10% of the population is affected with this problem. As a solution Hungary imports drinking water from Romania. In this paper we examine the water quality changes due to legal harmonisation process and analyse the current situation through statistical data.

There is a lack of healthy drinking water in one hand, but on the other hand there is a surplus in forms of inland excess water. The case of inland excess water is a severe problem of the Great Plain of the Carpathian Basin. It is not only risking agricultural production, but also affects urban built up areas causing health risk. The global climate change results increasing periods of droughts and excess water. The problem is not unique in Hungary, still the solution should be found on regional level between the affected countries. In the paper we examine attitude and opinion of the people who are affected by excess water. One of the main conclusions is that the most of the replicates are not aware of the problem, the perception and the adaptation strategy is different in rural and urban areas.

Keywords: environmental justices, health, CBC, post-socialist, EU legislation, water framework directive, urban-rural divide