Urban Water Systems—A Conceptual Framework

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There can be no doubt that the dominant tradition in urban studies has given scant attention to the universal and structural importance of water in urbanization processes. Peter Hall, in his acclaimed *Cities in Civilization* (1998), does discuss the role of water in the development of Rome, Paris and London, but this volume on cities in civilization has a register with no general entries on either sewage, water supply system, rivers, canals, or aqueducts. In the same author’s book on the future of cities from 2002, the water issue is of marginal interest (Hall, 2002). A summary of the content of all the volumes of the journal *Urban Studies* between 2006 and 2012 shows that out of 14,363 pages, only 86 pages were devoted to the water issue. These pages were not concerned with the physical or man-made environment impacting city development and affected by city development, or with its role in shaping patterns of social activities, power, or control. The few articles dealt with water as a case in studies of political-economic issues, mainly and not surprisingly the water-pricing issue. There were altogether four articles that dealt with such issues. None analyzed the interaction between water systems and cities, and how these impacted the social and economic life of the people in the cities. The book with the all-including title *Understanding the City* (Eade and Mele, 2002) does not give the water issue any attention whatsoever. A textbook in sociology in an influential series on sociology in the twenty-first century, *The World of Cities*, are only dealing with social aspects of urbanization, although it claims to be broad and comprehensive in its outlook. The book promises to “take a journey across time and space, over the urban landscape and to be historical and comparative in perspective” (Orum and Xiangming Chen, 2003: xi). It has, however, no discussion on the relationship between cities and water whatsoever, and carries not one reference to either water, rivers, sewage or waterways and canals (Orum and Xiangming Chen, 2003). Theoretical books on urban politics are neither concerned with the urban/water issue and how it frames and shapes both power relations in cities and makes footprints in the water landscape (see, for example, Parker, 2003; and Davies and Imboscio, 2009). This volume and article takes as a starting point that modern urban studies have persistently tended to