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GRADUATE SCHOOL: WASS / NETHUR**ENGLISH PROJECT TITLE:** THE TRANSNATIONALISATION OF LOCAL WATER BATTLES: Water accumulation by agribusinesses in Peru and Ecuador and the politics of corporate social responsibility**DUTCH PROJECT TITLE:** De transnationalisatie van locale waterstrijd: water accumulatie door agribusiness in Peru en Ecuador en de praktijk van Corporate Social Responsibility**FINANCING:** NWO-WOTRO (Integrated Programme)**EXPECTED PROJECT PERIOD from 15 September 2011 till 15 September 2016****CO-OPERATION outside WUR**

Netherlands, other universities	:	Utrecht University
institutes, research stations	:	
other organisations	:	Solidaridad (Utrecht); SOMO
International organisations such as FAO, WHO	:	EPSU/European Public Services Union, FAO, IWMI, CAMAREN-Ecuador, SIPAE-Ecuador, CESA-Ecuador, ITDG-Peru, IPROGA-Peru, Justicia Hidrica alliance (international, IWE-coordinated)
Foreign universities and organisations	:	Catholic University (PUCP)- Peru Un. Andina S. Bolivar - Ecuador IMDEA-Madrid, Spain

SUMMARY OF THE PROBLEM DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES (in English)

The programme investigates transnational processes of water resource accumulation and contamination by agri-business companies in arid areas in Ecuador and Peru, and explores societal responses to such processes. The programme's starting point lies in the rapidly increasing redirection of water towards agri-business companies. This causes a competition between 'South-North' virtual water exports on the one hand, and existing uses and users on the other. Favoured by permissive government policies, the growth of water intensive crops has led to the accumulation of water rights by agri-business companies and the emergence of new social relations of production which together have caused an accelerated social differentiation along axes of class, gender and ethnicity.

Reactions and resistance to such changes do not just include on-the-ground protests, but increasingly move upwards towards efforts to change national and international laws and investment policies. Indeed, the growth of agro-business companies and virtual water exports goes accompanied with important shifts in how and where water is controlled: from government regulation towards investment agreements and from regional and national to international scales. This shows for instance in consumer pressures to include 'the water issue' in fair and sustainable production trademarks; multinational companies' engagement in 'corporate social responsibility' and 'water stewardship' agreements; and user collectives jumping scales to defend their water and food sovereignty, or demand fair labour conditions. So far, the success of these actions has been limited at best, while certification schemes and stewardship arrangements are largely dominated by Northern entities and do not include the voices and perspectives of local inhabitants and dispossessed water users.

This programme explores these issues for high-water-consuming crops (flowers, vegetables, fruits, and biofuels exports) in Peru and Ecuador. It investigates how globalizing water extraction and virtual water exports change existing labour-and property relations, examines the strategies that local collectives devise to cope with this re-patterning of livelihoods, and explores opportunities and perspectives for articulating their demands with international producer-consumer networks, fair trade and CSR initiatives at diverse scales. We use a grounded comparative and an inter- and transdisciplinarity approach that cuts across the boundaries of the natural and social sciences. By embedding the research results in trade relations and regulatory and grassroots' action, and through a shared problem formulation and an explicit inclusion of local stakeholders' perspectives, the research combines academic with action research with the purpose of contributing towards a more democratic, equitable water management and better environmental conflict resolution.

The objective of the programme is:

To support new perspectives and strategies for articulating local water struggles with global water stewardship, fair trade and CSR initiatives, through the study of the impacts of water accumulation, virtual water export and water contamination by agribusiness on community livelihoods in Ecuador and Peru in relation to practices, rule making and discourses in national legislation, producer certification and private codes of conduct.

Specific objective 1 (scientific significance):

To acquire deeper knowledge about the processes of concentration of water rights, re-patterning of local production relations, and virtual water export, and explore how local water and livelihood struggles (can) articulate with international producer-consumer relations, schemes of CSR and water stewardship.

Specific objective 2 (relevance for development):

To improve dialogues, develop capacity and inform policy advocacy actions of the established academic and civil society water networks in both countries, partly by better linking them to international consumer, fair trade and CSR networks, in order to contribute to more democratic, equitable water management and better environmental conflict resolution.

Specific objective 3 (international collaboration):

To foster international cooperation among water user, producer and consumer organizations, their interaction with international research centres and universities, and extend the Latin American research, training and advocacy alliance on equitable and democratic water policies by fostering collaborative linkages with international producer-consumer research and solidarity organizations.