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Workshop 1: Are there lessons to be learned for future water management from the *unexpected properties* of water and from the *cult status* of water as a *luxury* item or an item of *necessity*?

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All over the world in many different cultures, water has been and still is a “holy object”. It is part of a religious cult and therefore treated with respect by its consumers. Although this cult status given to water seems to be out-of-date in the western world, there are still remaining influences in our daily life. A simple experiment showed that people turn off running water, but ignore a light that is switched on. Besides this “inherited” special relation to water, its fascinating physical and chemical properties could lead to an enhanced consciousness of the importance of this element (e.g. environmental education).

Knowledge about the molecular (and unexpected) properties of water could be used in future engineering technologies. An already present example of this is the membrane technology used in water purification.

Technological problems in the area of water are a minor problem. Often, there exist practical solutions. The much bigger challenge is the implementation of these technologies where they are needed most. Unstable governments and cultural differences make this task difficult. A more stable political system and more importantly, a decrease in poverty levels could change this mindset.

When regarding the water problem, an equivalent to the vision of the 2000W society from the energy area is not adequate. Such a system is the result of an averaging process which should be omitted due to the fact that global differences are enormous. Access to water is primarily a local problem. It was concluded that there is no need for a global water government. Water is just one piece in the complex mosaic of international interdependencies. Many other factors have to be considered in the bargaining processes that take place between different countries.

In early times, a higher awareness of the importance of a long-term view was guaranteed. A farmer knew that his sons would be farmers too and so, he used his land in a reasonable way. In the world of ‘shareholder value’, the short-time view has replaced the long-term view. If you only seek value today, there will be nothing left after 50 years. Hence, in the end we need legal tools at both the national and international level. In this context problems can not be solved without stronger governance at a global level.