

Islands Without Water?

Study Course on Water Use on Mediterranean Islands offered by the University of Münster's Centre for Environmental Research

By Manfred A. Lange and Dörte Poszig

Water already is and will increasingly become a very scarce resource. Water-related problems are especially challenging for islands which largely depend on precipitation. On many Mediterranean islands, the demand for water is already greater than the supply and will presumably increase. But how can this scarce resource be allocated between the various user groups - agriculture, tourism, households and industry? And what conflicts for water do exist? How did the generations before us make use of this valuable resource in the Mediterranean region? And how can an equitable and sustainable water management look like? Twenty-four graduate students from 12 European countries addressed these and many other questions during the two-week long Advanced Study Course SUSTAINIS ("Sustainable Use of Water on Mediterranean Islands: Conditions, Obstacles and Perspectives") which was organized by the Centre for Environmental Research at the University of Münster, Germany. The course, which was funded by the European Commission, was successfully held in Agia Napa at the southern coast of Cyprus in September/October 2003. The objective of the course was to illustrate the complex relationships between natural processes and societal decisions which govern the water household of Mediterranean islands. In addition, the importance of interdisciplinary research and cooperation between science, politics, and affected societal stakeholder groups was stressed. For this reason, the students and graduates which came from the natural and social sciences, and engineering disciplines – e.g. agro economics, political science, environmental science and chemistry - met 23 "water experts" of various nationalities and disciplines from universities, research institutes, international organizations, and business. In eight course modules, during lectures, discussion forums, group work and field trips, aspects of current water use, existing conflicts as well as the historical and cultural background of water in the Mediterranean region were addressed. Questions dealing with the basic geological and hydrological characteristics of the water supply on Mediterranean islands, and the question which influence the present climate and possible climate change have on the water supply were discussed as well. At the end of the course, two important questions were focussed on: how will the European Water Framework Directive be implemented till 2015, and how can an equitable and sustainable water management generally look like? The enthusiasm and great interest of the student participants as well as the dedication and expertise of the lecturers have been the major factors for the success of SUSTAINIS, and the feedback received from the students and lecturers alike was very positive. The shared experience of all SUSTAINIS participants to find answers to urgent questions when it comes to water use and management on Mediterranean islands – across the borders of their nationalities and disciplines – was

a great stimulus to deal with global problems in an interdisciplinary and cross-boundary manner in the future as well.

For more information, please contact the coordinators of the course, Prof. Dr. Manfred Lange (+49-251-83-33591; fax +49-251-833-6100; langema@uni-muenster.de) or Ms. Dörte Poszig (+49-251-83-38465; fax +49-251-833-8464; poszig@uni-muenster.de), or see SUSTAINIS web site (<http://www.uni-muenster.de/Umweltforschung/sustainis/sustainis.htm>). To place an order for the free course proceedings, please contact the coordinators of SUSTAINIS.