Empowerment of discourses in environmental economic policies: The case of French water management

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Résumé

Abstract : Empowerment of discourses and subjective perceptions is a real issue for economic policy makers, even in the environmental field in order to promote public acceptance. Q methodology appears as a transparent and operational alternative to complement traditional economic tools as it catches subjectivity of perceptions on a huge variety of topics. This paper offers an overview of some theoretical and empirical applications of its use in environmental and economic public policies and an illustration on water governance. Our study, conducted in a region of France on 35 participants by face-to-face interviews, highlights the usefulness of such a method to understand consensus and disagreements between a large diversity of stakeholders on the controversial use of water. Thus, participants sorted 33 statements representing means to preserve and manage the resource in a better way. This study deals with various topics: reduction of domestic consumption, reduction of agricultural and industrial consumption, preservation of the resource in quality and quantity, city planning and innovation, water governance and information, solidarity and intergenerational issues. We finally obtained five perspectives of thoughts (Active management guided by the tradeoff quantity/quality, Everyone's involvement for a sustainable management of water, Tackle local issues thanks to knowledge, Technological optimization to compensate lack of citizen investment and Pricing and regulation to support water preservation). Concretely, we develop these views as a decision support tool on water management to calibrate potential action scenarios for economic policy makers.

Mots-Clés: Q Methodology, Water policy, France, Environmental economics

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