The traditional water supplies have always been public services. Municipalities have supplied fountains and aqueducts for direct use of the population. Water supplies for collective use were free in the pre-industrial period. Although, in times of drought, municipal control became stricter by means of taxes or regulations that could ensure the public service. The start of new consumers habits associated with modern urban life modified seriously this municipal competence. Therefore, new formulas had to be found which would improve the operation of the modern system of water supply (MSWS). Basically, the solution adopted was to transfer operating and financial aspects to individuals and private companies by means of legal administrative concessions. A pro-rata rate was usually established representing a price for the supply, in the modern sense of the term, privatising the previously public service.

1. A sector both public and private

In fact, the most significant financial advance of the 19th century was the high-level financing of large-scale fixed investments by debt with long-term amortisation rates. At a previous stage it had been necessary to resort to donations and to new taxes, normally indirect, to finance these public works modestly. Therefore, the new systematic use of long-term commercial credit could be considered to be one of the main vehicles of the MSWS [see Mátés, 1999, 41-49].

The historical evolution in Spain has followed a clear pattern. Traditionally it was considered that water could not be sold and of course the water was not «an article of common trade». This obviously contradicted the emerging principles asking sharply for «freedom of exchange for all kinds of goods» [Rueda Laffond, 1994, 38]. Since the beginning of the 19th century municipal management of water supplies...
was highly criticized. It is obvious that an institutional change was taking place, and that this change affected the economic modernization that was beginning to take place in Spain [TEDDE, 1994, 525-538]. Private enterprises were granted complete freedom of action during the last decades of the 19th century but throughout the 20th century this freedom diminished and the intervention of public bodies became more effective.

This new approach provoked the creation of a high number of private enterprises in Spain from 1840 onwards. This tendency did not eliminate the strong controversy arising in the political and social sectors, during the first third of the 20th century, concerning the advisability of recovering some town services for municipal management. Some investment in public services was thought to be profitable in the long term. These characteristics obviously attracted the attention of businessmen and investors. There were contractors and promoters whose business consisted building up the water network, with the intention of either exploiting the water supply system for a certain time or transferring the concession afterwards or selling the company.

Although there were some quite profitable enterprises, it was plain to see that the general tendency in the 20th century moved towards municipal management. This tendency showed up more clearly from 1940 onwards, when the sector went through difficult times after the Spanish Civil War. Many enterprises transferred their concessions to municipal management. The high investments required to cover growing demand and the fix-price policy for water supplies hampered the normal development of private companies. This meant that only those businesses with significant turn-over rates could meet the heavy financial requirements demanded by the post-war Spanish economy. This was one of the reasons that led to the progressive transfer of water supply systems to municipal management, even though we should point out that private intervention did not completely disappear from the sector.

The public nature of water networks gave rise to a growing interest on the part of politicians in controlling it. This created a chorus of supporters of municipal control. This tendency, framed by the inflation problem on one hand and the blind political attitudes on the other, turned out to be the most destabilizing elements of the concession model. Inflation went through several stages. Initially, it broke the viable balance of the old pricing systems. Next, the Administration did not accept the revaluation of fixed assets but, on occasions, was prepared to consider modest increases in variable operating costs. Meanwhile, the central government and municipalities reinforced their interventionist aspirations. Finally, the updating of the rates turned into a political weapon against the private award holders. Consequently, private enterprise in the second half of the 20th century encountered great difficulties to achieve fast profitability, and this was the very reason that explains the reluctance to invest and the growing leadership of municipal institutions.

This path towards deeper municipal control was financed from public funds while the variable costs were financed through slightly increased water rates. At times, municipalities financed their investments with special taxes. The Central Government invested in high profile public works which affected several cities, and, at the request of concerned municipalities, financed them partially.

Finally, another cause affecting the public-private debate was the inability of many concessionaires to improve their networks in accordance with the growth of the cities, avoiding an increase of tariffs. During the first decades of the 20th century mobilizations and popular protests against private concessionaires were quite frequent in many cities and their main reason were, usually, rate increases which lend to the questioning of private management in the sector 1. But usually dominant attitudes were in opposition to private management of public services.

2. STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPANISH URBAN WATER SUPPLY SECTOR

Throughout the entire 19th century, private companies took the initiative in the sector of water supply, taking advantage of the precarious situation of municipal financial and managerial resources. Malfunctions associated with the growth of demand that could not be met by public bodies, forced local politicians on many occasions, searching for fast and effective results, to grant these services to private owners. But, in any case, privatization was for them the last and less desirable choice.

Many of these firms were established in medium-size towns where they reached an optimum level in economies of scale, an easier lese of local political oligarchies and solid guarantees against the risk of the entry of competitors threatening their monopolistic control. This strategy was very usual in the urban public services sector and it is worth underlining that Albert Broder, for example, explicitly uses this argument when explaining the performance of the French businessman Lebon in the gas industry, who chose towns of that size 2. Once established, the profitability of the business should be impelled by the expected growth of the city and the foreseeable rise of the standards of living, which would increase the number of clients.

A fast process of development in the sector occurred in certain cities. This provoked a variety of relationships between the public and private initiatives complex and changing with time. Figure 1 offers a view of the evolution in the number of water supply companies set up throughout all this period.

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which took charge of their water networks founding new public or mixed corporations which were usually very inefficient. Only in few cases, albeit significant ones, the management of the service remained under surviving private firms.

3. **First Private Enterprises (1840-1899)**

At the outset, private initiatives grew slowly, without any substantial change in their main traditional characters. Changes gradually took place encouraged by the gradual problem-solving process and the managerial experience gained after the setting up of the first companies in the most commercially promising town centres. Afterwards, once the main technical and financial problems had been solved, the expansion of demand and the improvement of the standard of living in many cities lead the companies until their maturity. But is worth noting that in the 19th century the growth of Spanish cities was limited because of the retarded demographic modernisation; this is evident in the limited transfer of population from agricultural to industrial activities. Unlike as the case of England, where this process began around 1800, in Spain the demographic transition began modestly in the second half of the 19th century and it was very limited up to 1880, with the obvious effects on the subject under study.

Even though we can find early initiatives since the 1840’s, the real beginning of Spanish MSWS occurs between 1865 and 1872. This was a difficult political and financial period which witnessed the foundation of several small enterprises around Barcelona. This represented a trial and error process of small scale initiatives whose number diminished during the following years. But afterwards their scale and stability improved seriously in the area, as showed by the AGUAS SUBTERRÁNEAS DEL RÍO LLORREGAT company (1871) and the AGUAS DE BARCELONA company (1882), which later absorbed the LLOREGAT Co. becoming the most important private water supplier in Spain.

This happened in the most developed area of the country; in Madrid, on the other hand, we must stress the State’s direct intervention in the water supply problem. The only solution it could find was to charge the initial investment to a public body called CANAL DE ISABEL II (1851) who managed under public control the water supply service of the Spanish capital from its origins until today. This early public initiative represented an important exception, without any other parallel in the history of Spanish public enterprise of the 19th century.

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3 In the following pages, when quoting a company name we will mention, in brackets, the year of its foundation.
Table 1
MAIN PRIVATE COMPANIES IN THE SPANISH WATER SUPPLY SECTOR FROM 1871 TO 1898

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firms</th>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS DE DENIA</td>
<td>Dénia</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS SUBTERRÁNEAS DEL RÍO LLOBREGAT</td>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA UNIÓN</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDUSTRIA CASTELLANA</td>
<td>Valladolid</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPRESA GENERAL DE CONDUCCIÓN DE AGUAS Y GAS</td>
<td>Lérida</td>
<td>1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS DEL CHÍVORA</td>
<td>Badajoz</td>
<td>1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANAL DE JACA</td>
<td>Jaca</td>
<td>1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS DE SANTANDER</td>
<td>Santander</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEVILLE WATER WORKS LTD</td>
<td>Seville</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS DE BARCELONA</td>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS POTABLES DE CÁDIZ</td>
<td>Cádiz</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS POTABLES DE SANTA CATALINA DEL MONTE</td>
<td>Murcia</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS DE BURGOS</td>
<td>Burgos</td>
<td>1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS POTABLES Y MEJORAS DE VALENCIA</td>
<td>Valencia</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS DE ARTÉA</td>
<td>Pamplona</td>
<td>1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA ANTISEQUIA</td>
<td>Elche</td>
<td>1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGUAS DE ALCANTAR</td>
<td>Alicante</td>
<td>1898</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the period 1876-1885 there was a significant number of new private enterprises, particularly in 1878, 1881 and 1883. The most important of them are quoted in Table I. From 1886 and 1900 there seems to have been a regular flow of new initiatives, which reached their peak in 1894 searching for a high potential per capita demand and possibilities of diversification. In the old system of water supply, some of these companies promoted both, urban water supply systems and irrigation schemes. Particularly in the southwest, the driest area of the country, most of the water supply companies followed this model with, on occasions, picturesque company names as LA ANTISEQUIA (the 'Anti-Drought') of Elche (Alicante).

In the beginning there was the logical predominance of small enterprises. These were usually set up by one or several independent businessmen, usually with limited financial resources; this seriously curtailed the growth capacity of these firms. However, when the economic conditions improved and larger investments were required, this encouraged the larger scale enterprises to absorb the original small ones.

On many occasions these initiatives gave rise to associations of foreign and Spanish promoters or even purely foreign ones. At the beginning Spanish businessmen reacted unenthusiastically, because they lacked confidence that the market would become dynamic enough. Moreover, they were not prepared to invest large amounts of money in a type of business in which they did not feel competent.

Evidence shows that, at the beginning, private companies suffered similar difficulties to those municipalities to make the necessary investment for this kind of service. This was a common situation throughout Spain where there were at least two or three different alternatives leading to foreign capital intervention. Many initiatives of Spanish businessmen were so poorly designed that many small companies disappeared after a few years, transferring their assets and concessions to more substantial firms. In other cases the obvious evidence of the industry limitations forced Spanish entrepreneurs to look for foreign financial and technological support. We can also find many examples of direct foreign promotion of initiatives in the sector, particularly common in the mining areas, where foreign engineers were very numerous and well established.

4. THE MATURITY STAGE OF PRIVATE MANAGEMENT (1900-1936)

In general terms, the Spanish economic situation during the first years of the 20th century shows a clear expansion in many areas which are particularly evident in the world of high finance. It is well known that many significant companies were founded in those years, particularly modern banks, big scale electricity suppliers and new heavy industries [see TORTELLA, 1994, and NÚÑEZ, 1998, in GARCÍA RUIZ, ed.]; this was usually explained by the unexpected but direct effects of the abrupt end of the Cuban War. In particular, as Xavier Tafunell demonstrated some years ago, there was a significant increase in the flow of profits which supported this financial expansion [TAFUNELL, 1996]. It is true to say that financial growth benefited the expansion of investment in the whole urban services sector, not only from private investors; many town councils also promoted significant direct investments, particularly those of the biggest cities [NÚÑEZ, 2001].

The water supply sector benefited from great urban public work projects —docks, urban enlargements, renewal of buildings, etc.— promoting an economic evaluation of sites and properties [see PÉREZ GARCÍA and NOREÑA, 1992, 461-472]. This trend gave rise to a third wave of investments in water supply enterprises which then included a large number of companies. At this moment the water supply sector reaped the benefits of the economies of scale and the external influences of sewage works under construction, establishing a new «water culture» among consumers. At least, the sector seems to be firmly established and the problems and risks of the previous stage almost forgotten.

Meanwhile, a considerable body of legislation improved their nature of public service and gradually the Government initiated a new interventionist attitude granting some modest economic support to the new water supply and sanitation projects.

During the first decades of the 20th century there were many attempts to reach business agreements and direct financial relations with Government initiatives. This
process brought about vertical integration and horizontal specialization, contrary to the path followed during the 19th century.

After 1910, under the pressure of financial expansion generated by World War I, the number of new water societies grew sharply, especially in 1910-1914 and 1925-1934. Later, in the twenties, under the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, the economy showed a certain dynamism even if the pace of creation of new enterprises came to a halt. The moment for financial reorganization had arrived for many societies in the entire sector of urban services—including water supply—and beyond. In the thirties, under the Republican Regime, the total number of new societies fell sharply, even though the amount of capital remained stable.

This impetus to invest was accompanied by a wave of innovations related to the improvement of urban life style. The dynamism of demand remained during the 1920s founded on a positive economic situation and the improvement of the incomes of urban workers, which favoured the diffusion of the types of consumption which up to then were considered to be exclusive to certain limited social groups.

Contemporarily this pattern, initially peculiar among big cities, was also followed by an increasing number of new companies established in small and medium-sized towns. On occasions even small companies invested intensively, searching not only for their industrial expansion but simply for their survival. Throughout these stages there was a direct relationship between the speed of growth of demand and the investment activity. It is very difficult to find precise data on the question of the role of the growing interventionist policy on the increase of water supply companies. In general terms we shall consider that political protection and, particularly, monopolies—in fact awarded by local bodies—had a great impact on the consolidation of many small enterprises and, obviously, on the previous decision-taking process. This theory is in agreement with the high-risk-aversion attitudes, reputed to have been very common among contemporary Spanish industrialists [see Torrella, 1994, 179-195; Mates, 1998, 187-212].

During the centennial period covering from 1840 to 1936 the modernization of water supply to domestic clients was closely related to urban renewal in a large number of Spanish cities. The initial lack of experience and economic foresight of the projects, despite legal dispositions which compelled businessmen and municipalities to study detailed and general technical plans, prevented adequate long and medium-term solutions. Historical and even significant cities such as Cadiz, Jerez, Valladolid, Granada and Valencia, not endowed with very dynamic economies, offer good examples of these difficulties 4. To a great extent this is due to the fact that this kind of investment could not be divorced from major town-planning works. Usually, a global solution to the city's requirements was needed which was influenced by numerous essential factors such as the effective development of economies of scale and the establishment of a monopoly. But on many occasions new municipal plans and renewed public expectations contrasted sharply with the technical and economic limitations of many of the companies. Those political changes that we should consider as the beginning of local modernisation in many areas soon clashed with the interests of the Municipal Councils and those of private concessionaires.

During the mentioned stage, some water companies introduced technical and managerial staff and a clear tendency to separate property from management. This heralded the arrival of the modern industrial enterprise in a process fully concordant with the well known scheme of Alfred Chandler Jr. [cf. Chandler, 1990]. Obviously, this scheme was followed basically only by some among the few large-scale enterprises, such as Aguas Putables y Mejoras de Valencia Co. (1890) and, above all, Aguas de Barcelona Co. (1882).

5. THE INTERVENTIONIST REACTION OF THE STATE (1939-1970)

In Spain, from 1921 onwards, the interventionist policies of the governments were aimed at the acquisition of direct control over public services. This attempt, which dates back to the 19th century, became stronger after the establishment of the Estatus Municipal (Municipal Law), passed in 1924. From then on the guideline followed by municipalities was to remove as many private enterprises as possible from water supply concessions. As could be expected, private investment in town amenities tended to drop.

This tendency grew sharply after 1939, impelled by both post-war economic conditions and dominant ideological attitudes among new local bureaucrats. Consequently, the development of private companies in the water supply sector followed quite a different path from others, many of which flourished unstoppably from 1943 till 1973 while no new significant water supply societies were created, with only a few exceptions such as the relatively important Aguas de Saradell (1949).

There are no particular reasons to explain this tendency apart from those supporting the economic interventionism of the Franco regime—when the State distorted price mechanisms heavily— which became a real creeping confiscation of private investors in the water supply sector—particularly during the forties—forcing, in many cases, the substitution of private concessionaries for public managers 2. This process was later

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4 See Barragán (1993 and 1994); Gigosos and Saravia (1993); Aguilar (1990).

5 As samples of the government hostility towards private foreign enterprise during the first stage of the Franco regime, and some of the affairs engendered in its shadow, see Gómez Mendoza, 1994, and Núñez, 2001.
supported by direct State subsidies for major public water works during the fifties and sixties. Those processes are today under revision by specialists in search of more accurate and realistic conclusions.

After the war the total number of water supply networks in Spain was 1,241, whereas the total number of towns with water supplies was 1,155, which means in fact only one company per town. Only a few of them, usually the biggest and more advanced ones, had two or more water supplies, such as Barcelona. In Barcelona, together with the dominant company Aguas de Barcelona and its subsidiaries, there were sixteen enterprises of lesser importance, most of which were simply owners of ventures for the exploitation of a spring or a water-mine, and a small pipeline. In Madrid, apart from the Canal de Isabel II, there was the Hidráulica Santillana (1905) and Cantabria S.A. Four companies, headed by Aguas Potables y Mejoras de Valencia (1890) served that city. Some minor cities and towns such as Gandía or El Escorial were also served by several societies. In the same way, only a few societies were serving more than one single town. A further example of this could be found in Aguas de Barcelona—which was controlling many small exploitations in neighbouring towns such as Badalona, Mataró, and many other smaller municipalities—. There were also two companies serving the surrounding area of Valencia—Aguas Potables y Mejoras de Valencia and Aguas Potables y Riegos—. In other cases such as Sevilla, Burgos and Valladolid private enterprises and municipal services coexisted for a long time.

Ten years later, data from the Servicio Sindical de Estadística (the Francisco Trade-Union Statistics Service) points to the existence of 1,168 networks responsible for water supply services. Among them, the great majority—785—dealt with urban supply, whereas there were only 375 private enterprises, which represented slightly more than 32 per cent of the sector. In any case, we should consider these figures more accurately because they seem to contradict the ideas previously mentioned; but this contradiction could be only fictitious if we consider that the data included some minimal supplies, or simple springs, without any commercial relevance in many small towns. In practice, most of these supplies were not functioning—a phenomenon that emerges clearly from some pages of the statistics—and they were included simply because they had not been removed from official records [Servicio Sindical de Estadística (Spain), 1950, 90-95]. Even up to 1940 there were many villages which obtained their supply from meagre springs, and, at times of drought, water had to be brought from far away.

The worst indicator revealed by the mentioned statistics seems to have been the very low level of consumers really served by the water networks at this time [cf. Sorribés, 1992, 211]. Only 1,117,437 domestic subscribers in 1950 and not many more than about 38,000 industries. This situation contrasted sharply with the previous steady path development followed by Spanish private water supply enterprises. Before

the war these companies were able to undertake complex and expensive projects which covered the continuous increase of demand. Up to this moment administrative control was limited to granting the concessions and to supervising the strict application of the authorised rates and subsequent regulations. Afterwards, a growing number of rules began to restrict the decision-taken process of the private enterprises while the increase of demand, the growing inflation, the worsening of the quarrels over rates and service quality provoked the worsening of the old controversy over the ownership and the management of the service threatened the private concessionaires. Afterwards the State used its control over rates and the anti-inflation policy as an instrument which restricted the autonomy of private water companies [see Linati Bosch, 1966, 658 and Antolín, 1996, 251-252]. In fact, and despite the economies of scale and the lowering charges of devaluated financial costs, the frozen rates paralysed all improvements, particularly the technological renewal and the spreading of the supply network. An additional reason to be considered was the expiry of the concession 99 year period awarded to many societies, which were founded on many occasions during the last decades of the 19th century as we have seen previously.

Obviously, under these conditions, private firms were not able to improve their investment significantly and the Government became the head of the large scale water policy. It was the Government which managed, by means of the so-called Confederaciones Hidrográficas (Regional Water Authorities), a set of administrative organisms founded during the twenties for every major basin in the peninsula. Therefore, the State became the main direct water supplier and the builder of the necessary water works, expressing thus its will to exert a real and direct control over urban and irrigation water management, much of which fell under the responsibility of municipal bodies. From 1940 onwards, the Public Works Ministry—through the Water Works Office—achieved a large and efficient organisation to help towns to overcome their water supply and sanitation problems.

This was also the moment for the expansion of the sewage networks in many cities—an obvious necessity for modern water supply services—which became an additional factor in the establishment of direct municipal management. For institutional and economic reasons the sewage system never attracted sufficient private initiatives willing to oversee its finance and management. The only one significant exception was the Seville Waterworks Ltd. (1883).

Even around 1970 the rates for urban water supply were not high enough to cover the real cost of the service and even less to provide financial backing for the

6 An ambitious policy of great water-works was initiated by the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera during the twenties and highly prosecuted by the government of Franco during the fifties and the sixties.
new works. The Franco regime generated a singular system for financing collective investments, not only in the water supply sector. Some features of this system have exerted their negative influence almost up to the present day. Once the Government had solved the question of the major water works, the management was handed over to the municipalities, usually with fixed maximum rates and always under the inspection of Government bodies [see CANALS ÁLVAREZ, 1955, 513].

The critical situation we have described forced private firms to look for alternative strategies other than the classical cash flow and to explore new sources of finance. Basically, they devised two strategies: to obtain any sort of help from public bodies at any price or to reorganize their managerial structure. The support from the State arrived in the form of significant subsidies. This was particularly normal in cases where the service did not cover the full cost or did not open the door to new investment. This reality effectively hid the true economic situation of firms, and represented a significant burden for the State. With such an interventionist mentality, the Government established new institutions to enforce its will. As an instrument of control for public and private bodies the legislation regulating subsidies established an annual inspection and determined that these private companies were also under the control of the Water Works Office [CANALS ÁLVAREZ, 1995, 566]. Moreover, the wider experience of civil servants in the management of the service, and a considerable increase in economic aid to municipalities, encouraged the progressive withdrawal of private enterprises from the sector.

As a consequence, private concessionaires and municipalities negotiated agreements for the transfer of concessions despite the concession dead lines that had previously been established.

Municipal action in this second half of the century revealed a very significant feature: the incapacity demonstrated by many of them to carry on water supply and sanitation management at a higher territorial scale. This showed more and more clearly the necessity to execute the new infrastructure works under a national perspective, wider than a single municipal district. In this sense, it is worth noting the reorganization of a centenary body such as the CANAL DE ISABEL II — which dealt with the water supply of Madrid and surrounding areas— and the more and more frequent use of municipal consortiums, promoted by the Diputaciones Provinciales (Provincial Authorities).

Nevertheless, some companies succeeded in overcoming all these problems and in carrying out an expansionist policy leading to the control of significant market areas. Once again this was the case of AGUAS DE BARCELONA, which controlled a financial group including several companies developing an organizational strategy that offered a better and easier managerial subdivision than a hierarchic organization. One of the most significant achievements was the foundation of ABASTECIMIENTOS URBANOS Y RURALES (SAUR) (1963), a company which provided the water supply service to several important towns of the Barcelona industrial area, where it obtained new concessions or franchises for the service.

In 1970 there was a small group of surviving water supply enterprises. All of them had obtained wide experience in the management of the service during many years, usually in medium-sized towns. Afterwards, the vast majority were absorbed, sooner or later, by AGUAS DE BARCELONA.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The legislation existing in 1970 kept defending municipal competences in guaranteeing water supply to the population of the respective towns within their administration. Direct municipal management has undoubtedly been the most common formula in Spain since then, but the legal system accepts a modus operandi of both, direct and indirect management which includes diverse possibilities such as municipal direct control, a local company under private regulation, as well as a mixed company, concession and franchise to private companies. By de date in question only seven per cent of the water supply networks was managed by private enterprises, but they were still very significant, controlling the supply to 25 per cent of clients in some of the Spanish wealthiest cities, such as Barcelona, Valencia and their respective metropolitan areas.

In a long-term analysis, the management of the water supply service has been a changing process with a rich variety of organizational models. This process was moved by different factors such as technological change, the changing influence of the markets — closely related to the expansion and growth of the cities — and, of course, their geographical location. Other elements also co-occur in the final configuration of the sector: the merging of many companies, the diverse financial structures and, of course, the development and spreading of financial institutions.

We cannot avoid considering the subject within the disparate historical and political moments which followed one another, and we should also bear in mind the changes in other aspects.