



Water in Africa: Hydro-Pessimism or Hydro-Optimism?

Água em África: Hidro-pessimismo ou Hidro-optimismo

Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto
Porto, Portugal, 2-3 October 2008



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Water management and changing gender relations in Morocco



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Outline

1. Introduction: water, gender and modernization
2. The drinking water supply in the High Atlas
3. Social change, islamicization and threatened masculinity
4. The dialectics of modern water: political and symbolic logics
5. Conclusion

1. Water, gender & modernization

- **The Development storyline**

Modernization through new hardware but also empowerment, participation etc.

» Flowing into villages with the project's clean water supply is a promise of incoming modernity: modern water for modern women«.

Kathleen O'Reilly 2006: 961

- **Ecofeminist storyline**

»Dams, tubewells, water-intensive cultivation, and technology intensive solutions to the drinking water crisis are destroying the feminine principle and sustaining power of water, and destroying women's knowledge and productivity in providing sustenance«.

Vandana Shiva 1989: 184

Relational gender analysis

»Gender analysis needs some care in application in order to avoid two possible pitfalls; an overemphasis on the separation of genders, rather than the integration and interdependence of **gender relations**, and an excessive reliance on materialist analysis, in particular a reduction of „resources“ to mean only physical assets«

Cecile Jackson 1998: 315

Social theory

Constructivist structuralism (Pierre Bourdieu: 1930 - 2002) and
Political economy of signs (Jean Baudrillard: 1929 - 2007)

Research questions

- What is the meaning of the new water supply system?
 - Improvement of living conditions, in particular of women's living condition?
 - Modernization? Progress?

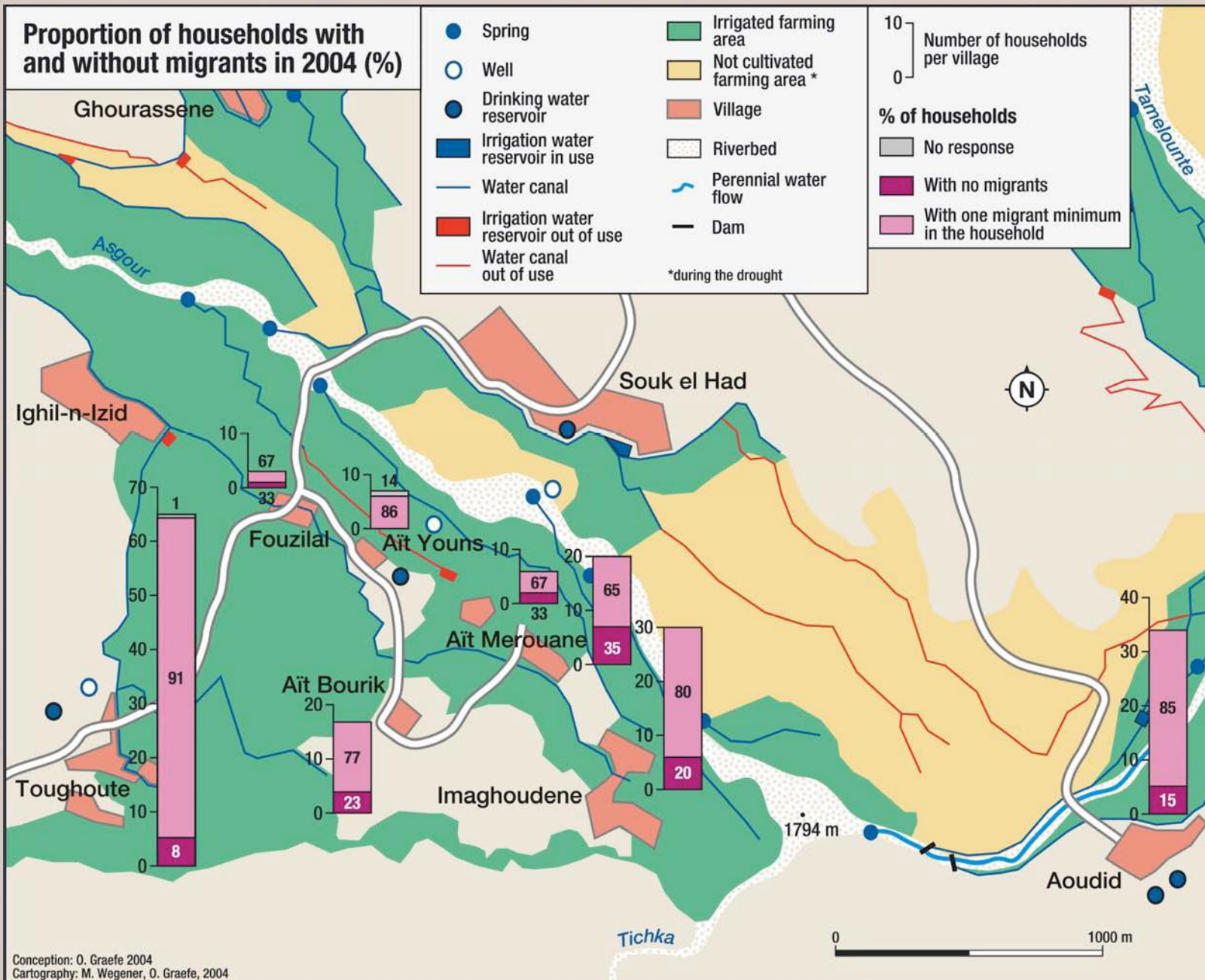
2. The drinking water supply in the High Atlas







Proportion of households with and without migrants in 2004 (%)



3. Social change, islamicization and threatened masculinity

'Islamicization' : increasing stress on Islamic observance and symbolism

Mary Searle-Chatterjee 1994

with consequences for social and political relationships



Islamicization of Berber Society

- Village landscapes
- Increasing gap in illiteracy rates between men and women, especially in rural areas (82 % of illeterate women in 1998)
- Behavioral patterns of women in public
- Changing clothing patterns (headscarves)



Reasons for the threatened masculinity

- New division of labour
 - Delay of the age of marriage
 - Expectations towards men by other men over the control of daughters and sisters
- ➡ Women represent a symbolic value giving access to social and symbolic capital
 - ➡ The masculine honour is measured by the female's reputation and chastity

4. The dialectics of modern water: political and symbolic logics



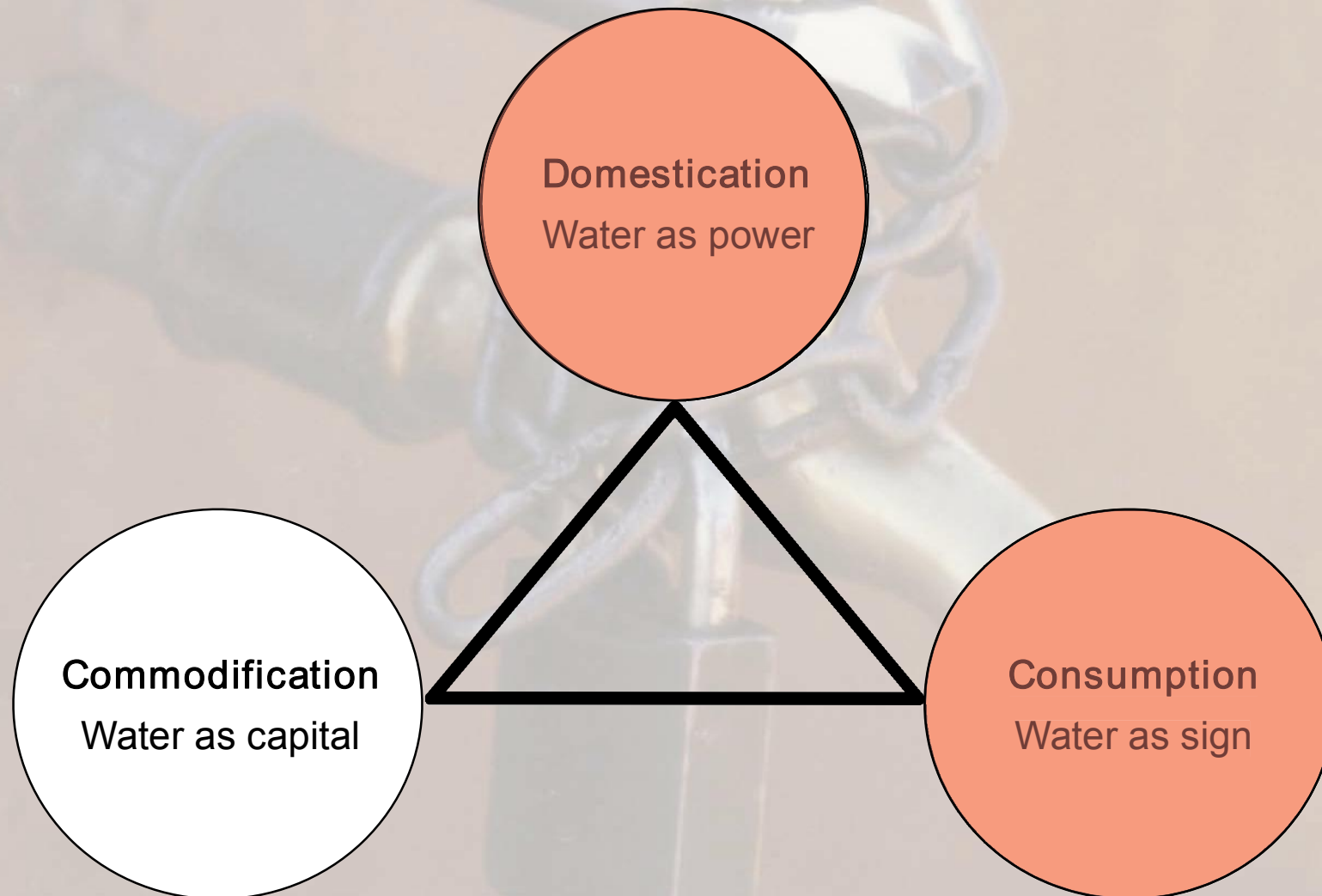
Introduction

Water supply

Social change

Dialectics

Conclusion



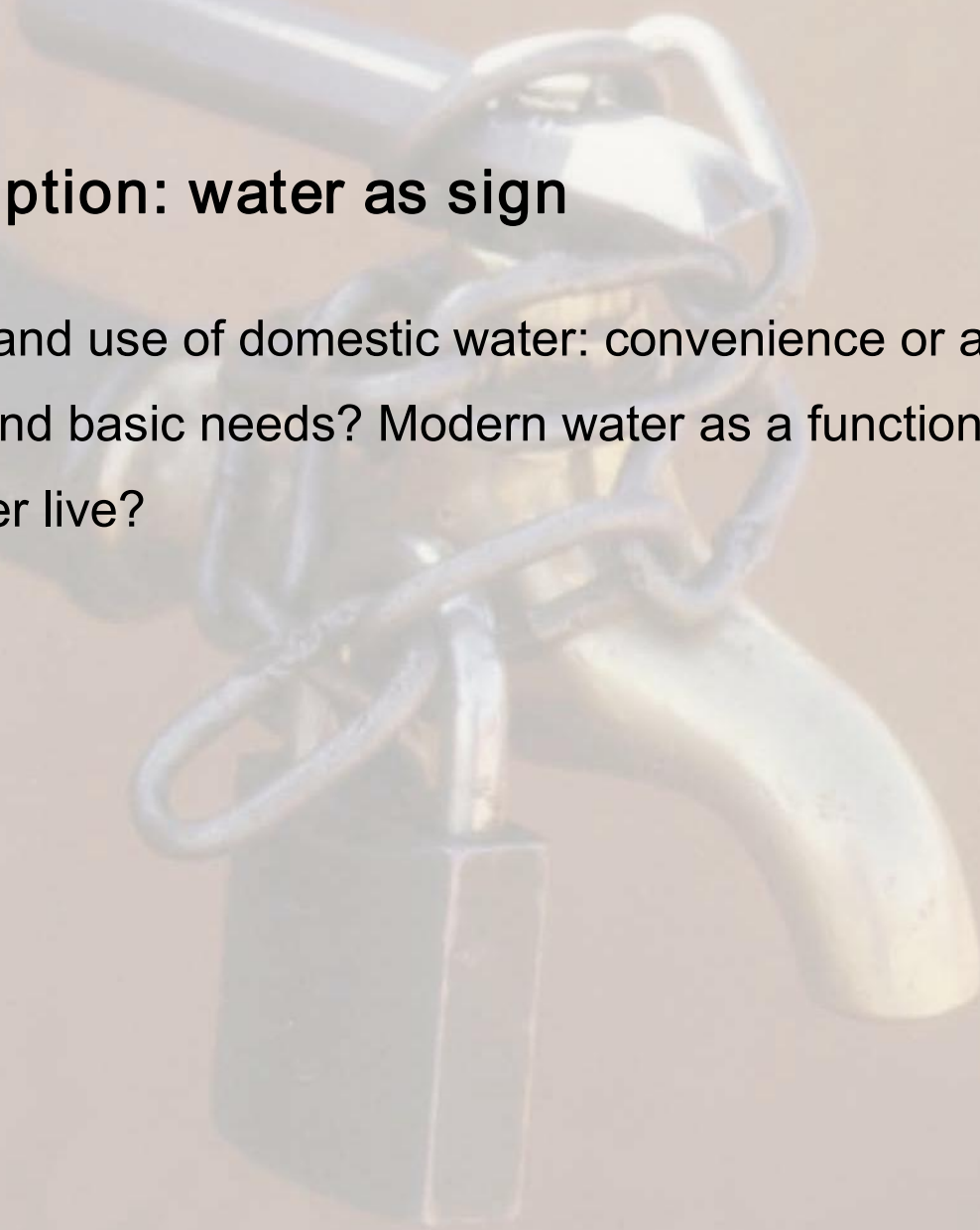
The domestication: water as power

Domestication: control **over** and taming water
disposal of water in the house (lat.: *domus*)

- The disposal of drinking water at home avoid
 - the additional exposure of women in public
 - uncontrolled social contacts with other women
- The construction of the hydraulic infrastructure allowed
 - to centralise the drinking water supply
 - taking control over the water supply by men

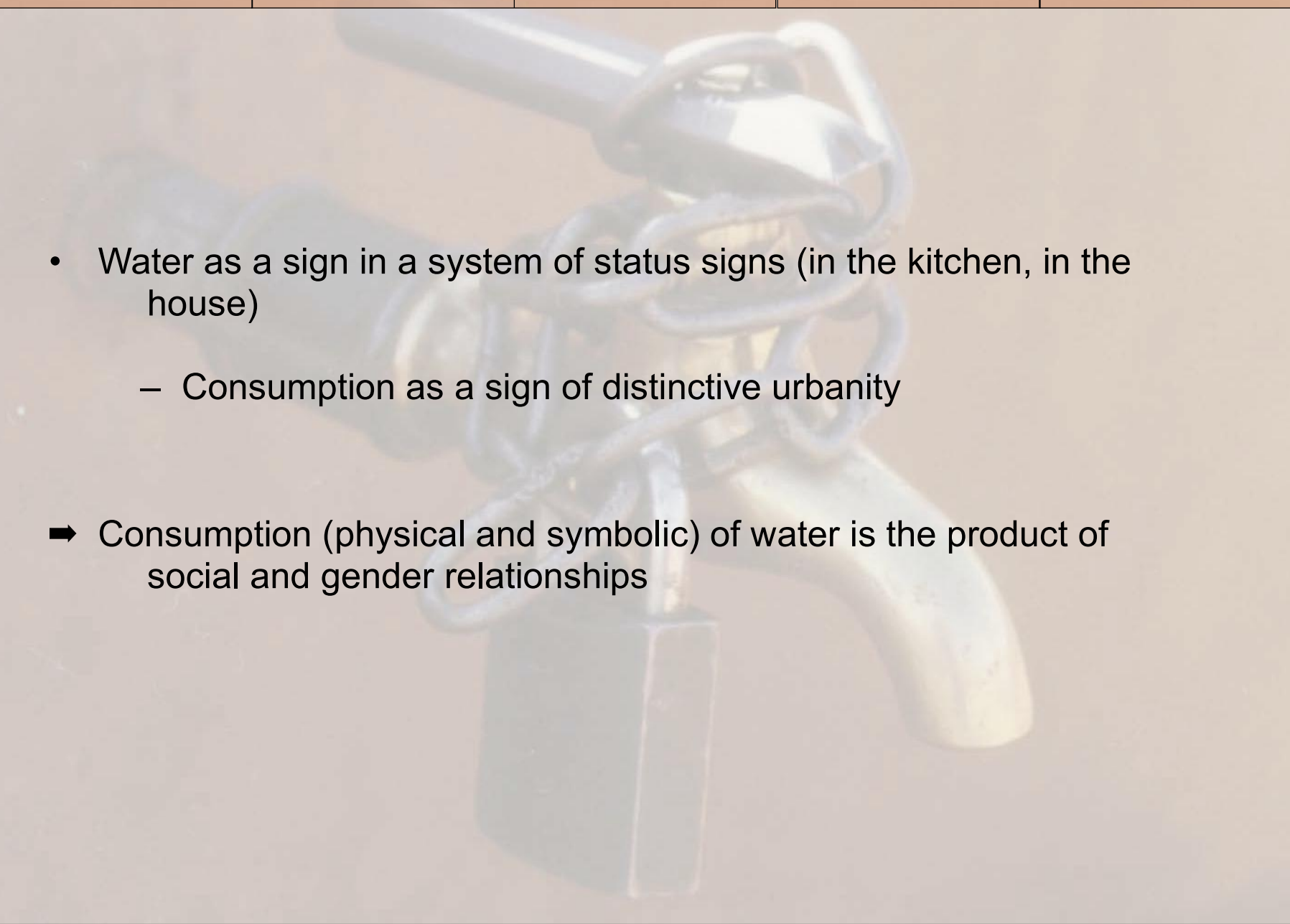
The consumption: water as sign

- Demand and use of domestic water: convenience or answer on drought and basic needs? Modern water as a functional response for a better live?



Functionality of objects

»Derivative from „function“, it suggest that the object accomplishes itself in its exact relationship to the real world and to the needs of human beings. In fact, [...] »functional« does not describe something, which is adapted towards an objective, but which is adapted towards an order or a system: the functionality is the capacity to integrate a whole set. For the object, it's the possibility to exceed (or surpass) precisely its „function“ towards a second function, to become an element of play, of combination, of calculation in a universal system of signs (Baudrillard 1968: 89)

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- Water as a sign in a system of status signs (in the kitchen, in the house)
 - Consumption as a sign of distinctive urbanity
 - ➡ Consumption (physical and symbolic) of water is the product of social and gender relationships

Conclusion

- The new water do reproduce masculine domination
- Gender has to be understood **relationally**
- Objects like processes need to be reflected **dialecticly**
- What kind of appropriation of the new water by women and men will emerge?