

# Center for Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM)

Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

## CBRM Database

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<b>Case Study Name:</b>	Watered-down democratization: modernization versus social participation in water management in Northeast Brazil		
<b>Authors:</b>	Taddei, R		
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<b>Region:</b>	South America		
<b>Country:</b>	Brazil		
<b>Ecosystem Type:</b>			
<b>Social Characteristics:</b>	Remote community		
<b>Scale of Study:</b>	regional		
<b>Resource Type:</b>	Surface water, ground water, watershed		
<b>Type of Initiative:</b>	Research-driven project		
<b>Community Based Work:</b>	Resource management		

<b>Keywords:</b>	Water management, participation, modernization, Northeast Brazil, Ceara
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>This article examines social participation in water management in the Jaguaribe Valley, state of Ceará, Northeast Brazil. It argues that participatory approaches are heavily influenced by the general ideological and symbolic contexts in which they occur, that is, by how participants understand (or misunderstand) what is taking place, and associate specific meanings to things and events. An analysis of these symbolic factors at work sheds light on the potentialities of and limitations on participatory experiences not accounted for in usual structural analyses. In the particular case of Ceará, this article describes how the idea of modernization, which is so pervasive in the ways economic development is presented in Brazil, provides a frame against which other meanings are constructed. In water management arenas, the presentation of participation as an aspect of the general modernization of the state has reorganized meanings and delegitimized some forms of knowledge and economic activities to the detriment of others. As a result, the promotion of equality through participation lost a great deal of efficacy, and this state of affairs provided some degree of social validation for asymmetries in participatory decision making processes.</p>