

## **Water crises management in Marseilles in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century: specificities and temporalities of socio-political answers (1800-1850)**

Until the mid-XIX<sup>th</sup> century, the water supply of the city of Marseilles has always been problematic. Constrained by a mountainous topography within a dry landscape its inhabitants often coped with acute water shortages. For centuries, wells, a small medieval aqueduct more some urban springs were the only water resources.

But, in order to overcome the chronic lack of freshwater, solutions were always temporary and ineffective for supplying poor-quality water... Many river diversion projects planned since the late Middle Ages for providing a reliable resource to the city have failed, without real efficient management from the successive municipalities.

However, this issue became so pressing in the first half of the nineteenth century, thus forcing municipal officials to quickly deal with this problem. Indeed, the combination of a growing population, a booming industry, but above all recurring summer droughts, such as in 1834, drastically diminished the available volume of water for city dwellers. Consequences on the economy and the “urban ambiance” were quick enough but the lack of water mainly resulted in significant sanitary problems, allowing the spread of waterborne diseases.

In this context, we propose to explore policy answers and socio-economic options that have solved the supply problems thanks to the construction of a new aqueduct to carry potable water from the Durance River.

First, after describing the hydro-climatic context of the Provence area during the first half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, we'll present major social, sanitary and economic crises due to the lack of water which impacted Marseilles together with their effects on the local urban dynamic.

Then, we'll analyze public policy answers and challenging technical choices made both by the General Council of the Bouches-du-Rhône Department and the municipality to address the chronic water shortages, mainly during the construction process of the new *Canal de Marseille* from 1839.