

Growth and Scarcity: A Socio-historical Perspective on Western Water Policy

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Thesis

- Western US appears as a land of conflicts for the control of natural resources, at least since the 19th Century (cf. Donald Worster, John Walton, Robert Gottlieb).
- New conflicts over water management are generated by the “mega-drought” affecting the region since the beginning of the 2000’s.
- These conflicts are not only caused and shaped by drought but also by **the coalitions of actors** involved in it, their beliefs and their social position.

Methodology

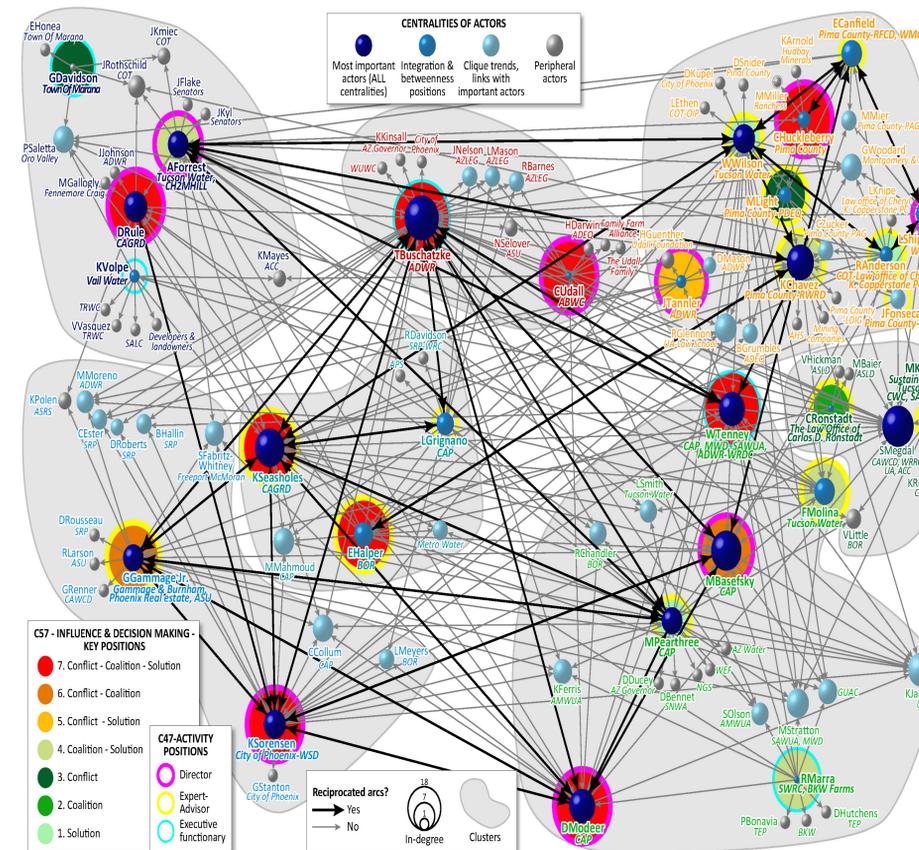
FIRST STEP : A review of works on “water wars” beginning in the late 19th century in the western United States => necessity to understand the historical processes of implementation of water infrastructure in the West.

SECOND STEP : Network analysis and qualitative research: attending professionals meetings, mapping out key institutions and carrying out interviews with professionals in charge of water management.

Historical Moments

PERIOD	STRUCTURAL HISTORY	DOMINANT COALITIONS	BELIEFS
1890s-1920s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Level Speculative economy in the West Big companies owning lands and basic infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New engineers Social reformers and elites of the Western economy Economic elites of the West 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For engineers: Science for progress. For social Reformers: Irrigation to build up a new America of small farmers. For economic elites: Water as an instrument to ensure economic growth of the West
1920s-1960s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-State Level Legal issues to share the Colorado River 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governors, Senators, Lawyers, State Commissions & Agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get as much water as possible for “my” State
1960s-2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Level CAP in Tucson: Urban Sprawl, Water Quality and Mega-Drought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal/County Administrations, Developers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get water as the fuel for urban sprawl and reinforce the local economy.

Network of Actors



Discussion

Some conceptual changes:

- From stakeholders mapping to the space of positions (interests, hierarchies, relations of power)
- From decision making to the space of position takings (relational dimensions of public stances)
- Not a sociology of water but of social uses of water (cf. what agents do)

A structured system of positions:

- The “real world” of stakeholders is a world of hierarchies, interests and relations of power
- Social world is structured by inequalities in terms of distribution of capitals (economic, cultural, social, etc.)
- Two main principles of differentiation: volume of capital and distribution of cultural/economic capital