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Actors: Why power matters and how we understand it in water governance

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Why consider power as a factor in water governance?

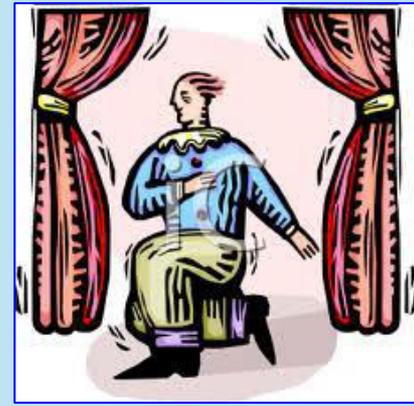


- Whenever something of value is at stake, there are contending interests
- These interests push and pull to steer policy & management procedures, and especially outcomes they would prefer
- The question is, how can these interests exert their influence?
- The answer: By exercising such forms of power as they may wield (*e.g.*, money, votes, patronage, jobs, mass mobilization, moral suasion)
- In the case of water, the more it's in short supply or when its use threatens interests, the greater the likelihood of the use of power

How do actors figure in the exertion of power?

Via their actions, they may wish to:

- Secure water-allocation rights in order to pursue:
 - Their pecuniary interests (*e.g.*, development, ranching, agriculture, industry), or
 - Common-pool interests (*e.g.*, flows, habitat, landscape, sustainable practices)
- Regulate such actions as abstraction, distribution, use, cost, quality assurance
- Resist some or all such interventions
- Assure information flows, access to data, and scientific and technologically sound approaches
- Introduce modes of localized self-governance
- Insist on broad, diverse participation (from multiple jurisdictions, if appropriate), and meaningful opportunity to influence decisions
- Emphasize notions of equity, human right to water, and public health



The actors

Given this range of interests, it's useful to ask:

- Who are typical actors? Which interests do they represent?
- What is the influence of:



- Context



- Scale



- How and when do actors become relevant in water governance?
- How do they exercise influence and power?
- What are the various ways in which actors participate?



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