

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

Joan Cortinas-Munoz, Murielle Coeurdray, Brian O'Neill and Franck Poupeau

UMI iGLOBES (CNRS/University of Arizona)



## Thesis

- Western US appears as a land of conflicts for the control of natural resources, at least since the 19<sup>th</sup> 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

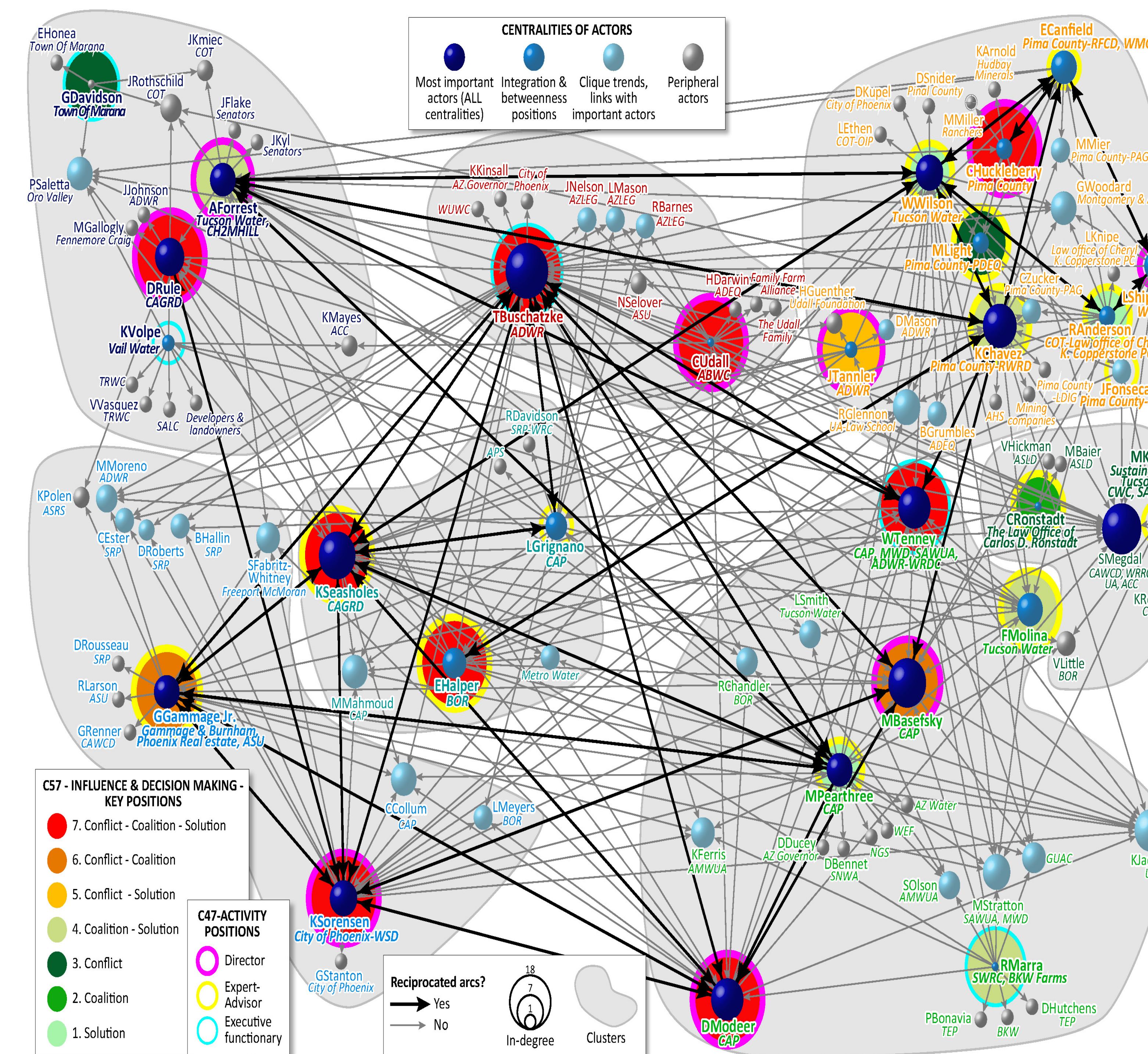
FIRST STEP : A review of works on “water wars” beginning in the late 19th century in the western United States => necessity to understand the historical processes of implementation of water infrastructure in the West.

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

## 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