

Reading Water Governance: Importance of Institutions

Dr Christina Cook
Centre for Socio-Legal Studies
University of Oxford
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What am I talking about?

Water governance

- the process through which decisions regarding allocation of, use of, and access to water are taken
- **Distinct from management** - the daily activity of implementing governance decisions

What am I talking about?

Institutions

- broadly construed to include “rights, rules, or decision-making procedures that give rise to social practices” (Young et al., 2008, p. 13).
- Distinct from organisations

Scene Setting Questions

1. To what extent do institutions matter for water governance in evolving contexts of water allocation and use?
2. Are the existing institutions appropriately addressing and solving important water challenges?
3. What kinds of features are necessary for institutions to cope with changing contexts of water allocation and use?

1. Importance of Water Allocation and Use Institutions

What are they?

- Laws & regulations
- Policies
- International treaties
- Interstate agreements
- Administrative tribunals (e.g. acequias, water boards, licencing agencies)

Examples

- Riparian rights
- FITFIR
- Statutory licencing schemes
- Water markets & trading
- Land use laws
- Pollution permits

Transferability of Allocation

Pros

- Creates a market; gives incentive to use water efficiently
- Increases available water supply
- Reclaims flows for environmental objectives

Cons

- Market may not address social and environmental needs (increase inequity)
- May increase conflict through more intensive use of existing water rights
- Environmental buybacks complicated by inappropriate valuation

2. Appropriateness in solving important water challenges

Depends on your perspective

- Risk tolerance
- Trade offs
 - Environmental
 - Social
 - Economic
- Sector
- Example of Ontario



Ontario Source Protection

- Semi-quantitative risk assessment of risks to drinking water quality
- Governance – process v. substance
- Aggregates Act and Drainage Act privilege resource extraction and management for economic development
- Mandatory protection of areas with ‘significant threat’ that protects 1.2% of total land area in regulatory regime
- Appropriate?

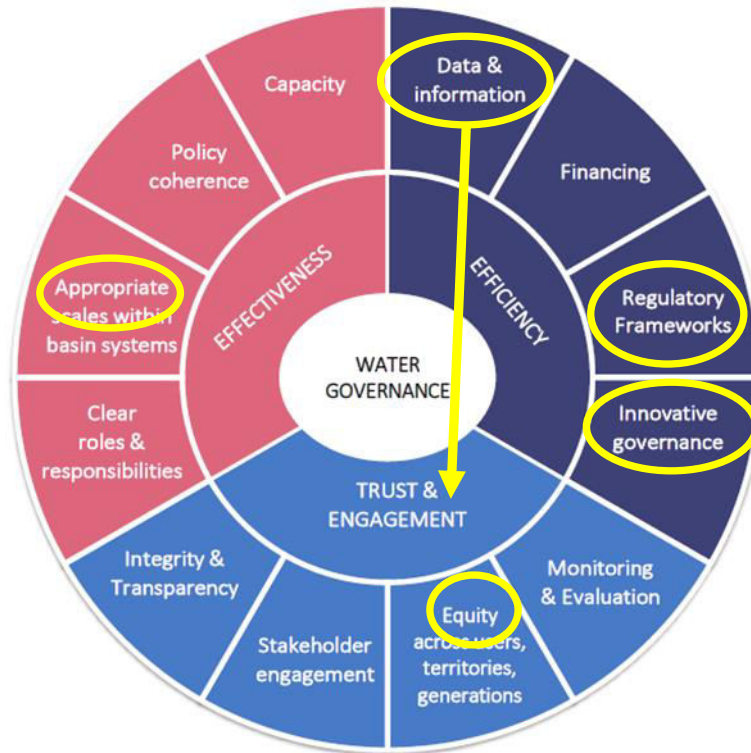
3. Necessary features for changing contexts

- Awareness of context – one size does not fit all in water governance
- Looking for flexibility/adaptability in institutions to respond to changing circumstances (outcomes, regulations, guidelines)
- Water Governance is an ongoing negotiation

12 principles of Water Governance

Reliant on Trust & Engagement

Appropriate from whose perspective?



Beware Instrumentalism

Innovative or Adaptive?

Fairness as judged by whom?