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WATER POLITICS IN EL SALVADOR

Power, Water and Social Change in poor communities of San José Villanueva



*A thesis submitted to the University of Warwick for the
degree of Ph.D.*

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May 2015

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DECLARATION

No portion of the work in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification at this or any other university or other institute of learning. The thesis is entirely my own work.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how social power relations affect poor, vulnerable people's access to clean and sustainable water in El Salvador. It does so using an in-depth case study of people living in seven socially deprived rural communities of San José Villanueva, province of La Libertad, southern El Salvador.

Drawing on several strands of social and political theory, the research conceptualises 'power' along three axes: on local/global, material/ideational and structure/agency lines. Using El Salvador's neoliberal transition as its socio-historical backdrop, the research explores the power dynamics shown by water actor groups in positions of hegemony, counter-hegemony and social exclusion. The study shows how these water actors use strategies, tactics and actions along the three power axes. The thesis assembles empirical evidence from academic research; policy documents, media outlets and civil society sources; interviews with policy makers; and poor people's narratives. The research argues that the current state of unequal power relations in water governance constitutes the main factor shaping poor people's water access outcomes today.

Five key knowledge contributions emerge from this enquiry. First, the thesis handles the concept of 'power' as a tool to enrich the traditionally depoliticised approaches regarding water access today in El Salvador. Second, the research builds an innovative conceptual synthesis on power, an 'axes of power approach'. Third, the thesis provides new empirical evidence using an in-depth case study. Fourth, the study fills an existing gap in country-specific water politics knowledge. Finally, the research offers relevant knowledge in a key water governance period for El Salvador as policy-makers negotiate the country's first General Water Law in its history.

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DEDICATION

“What makes the desert beautiful,” said the little prince, “is that somewhere it hides a well. . . .” (Saint-Exupéry, 1995, p. 66)

I dedicate this thesis to the communities of San José Villanueva who have so tenaciously fought for clean water access, especially the women and children who have spent untold hours collecting and using the waters of river Aquiquisquillo. So many people from these communities gave me countless hours of hospitality, guidance, trust to learn from them and to whom I am now so thankful. For their leadership and proactive support, I would like to thank Sergio Elmer Alfaro, María Alejandra Ramírez, Miguel Ángel Torres and Delmy Blanca Cruz. I am grateful to all the members of the communities who agreed to open their doors to take part in this research.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA-EU-CA	Association Agreement – European Union- Central America
ACUA	Asociación Comunitaria por la Unidad Agropecuaria y el Agua [Communitarian Association for the Union of Water and Agriculture]
ADESCO	Asociación de Desarrollo Comunal [Community Development Association]
AECID	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo [Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development]
ALBA	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América [Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America]
ALOP	Asociación Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promoción al desarrollo [Latin American Association of Development Organisations]
ANDA	Administración Nacional de Acueductos y Alcantarillados [National Administration of Water and Sewer (ANDA)]
ANDA-GSR ANDA	Gerencia de Sistemas Rurales de ANDA [Rural Systems Management part of the National Administration of Aqueducts and Sewage]
ANDAR	Asociación Nacional para la Defensa, Desarrollo y Distribución Ecológica del Agua a Nivel Rural [National Association for the Defence, Development and Ecological Distribution of Water at the Rural Level]
ANEP	Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada [National Association of Private Enterprise]
ARENA	Alianza Republicana Nacionalista [Nationalist Republican Alliance]
ARPAS	Asociación de Radios y Programas Participativos de El Salvador [Association of Radio and Participatory Programs El Salvador]
ASC	Alianza Social Continental [Hemispheric Social Alliance]
ASI	<u>Asociación Salvadoreña de Industriales</u> [Salvadorean Association of Industries]
ASIAGUA	Asociación Salvadoreña de Industrias de Agua Envasada [The Salvadorean Association of Bottled Water]
ASPRODE	Asesoría a Programas y Proyectos de Desarrollo [Advice for Development Programmes and Projects]
BID	Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo [Inter-American Development Bank]
CAFTA	Central American Free Trade Agreement
CARE	Cooperativa Americana para las Remesas Exteriores, El Salvador [Cooperative for American Remittances Abroad, El Salvador]
CASSA	Compañía Azucarera Salvadoreña [Salvadorean Sugar Company]
CCAD	Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo, parte del SICA. [Central American Commission of Environment and Development, part of SICA]
CDC	Centro para la Defensa del Consumidor [Centre for the Defence of the Consumer]
CEDES	Consejo Empresarial Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo Sostenible [Salvadoran Business Council for Sustainable Development]
CEICOM	Centro de Investigación sobre Inversión y Comercio [Research Centre for Investments and Commerce]
CENTA	Centro Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria y forestal [National Centre for Agricultural and Forestry Technology from El Salvador]
CEPAL	Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe [United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America]

COMURES	Corporación de Municipalidades de El Salvador [Union of Municipalities of El Salvador]
CONAMYPE	Comisión Nacional de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa [The National Commission for Micro and Small Enterprises]
COPAMA	Comité para la defensa del agua y el medioambiente [Committee for the defence of Water and the Environment of San José Villanueva]
CORCULL	Comité de Rescate de las Cuencas de La Libertad [Committee for the Rescue of the Water Basins of La Libertad]
CORDAID	Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid
CORDES	Asociación para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo de El Salvador [Association for Cooperation and Development in El Salvador]
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CWN	Counter hegemonic water network
DEMASAL	Derivados de Maíz de El Salvador [Corn Derivatives of El Salvador SA]
DGRNR	Dirección General de Recursos Naturales Renovables [General Directorate of Renewable Natural Resources]
ECOVEG	Ecología Vegetal El Salvador
EHPM	Encuesta de Hogares para Propósitos Múltiples [Multiple Purpose Household Survey]
ENADE	Encuentro Nacional de la Empresa Privada [National Summit of Private Enterprise]
ENLACES	Asociaciones de Consumidores de El Salvador [Consumer Associations of El Salvador]
EP	European Parliament
ESF	Enginyeria Sense Fronteres-Catalunya [Engineer without frontiers from Catalunya, Spain]
EU	European Union
FANCA	Fresh Water Action Network Central America
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FIHIDRO	Fideicomiso para el Desarrollo del Proyecto de Mejoramiento del Sistema de Abastecimiento de Agua Potable [Development Trust project to improve the supply system of potable water]
FISDL	Fondo de Inversión Social para el Desarrollo Local [Social Investment Fund for Local Development]
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional [The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front]
FoE	Friends of the Earth
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FUNDASAL	Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo y Vivienda Mínima [The Salvadorean Foundation For Minimum Housing and Development]
FUNDE	Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo [National Foundation for Development]
FUSADES	Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social [The Salvadorean Foundation for Economic and Social Development]
GOBACIT	Governance, Citizenship, Water Management and Environmental Health in Developing Countries
GVP	General Vice-President
GWL	General Water Law

GWP	Global Water Partnership
HRTW	Human right to water
ICCO	Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
ILC	Industrias La Constancia [La Constancia Industries]
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISF	Ingenieros sin fronteras [Engineers without Borders]
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MAG	Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería [Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock]
MARN	Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales [Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources]
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MINEC	Ministerio de Economía [Ministry for the Economy]
MINED	Ministerio de Educación [Ministry of Education]
MINSAL	Ministerio de Salud [Ministry of Health]
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSF	National Sanitation Foundation
NWF	National Water Forum [Foro del Agua de El Salvador]
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OIRSA	Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria [The International Regional Organisation for Plant and Animal Health]
OPS/OMS	Organización Panamericana de la Salud [Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization]
OSB	Oxfam Solidarity Belgium
OVAM	Public Waste Agency of Flanders
OXFAM	International confederation of 17 organizations worldwide working against poverty
PDC	Partido Demócrata Cristiano [Christian Democratic Party]
PLAMDARH	Plan Maestro de Desarrollo y Aprovechamiento de los Recursos Hídricos [Master Plan for the Development and Utilisation of Water Resources]
PLANSABAR	Plan Nacional para el Saneamiento Básico Rural [National Plan for Basic Rural Sanitation]
PNC	Policía Nacional Civil [National Civil Police]
PNUD	Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo [United Nations Development Program]
PRISMA	Programa Salvadoreño de Investigación sobre Desarrollo y Medio Ambiente [Salvadorean Programme of Research on Development and Environment]
PROVIDA	Programa para la Vida / ASAC [Programme for Life]
RAS-ES	Red de Agua y Saneamiento de El Salvador [Water and Sanitation Network in El Salvador]
SEM	San José Villanueva's Private Water Service Provider
SHARE	Salvadoran Humanitarian Aid, Research and Education Foundation
SIA-MARN	Sistemas de Información Ambiental del Ministerio de Medio Ambiente

	[Environmental Information Systems of the Ministry for the Environment]
SICA	Central American System of Integration [SICA]
SIG	Sistemas de Información Geográfica [Geographic National Service for Territorial Studies]
SJV	San José Villanueva
SNET	Servicio Nacional de Estudios Territoriales [National Service for Territorial Studies]
STEPS Centre	Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability Centre
TNI	Trans National Institute
UCA	Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, El Salvador[“José Simeón Cañas” Central American University]
UCL	University College of London
UE	Unión Europea [European Union]
UES	Universidad Nacional de El Salvador (Universidad Pública de El Salvador) [El Salvador National University]
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNES	Unidad Ecológica de El Salvador [Ecological Unit of El Salvador]
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN-GA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHRC	UN Human Rights Council
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WATERLAT	Research Network on Water in Latin American and Caribbean —branch of GOBACIT
WB	World Bank
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WHO	World Health Organisation

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1. INTRODUCTION



Struggles for Water and Power in El Salvador

“The roots of the crisis in water can be traced to poverty, inequality and unequal power relationships, as well as flawed water management policies that exacerbate scarcity” UNDP (Watkins, 2006)

All life forms need water to live, but people also need power to access it. Water is like the blood of society. Just as blood constantly travels across networks of arteries and veins to all cells in our bodies, water must travel through networks of institutions, legal frameworks and social arrangements to all individuals in society. With one added caveat. In society, water often travels in the direction of power (e.g. Boelens et al., 2011, Swyngedouw, 2004a, Molle et al., 2009, Mehta et al., 2012) and power often tends to concentrate in few hands.

Today, worldwide research suggests a recurring link between water and power: water flows where power goes (e.g. Boelens et al., 2011, Swyngedouw, 2004a, Molle et al., 2009, Mehta et al., 2012). These researchers have exposed how frequently powerful actors channel water in the direction of their interests. By sucking too much water from one place to another, powerful actors end up distorting, blocking or deteriorating

water's pathways in society. Hence, water does not always end up well distributed. Water today rarely flows under principles of solidarity, equality or justice (Boelens et al., 2011, Zeitoun, 2013).

Water justice matters. The resultant disparities in people's access to clean water coupled with people's competing views regarding water governance can also trigger crises, conflicts, and even wars (Zeitoun et al., 2014, Camacho, 2012, Kremer, 2012, Yoffe et al., 2004). For these reasons, a new thirst for knowledge regarding water politics now emerges. The challenge today lies in clarifying how people's power relations shape water's pathways amid distinct social contexts (Molle et al., 2009, Swyngedouw, 2004a).

This research germinates within the fertile academic landscape of water politics. It engages with urgent questions trying to illuminate why and how poor people fail to achieve sustainable access to clean water in El Salvador. In this sense, this thesis studies the link between people, power and water. It tries to unlock and dissect some of the hidden relationships between them. What kinds of power relations shape the fate of poor people's clean water access outcomes in El Salvador?

The thesis argues that academic efforts to date have largely underexplored the country's key water access problems using power as a conceptual tool. Consequently, the research develops an approach to illuminate, both theoretically and empirically, the still obscure political complexities determining people's water access in El Salvador. The following sections briefly outline El Salvador's water politics context and clarify why it matters.

Figure 1: Map of El Salvador



Source: (UN, 1998)

Brief Overview: Water, People & Power in El Salvador

(a) Water: Uneven and Deteriorating Flows

Water is a finite resource flowing unevenly in our planet. Water scarcity and people's competing views on how to use it often make water a source of struggle and dispute all around the world (Gleick, 1993). Both natural and socially constructed factors seem to trigger people's disputes over water. Fresh water constitutes less than 3% of all the water available in the world. The rest is seawater and undrinkable. Moreover, 2.5% of fresh water is largely inaccessible, locked up in frozen glaciers, in the Arctic and the Antarctic. Hence, humanity depends on this tiny 0.5% of the world's fresh water to supply its needs (UNESCO, 2003).

In addition, researchers now show that climate change increases even further our planet's pressures on the freshwater we have available (OECD, 2013, Bates, 2008) and that human behaviour aggravates water scarcity and climate change even more (Haddeland et al., 2014). Indeed, all too often water scarcity is not produced by nature but emerges as a consequence of our actions (Gleick, 1998, p. 5). Society's challenge then lies in how to make water flow and reach everyone in our world despite the many obstacles that block its course, be them man-made or natural. Our own lives, environment and biodiversity depend on how successful we become in controlling water in fair and sustainable ways.

Today, scholars commonly represent water scarcity using the Falkenmark Water Stress Indicator (Falkenmark and Lindh, 1976). Despite its known shortcomings¹, researchers and policy-makers have very frequently used this indicator to depict the dwindling water supplies in our world. For example, a society experiences 'water stress' (that is, frequent water shortages), when a country or region's annual water supplies drop below 1,700 cubic metres per person per year. When water availability falls below 1,000 m³ per person annually, 'water scarcity' begins, and below 500 m³ we call it 'absolute water scarcity'. Globally, water scarcity affects more than 40 percent of the people on the planet, and their number is growing. By 2025, at least 1.8 billion people will suffer 'absolute water scarcity' and almost two thirds of the world's population will be suffering 'water stress' (UN WATER, 2014).

In Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC) many people suffer water scarcity despite it being one of the most water-rich regions in the world. LAC has the highest average water availability in the planet, at about 24,400 cubic metres per person, even with its seasonal variations (World Bank, 2009). However at the same time, in LAC at least 130 million people lack access to safe drinking water (Food & Water Watch, 2014).

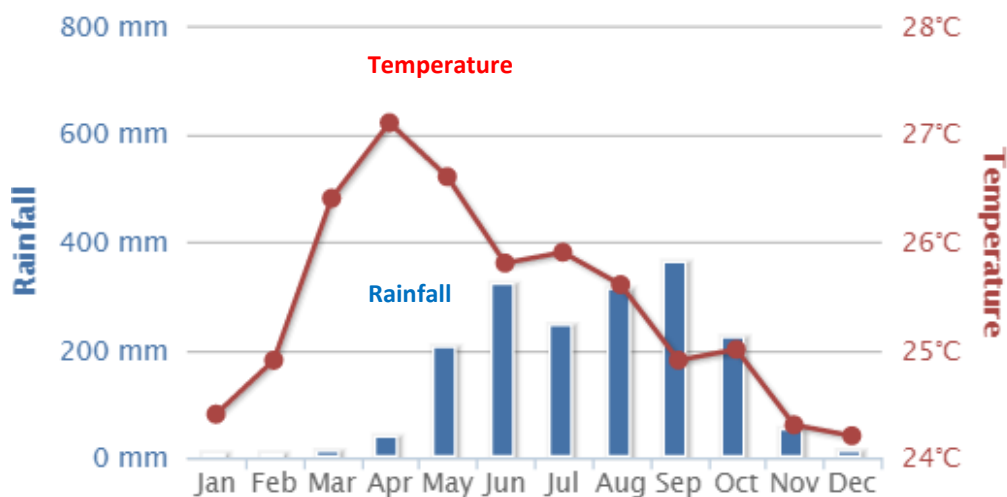
¹ Researchers indicate the Falkenmark water stress indicator has at least four limitations: First, it ignores essential regional differences in water availability, as it measures only water scarcity at a country level. Second, the index fails to show whether the water resources reflected are actually accessible for people. Third, the indicator does not include man-made sources of freshwater, e.g. desalination plants increasing water availability beyond what is naturally available. Finally, the index fails to factor in the fact that different countries, and regions within countries, use different amounts of water. Rijsberman, F. R. (2006) 'Water Scarcity: Fact or Fiction? ', *Agricultural Water Management*, 80, pp. 5-22.

Within LAC, Central Americans and particularly Salvadoreans suffer the paradox of *'water scarcity amidst water richness'*. Central America is a region of seven countries² populated by 40 million people unevenly scattered in relation to its fresh water resources. At least 70 percent of Central Americans live on the Pacific coast of the region where only 30 percent of the water resources are available (GWP, 2014). Despite the problematic water/people distribution, Central Americans enjoy average water availability trends exceeding 3,000 m³ per person per year (FAO, 2014). The exception is El Salvador. Although, the average water precipitation in El Salvador reaches a healthy 1,784 mm per year —in comparison for example, the UK enjoys 1,220 mm/year, Switzerland 1,537 mm/year and Brazil 1,761 mm/year (World Bank, 2014b) — El Salvador fails to capture these plentiful flows of water and channel them into usable water for all.

Water availability in El Salvador varies strongly throughout the year due to seasonal variations (see fig. 1). However, Salvadoreans are gradually sliding below 2,800m³ of water per person per year and moving ever closer to the 1,700 m³/year 'water stress' threshold (Mejía, 2014). If this trend continues, studies predict that El Salvador will experience serious water stress levels by the year 2022 (UNDP, 2006a).

² Central America connects North and South America and includes the countries of Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica and Panama.

Figure 2: El Salvador's Average Monthly Rainfall & Temperature trends (1990-2009)



Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2014b)

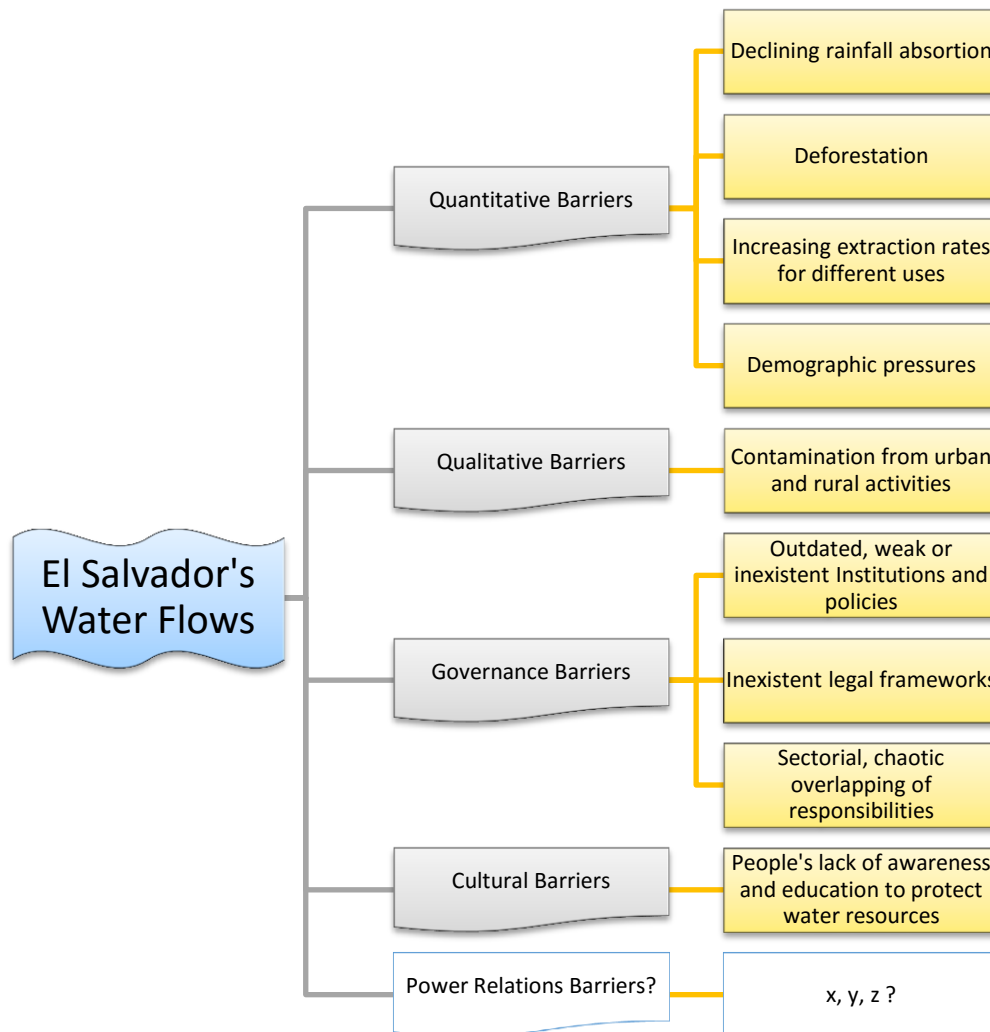
Researchers have suggested at least four types of 'man-made' barriers contributing to the dwindling flows of clean and sustainable water in El Salvador (see figure 2).

The first barrier affects **the quantitative side of El Salvador's water flows**. Water analysts agree that El Salvador's physical water scarcity stems from the declining capacity of the territory to regulate, absorb and filter rainfall.

Deforestation: Healthy forests provide water sustainability (Neary et al., 2009) maintaining the hydrological cycle, conserving water as a resource and helping secure water from further pressures from climate change (Bonan, 2008). However, El Salvador has cleared large tracts of forest due to its increasing urbanisation processes, eroding soils and disturbing the hydrological water cycle in the country. For some years El Salvador has had the dubious honour of being the second most deforested country in Latin America after Haiti (Mongabay, 2010). By 1990, forest cover had already shrank to less than 20 percent of the country (Lambin and Meyfroidt, 2011) and kept on diminishing rapidly. The result is that in approximately two decades forest cover reduced in 26.2% from 3,770 km² in 1990 to 2,782 km² in 2012. Today only 13.4% of the land area of the country has forest cover and only 6 percent of the natural forests

remain undisturbed (Hecht and Saatchi, 2007) (see fig.2). Although new reforestation efforts are trying to stop and reverse this process (Boucher et al., 2014), the nation's overall average rate of deforestation is still significant reaching 1.5 percent per year (AQUASTAT-FAO, 2014).

Figure 3: El Salvador's Water Flows: Where do they go?

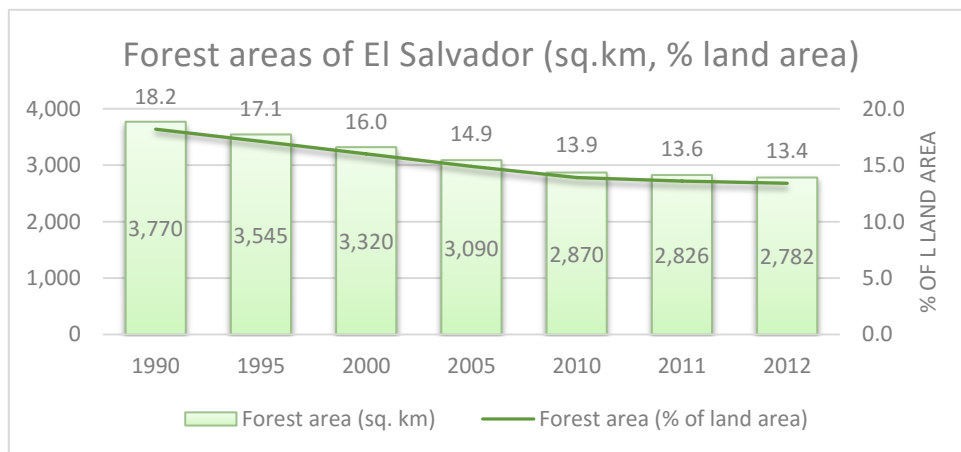


Source: Own construction

Increased environmental and human vulnerability: Not only has forest depredation had a massive impact in the sustainability of El Salvador's water resources, but it has also increased the vulnerability of its people. Without forests to feed key water bodies,

soils erode and deteriorate to the point rainfall increasingly runs off and leaves behind a path of destruction in the form of floods and landslides. For instance, it is now ever more frequent in El Salvador that severe floods sweep the country hitting in particular the most poor and vulnerable, who usually live in high risk places with unsuitable constructions and not resilient enough to face these disasters. Examples include the damages and human losses from hurricane Mitch (1998), Ida (2009), Agatha (2010) and the tropical depression 12E (2011). The economic costs for these disasters rose to over \$1,266 million dollars in total.

Figure 4: Declining Forests in El Salvador

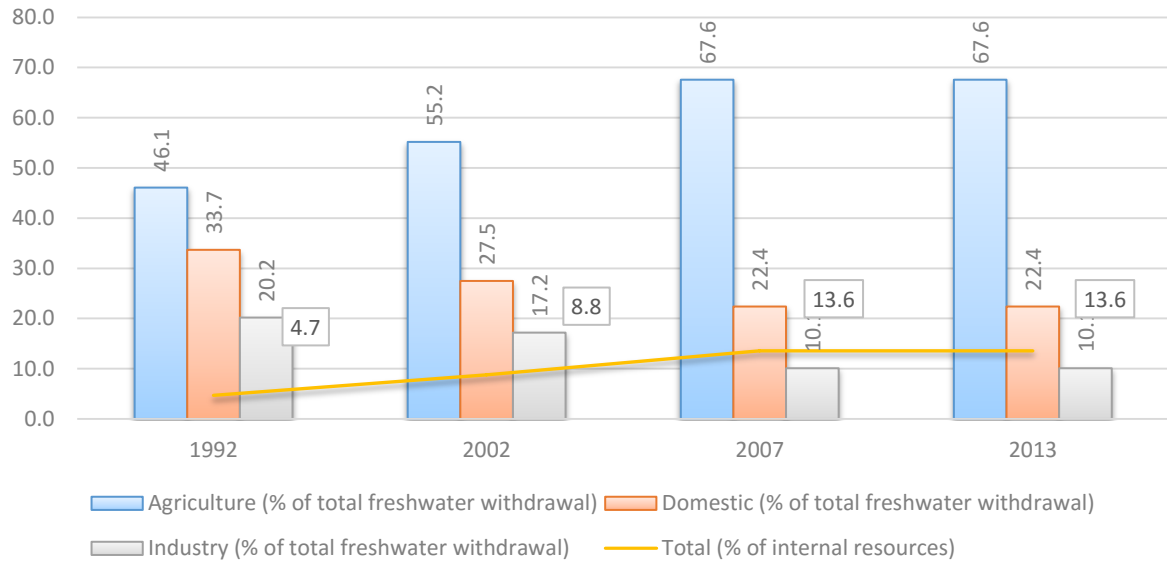


Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2014b)

Demographic and economic activity pressures contribute to an increased water consumption in El Salvador. After all, six million people populate El Salvador’s 21,044 km² making it the most densely populated country in Central America with 301 people per square kilometre (AQUASTAT-FAO, 2014). The trend of freshwater withdrawals in El Salvador today reaches at least 10 percent of the total internal resources in the country (see fig.3). However, when examining water demand in detail sharp contrasts between the water demanded by different economic sectors. For instance, human consumption of water in El Salvador (22% of the total of water resources extracted) is

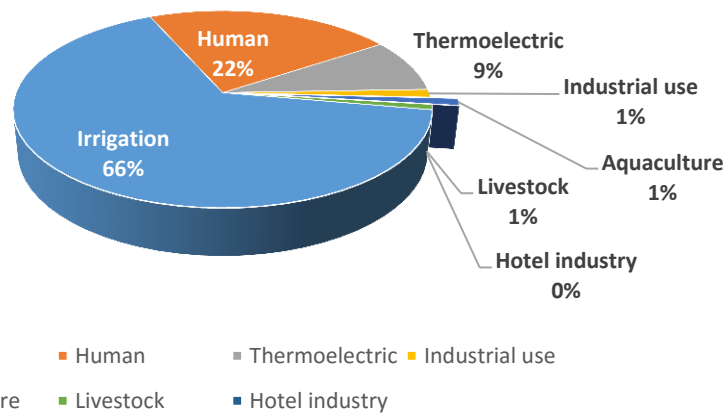
three times smaller than the water extracted for irrigation in the country. The agricultural sector extracts on average around 66 percent of the available internal water resources consumed in the country (see figure 4).

Figure 5: Annual Freshwater Withdrawals (%) in El Salvador (1992-2013)



Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2014b)

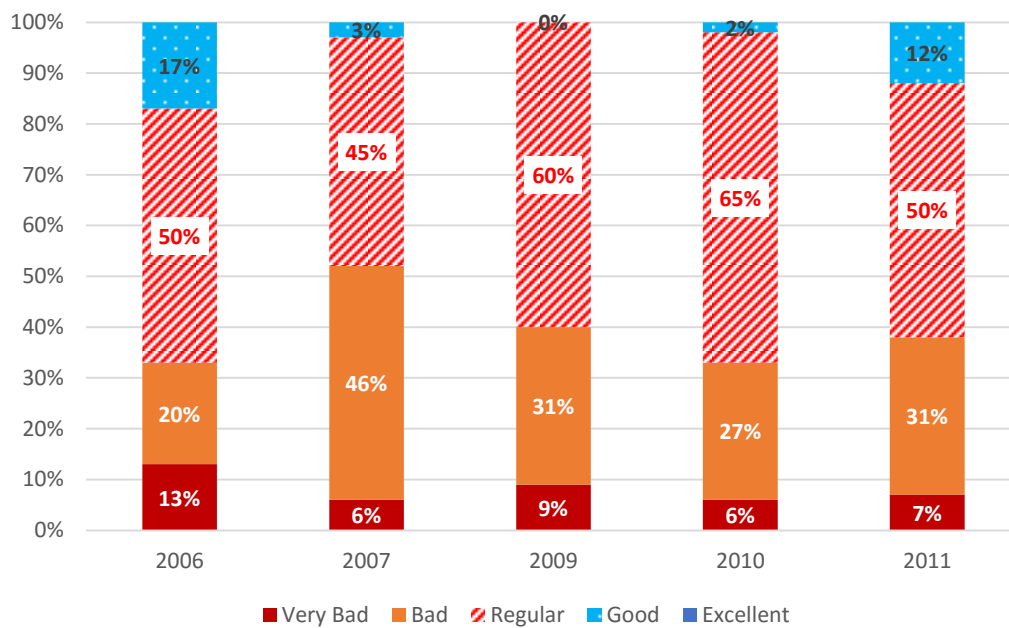
Figure 6: Average Water Consumption by Sectors in El Salvador



Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2014b)

The second obstacle affects **the qualitative output of El Salvador's water flows.** Currently, the country's key water bodies suffer extreme **contamination** processes. El Salvador has 360 rivers, which together form 10 hydrological regions (AQUASTAT-FAO, 2014). On average during the last decade 93% of Salvadorean rivers' waters have been classified as being in a 'regular', 'bad' or 'critical' state of contamination, which renders them unviable for human consumption (MARN, 2010, MARN, 2011b). In total, only 7% of the nation's rivers qualify as being in "good" condition. However, not a single one of these rivers qualifies as "excellent" clean and safe water (MARN, 2010, MARN, 2011b). Importantly, water contamination hits disproportionately more the poorest and most vulnerable. On average, El Salvador registers around 12,000 deaths of children related to water pollution per year (AQUASTAT-FAO, 2014).

Figure 7: Evolution of Water Quality in El Salvador (2006-2011)



Source: (MARN, 2011a)

The third barrier blocking the flows of water in El Salvador signposts **the poor, weak and inadequate water governance** the Salvadorean state has implemented to date. Researchers again tend to agree that El Salvador's water governance structures, institutions and laws put in place during the last decades have failed to manage, protect and secure water across the country (see Gornés Cardona, 2011, MARN, 2010, Terra, 2010, UNES-CARITAS, 2006).

The crucial problem present in El Salvador's water governance structures is its puzzle of overlapping, outdated and weak institutions, which bundle with other equally complicated and overlapping frameworks of laws regulating the different uses of water in the country. Researchers and practitioners argue that overall, the outcome is confusion and lack of accountability from the Salvadorean state to its people in matters of water governance. The lack of clarity about which institution governs each of the different uses of water and which legal frameworks rule to use for each case has been an endemic problem throughout El Salvador's history of water governance.

Significantly, El Salvador's water governance chaos has led to different kinds of abuses. Corrupt people have exploited the leaks in the water governance system of the country and managed to steal funds from the already weak institutions regulating and protecting the uses of water (Henríquez, 2007).

(b) People: Salvadoreans Suffering Social Inequalities

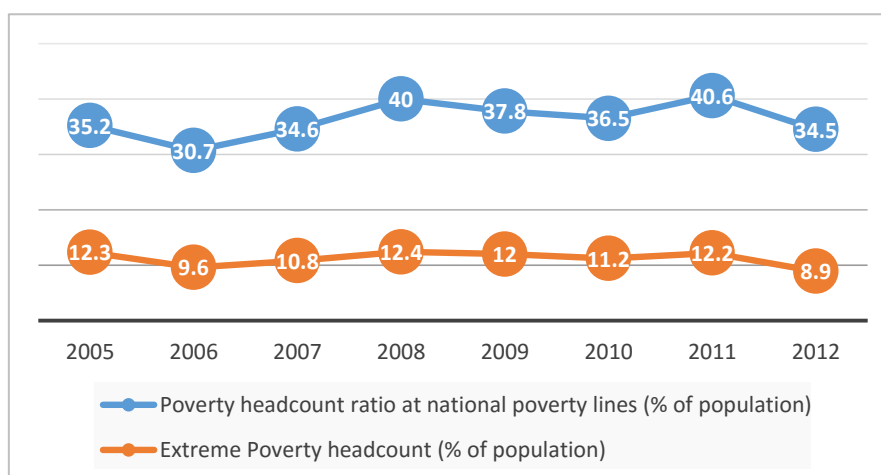
*"Knowledge of suffering cannot be conveyed in pure facts and figures, reportings that objectify the suffering of countless persons. The horror of suffering is not only its immensity but the faces of the anonymous victims who have little voice, let alone rights, in history."
(Chopp, 1986)*

The ill health of El Salvador's waters today, mirrors Salvadoreans' state of social inequality and injustice. As we shall see, a large part of the Salvadorean population has suffered the asphyxiating grip of poverty. However, crucially this kind of poverty is not just about income, but about a continuous deterioration of their own power to lead dignified and healthy lives (UNDP, 2013).

Poverty bites four out of every ten Salvadoreans. Approximately 41 percent of Salvadorean homes are poor³, half of them come from rural areas (UNDP, 2013, 105) and 12 percent of the poor experience extreme poverty (MINEC, 2012).

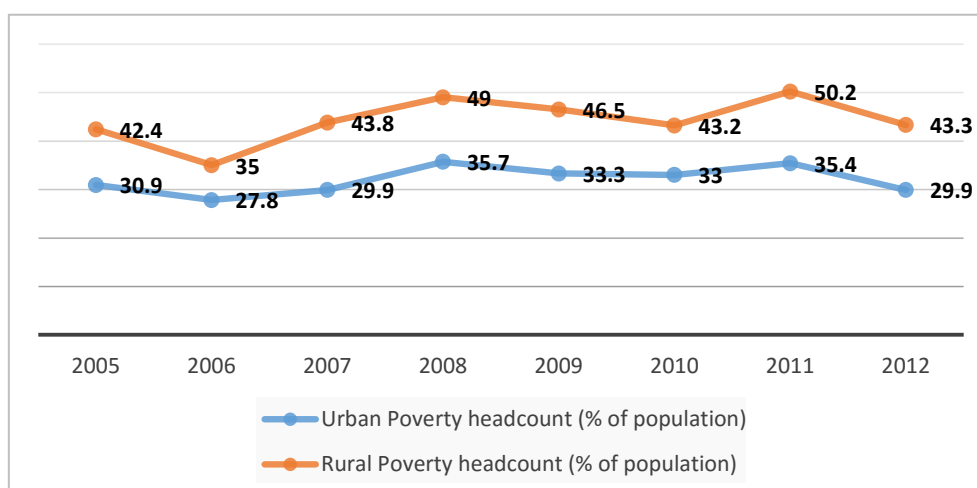
³ According to the United Nations Development Programme, income has been the privileged measure defining who is poor or not in El Salvador. The method defines those living in extreme poverty as all those individuals or households with income less than the cost of the basic food basket. Relative poverty is defined, in turn, as the situation of people or homes with income less than the value of two basic food baskets (UNDP (2013) *Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano El Salvador 2013: Imaginar un nuevo país. Hacerlo posible. Diagnóstico y propuesta.*, San Salvador: Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Humano (PNUD).

Figure 8: Poverty trends in El Salvador (% of population) 2005-2012



Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2014b)

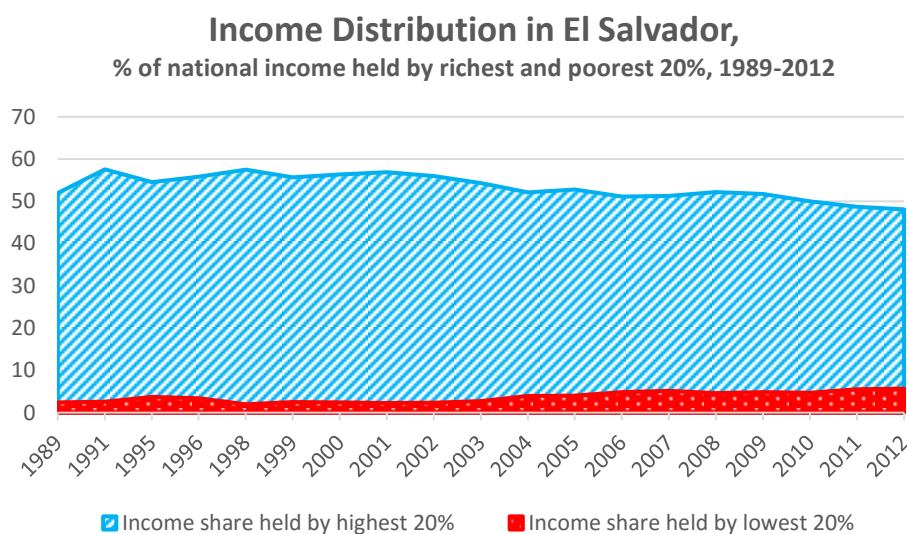
Figure 9: Rural & Urban Poverty trends in El Salvador (% of population) 2005-2012



Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2014b)

In contrast, the richest 20 percent of Salvadoreans receive almost half of the nation's national income (48.4 percent), whilst the poorest 20 percent receive just 4.9 percent of it (UNDP, 2013, p. 104). More importantly, the inequality gap in income distribution has kept high throughout the last two decades (1989-2012), see for instance (fig.10).

Figure 10: Persistent Inequality in Income Distribution in El Salvador (1991-2009)



Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2014b)

Salvadoreans living in poverty are not just poor or dispossessed in terms of income. Their poverty spreads across many dimensions of their lives as they tend to lack the most basic levels of education, health, livelihoods, social security or political empowerment (UNDP, 2013). For instance, in El Salvador at least 61% of the population live in households deprived at least on one basic service (MINEC, 2012) including water and offer sub-standard levels of security and comfort. In terms of education, Salvadoreans do not go far either. Whereas statistics of net enrolment in primary education show that 93.7% of boys and girls jump into the education bandwagon, those that progress to secondary education only represent 35.4% of the population (UNDP, 2013). Lack of education strikes almost every dimension of people's opportunities to do and to be what they want. However, even more so do the lack of opportunities to access a formal job. In El Salvador, only 1 in 5 jobs is formal, so the majority of them do not guarantee fair wages, social protection or security for the family (Ibid.).

For many Salvadoreans the only option left to escape the poverty trap lies in searching for jobs abroad, chiefly in the United States. In the last 30 years, two out of every

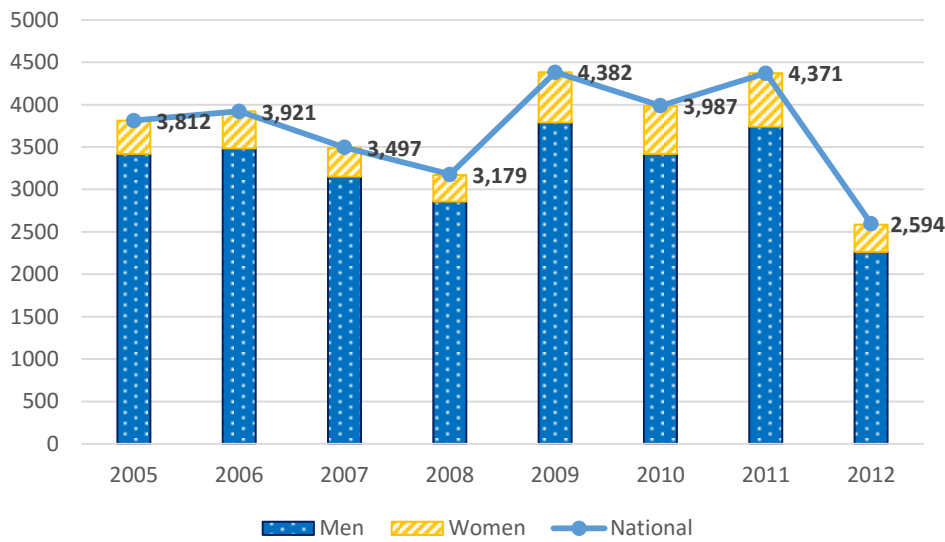
three Salvadoreans that managed to get a job, did it by migrating to the US. Remittances today in El Salvador represented for most of the last decade (2005-2012) an average of 17.11% of the GDP.

Poor Salvadoreans suffer not just from low levels of education and health, lack of formal jobs and opportunities, but also feel the pain of high levels of insecurity, physical and emotional. Today, El Salvador is formally recognised as the world's most violent country in terms of homicides. Salvadoreans live in practice, a kind of prolonged and unofficial war. Just for the 2005-2012 period, 29,743 people died as victims of intentional homicides, reaching an average of 3,718 people killed every year⁴. Such levels of violence also affect poor people's actual capabilities to achieve water access.

Poor women and children in particular, suffer more from the lack of basic freedoms such as the freedom of walking in safety to fetch water from the nearest well or river. Research has demonstrated how big the issue of security is for women around the world, see for instance (Fisher, 2006) and this is especially true for El Salvador. Salvadorean women currently experience some of the worst levels of violence against them in the world. The Organisation of Salvadoran Women for Peace (ORMUSA) registered at least 2,250 'femicides', i.e. the crime of murdering females because of their gender, from 2010 to September 2014. In 2013 alone, nearly 4,000 Salvadorean women ended up in hospital due to domestic and sexual violence in the home (Moloney, 2014). Researchers indicate that much of it is tied to a widespread culture of machismo and of high impunity levels (Ramisetty and Muriu, 2013).

⁴ Put into perspective, it means that every year more people die killed due to violence than the amount of people killed in the 9/11 attacks in the United States (see Morgan, M. J. (2009) *The impact of 9/11 on politics and war. The day that changed everything?* 1st edn. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. .

Figure 11: Widespread Violence: Number of Homicides per Year in El Salvador (2005-2012)



Source: (UNDP, 2013)

Walls of social inequality crush and divide Salvadoreans. However, social inequality is not always self-evident and often happens when examining water access trends. Current water access statistics in El Salvador glitter at first sight with narratives of success (see for instance (ANDA, 2011, ANDA and World Bank, 2014). Salvadorean water access indicators reveal that now more people than ever in El Salvador's history have access to an improved water source and that is true to a certain extent.

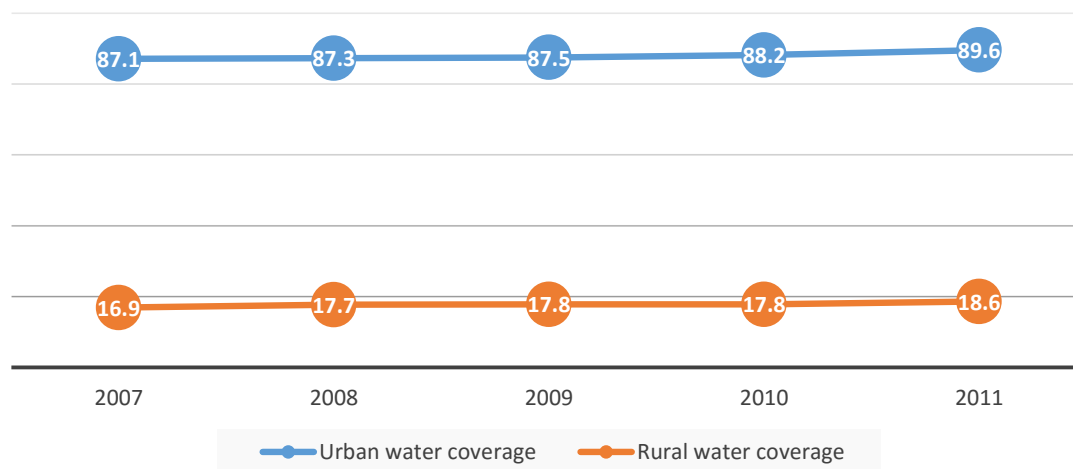
According to the United Nations, El Salvador successfully accomplished the Millennium Development Goal No.7.C that aimed 'Halving, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation' at least five years ahead of schedule (UN-GOES, 2014). National data shows that for the year 2012 already 91.2% of the total population had access to an improved water source. That statistic alone represents a massive improvement from the 63.3% that had access to an improved water source in 1991 and knocks out by far the 80.5% goal targeted in MGD 7.C (UN-GOES, 2014). In fact, even the urban and rural divide shows Salvadorean water-access progress in good light: By 2012, the Salvadorean urban

population had 97.1 percent access to an improved water source and the rural population 81.5 percent (UN-GOES, 2014). Similarly, national household connection access increased from 42.2% in 1991 to 74.9% in 2012 already surpassing its original MDG target (71.6% by 2015) (UN-GOES, 2014).

However, water access indicators like the ones above exclude key information about inequalities in clean water access attainment, quality, service regularity and distribution among the different groups that compose Salvadorean society. Institutions like the World Bank and the National Administration of Water and Sewer (ANDA) agree that the main bottlenecks to achieve national targets for water and sanitation takes place in the persistence of “differences in access to services for the poor” as well as “the gaps between urban and rural areas” (World Bank, 2014a).

Indeed, although the Salvadorean population without access to potable water declined from 26% in 1990 to 12% in 2010, and the population without access to sanitation fell from 25% to 13% during those two decades, many still suffer the absence of these services (IDB, 2010). By the end of 2010, more than 740,000 people still lacked access to safe water and about 860,000 had no sanitation. Out of these people, 76% and 54%, respectively, lived in rural areas (ANDA and World Bank, 2014). According to IDB, despite strong progress, El Salvador still has one of the lowest rates of water and sanitation service coverage in Latin America (IDB, 2010). Around 70% of the country’s households in 2010 received water through a household connection. Yet, 82% of these connections were in urban areas compared to the only 44% in rural areas (IDB, 2010). The pattern of inequalities repeats itself in the area of water sanitation, where household coverage with a household sewer connection stands at 39% nationally: 57% in urban areas and strikingly, only 1% in rural areas. Nationally, 44% of households use latrines (30% in urban areas and 77% in rural areas) (IDB, 2010).

Figure 12: Potable Water Services: % National Coverage by ANDA & Decentralised Operators (2007-2011)



Source: (ANDA, 2011)

In terms of quality of service, in general, the water supply is irregular and the urban/rural divide emerges strongly. The presence of coliform bacteria in water is widespread in rural communities and small towns, even when distributed over a national service network or alternative sources. Moreover, 48% of the drinking water supply falls in the category of ‘intermittent’ or ‘irregular’ in the country. At least 50% of the population has reported deficiencies in water quality provided. In addition, only 4.5% of the population reported that wastewater receives any treatment (ANDA and World Bank, 2014). To diminish these social inequalities in water access the World Bank estimates that the annual national deficit to cover the necessary investments and achieve national goals reaches \$73 million for potable water and US \$182 million for sanitation, resulting in a total deficit of US \$255 million annually for the water sector(ANDA and World Bank, 2014).

(c) Power: Who Governs People and Water in El Salvador?

'What matters here is how much money you have and who is your dad' (UNDP, 2013).

Scholars have often described El Salvador as a classic example of a Latin American oligarchic state. The social inequalities and injustice people suffer in relation to water and other basic freedoms and rights stem from power relations long rooted in structural violence⁵ and authoritarian regimes in El Salvador's history. A history of unequal and often brutal power relations fostered by a cooperative alliance between military regimes and economic elites used the State as a vehicle to expand and secure their interests (González, 2005, Guidos Véjar, 1980, Seligson and Córdova Macías, 1995).

Military dictatorships with shifting alliances to agricultural elites have controlled the Salvadorean state throughout most of the 20th century (1900s-1970s) (Dunkerley, 1991, Dunkerley, 1982), (Oppenheim, 2003). However, from the 1970s onwards, embryonic groups of powerful families grew and metamorphosed into a hub of economic elites with transnational presence in Central America and beyond (Bull, 2006, Bull and Kasahara, 2012, Segovia, 2005b, Paniagua, 2002). Indeed, researchers have uncovered a significant amount of evidence showing how, for much of the last

⁵ The term 'structural violence' coined by Johan Galtung Galtung, J. and Höivik, T. (1971) 'Structural and direct violence: A note on operationalization', *Journal of Peace Research*, 8(1), pp. 73-76, Galtung, J. (1969) 'Violence, peace, and peace research', *Journal of peace research*, 6(3), pp. 167-191. illustrates the kinds of violence that social structures or social institutions exert harming people in ways that prevent them from meeting their basic needs. The term is

century, the invisible hands of these economic elites have not only been present, but have also been actively sculpting significant chapters of El Salvador's history.

The recent history of events in El Salvador (1980s-2010s) illustrates how social inequality in the country has often erupted into extreme power clashes between different social groups and their deep impact across Salvadorean society. From dictatorships to civil war massacres, from organised corruption to widespread human rights violations, extreme marginalisation and rife violence from gangs and delinquency, ordinary Salvadoreans have had to endure in the recent decades extreme risks to their human security and welfare (Dunkerley, 1982, Danner, 1994, Lindo-Fuentes et al., 2007, Popkin, 2010, Binford, 2002). Three key recent historical periods can help understand the evolution (and revolutions) of power in El Salvador.

The first and most illustrative set of events depicting El Salvador's contemporary power relations has been, without a doubt, the country's *civil war (1980-1992)* period. The 1980s civil war has been the most violent social cataclysm to shape Salvadoreans in a century. In this conflict that lasted for more than a decade, at least 75,000 people died or 'disappeared' leaving a traumatic legacy of destruction and a polarised political backdrop between its people (United Nations, 1993). Several studies have demonstrated that the ripples and the legacy of this cruel conflict lives in the psyche of Salvadoreans, with its impacts still manifested in its political, legal, economic and cultural streams(Call, 2003, de Zeeuw, 2010, Dickson-Gómez, 2004, Wood, 2003).

Some experts sum up the civil war's impact on the collective Salvadorean psyche in the following mantra cited from Salvadoreans themselves "one who doesn't know war, doesn't know anything" (Dickson-Gómez, 2004). Indeed, this period is relevant in the history of power relations in El Salvador as it shook up the foundations of society and drilled into Salvadorean culture a drive for resistance, survival and resilience amidst a culture of violence. The civil war period is key to understand the current state of water governance in El Salvador. The civil war revealed the extent of people's social unrest due to the inequalities the Salvadorean State had produced or helped maintain. During

those years, the Salvadorean state diverted valuable resources to elites and war rather than to improve the existing environmental and water governance structures.

The second quintessential period to understand El Salvador's recent history is the *neoliberal post-war period (1992-2009)*. This period has been a special chapter in El Salvador's history and fundamental to understand its present power relations and water governance model. El Salvador's neoliberal governance era came as an offspring of the political and economic model chosen by the country's dominant political party in those years: the National Republic Alliance (ARENA), which came into power close to the end of the civil war in 1989. ARENA seen by many as the political party representing the interests of the economic elites in the country, stayed in power for two decades in a continuous cycle of four presidential administrations. In so doing, ARENA dominated the key decision-making processes in the country favouring economic elites (Bello Suazo, 2008) and imprinting its free-market philosophy, frameworks of thought and rules to the way governance works in El Salvador (Robinson, 2003). ARENA's legacy left behind a sturdy framework of neoliberal market-based institutions and policies in almost every arena of governance in the country, including water (Segovia, 2002a).

Finally, the third and most recent period in El Salvador's history is the post-ARENA 2009-2014 *transitional period* in El Salvador. This period marked by the fall of ARENA from governmental power began a period of political transition to what could perhaps become a post-neoliberal era in the country. This period of political turmoil and transition to a new model of governance different from ARENA's neoliberal offer stands as the key period that feeds this research's analytical endeavours. The idea of transition derives from a single but politically important event: For the first time in El Salvador's post-civil war history, a democratically elected candidate backed up by a left-wing political party won the Presidential elections. That candidate was Mauricio Funes, a former journalist. The FMLN who was the main opposition party and former leftist guerrilla movement, together with other centre-left groups in Salvadorean civil society, formed a powerful alliance that managed to sit Funes in the Presidential seat.

The left wing's Funes coalition victory represented a pivotal moment in the country's history. The FMLN, finally after signing the Peace Agreements of 1992 and becoming a political party, had the opportunity of a lifetime to make structural changes to the country's governance. This social change opened up opportunities to adjust the nature and direction of a variety of policy-making agendas and processes, including the regulation of the environment and water supply.

The importance of this transitional period lies in that it is the first time El Salvador's governmental pillars have changed its political power while still colliding with the Salvadorean elite's economic power. According to some researchers, Bull and Cuéllar (2013), while the tight and cozy relationship between the elites and the state did loosen up a bit after ARENA's fall, the epicentre of economic power has remained in the hands of elites which have continued to be hegemonic. Moreover, Salvadorean elites are no longer Salvadorean but transnational and extend their control to the media (Rockwell and Janus, 2003, Rockwell and Janus, 2002).

Economic Elites and the Salvadorean State

Salvadorean elites would not have risen their power so dramatically if it had not been with the help of ARENA. ARENA has for long been portrayed as the quintessential political vehicle of the economic elites in El Salvador and it owes this credit to its foundational fathers and donors coming from the top economic spheres in the country (Van der Borgh, 2000). Democratically elected, ARENA governed for two decades from 1989 until 2009 transforming El Salvador into a neoliberal haven. During its leadership in government ARENA reformed a number of legal frameworks and institutions to the tune of market-based initiatives, including: reducing the size of the state via privatisation processes (Equipo Maíz, 2005, Selva Sutter, 2004), subscribing to multiple free trade agreements (Segovia, 2005a), promoting financial deregulation (SAPRIN, 2000), and dollarizing the economy (Ibiate, 2001) among many others. Under ARENA's steering wheel, El Salvador became the leading example after Chile of the most liberalised country in Latin America but also a society where wide inequalities

persisted in time (Segovia, 2002b). In other words, thanks to ARENA, the historical process of accumulation by dispossession that had been going on in past models of governance increased in pace and breadth allowing the making of new rich elites linked to areas like the financial sector and rocked El Salvador's foundations (Segovia, 2002b). This research defines economic elites as 'hegemonic' in El Salvador in the view of the available evidence that these groups without the use of force are still dominant in the country and hold a high influence in the decision-making processes and social order of El Salvador —see (Scott and Marshall, 2005, p. 265).

El Salvador's transitional period (2009-2014) forms the historical context underpinning the focus of this thesis and is fascinating from a water governance perspective. It is an interesting period in El Salvador's water governance history for at least three reasons.

First, President Mauricio Funes promised as part of his Presidential campaign to expand basic water services coverage to the poor. This would mean in practice expanding water access to "at least 32 municipalities in extreme poverty conditions and others in high poverty" (Funes, 2009). President Funes' promises were part of a wider focus from his government to expand social policies, which would supposedly focus more on the poor and the vulnerable rather than on the rich, in stark contrast with the priorities of previous governments.

The second reason why this transitional period is remarkable is that the new government in power has opened a window of opportunity to reverse the deep social and environmental crisis hitting the country, which is affecting poor people's water access and the sustainability of water resources.

Thirdly and related to the latter, this transitional period is also pivotal from a water governance view as the framework of rules sustaining the current model of governance shows signs of potential radical change: the Legislative Assembly⁶ has been set to discuss, negotiate and potentially ratify the country's first General Water Law (GWL). This is a genuinely game-changing step in the water governance structure of El Salvador. As early as 2006 social activists from the National Water Forum, such as UNES-Cáritas, had presented a GWL proposal (UNES-CARITAS, 2006) to address social inequalities and deficiencies in water access and make the government accountable for them. However, despite several efforts from civil society, the GWL had consistently remained a low priority for legislators and they have never ratified it. This thesis coincides with this water legislation process, the political transition and a context, which many social activists believe, could lead to major social changes in water governance.

The Core Research Question

El Salvador provides an interesting contemporary case to study the flows of water, people and power. In this country, asymmetries of power become asymmetries in water access. However, contemporary academic literature studying El Salvador's water politics has had limited exposure to power analyses. Most researchers on Salvadorean water governance have focused on issues shielded from politics and insulated by an apparent cover of neutrality: for instance preferring to study the economics, engineering or managerial aspects of water (Dimas, 2007b, Dimas, 2007a, Herrador,

⁶ El Salvador's political body equivalent to Congress.

2001, MARN, 2005, UNDP, 2006a) rather than examining the distorting forces of social power in the governance of water .

The following guiding question supports the backbone of the present research project:

- **How do social power relations affect poor, vulnerable people's access to clean and sustainable water in El Salvador?**

Subordinate Questions:

Exploring the core research question prompts this research to investigate further subsidiary questions. The answer to each of these subsidiary questions contributes toward illustrating better the hidden dynamics of El Salvador's water politics. Some of the essential lines of inquiry are:

- What has been the historical context of poor people's water access conditions in El Salvador? Which groups in Salvadorean society have been able to enjoy (or have lacked) access to clean and sustainable water? (Ch.2)
- How have recent efforts in the water politics literature explored the way power relations shape poor people's clean and sustainable water access in highly unequal and developing country societies? What kinds of knowledge gaps appear still missing in this field? (Literature review) (Ch.3)
- What sort of theoretical framework on water/power relations can this research use as an operational tool to uncover key hidden faces of people's social power relations over water? How can we capture the holistic nature of 'power' affecting poor people's (lack of) access to clean and sustainable water? (Ch.3)
- What sorts of power/water relations have hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collectives social actors used to achieve their water access and control interests in El Salvador? In other words, how have the key water actors operating in El Salvador deployed strategies, tactics and actions to achieve

water outcomes and how does this ultimately affect poor people's water access? (Ch.4, Ch.5, Ch.6)

- What can we conclude from the critical analysis of social power relations in El Salvador shapes poor people's water access? (Ch.7)

The Core Argument

This thesis argues that:

Hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collectives in El Salvador use local and global, material and ideational, agency and social structure power relations to achieve specific objectives in water governance. These power relations are manifest in visible and invisible strategies, tactics and actions. At the same time, these strategies help explain more effectively, what shapes poor people's water access outcomes.

Powerful hegemonic groups have come to control El Salvador's present water governance. Water governance in El Salvador remains locked in a stalemate of power relations, which currently favours hegemonic groups and produce negative outcomes for poor people's water access. Hegemonic water actors have done this by using effective power relations strategies that normalise and legitimise their dominance over the rules and institutions governing the uses and management of water in El Salvador. By colonising ideologies and discourses, belief systems and norms related to water governance, hegemonic water actors have been able to dominate and lock-in the behaviours and actions of people's water governance practices in El Salvador according to their best interests. The country's current key water governance frameworks and outcomes in the General Water Law, water regulations in free trade agreements and public-private partnerships have become examples of this dominance.

The material focus of the existing literature on El Salvador's water politics does not adequately explain events on the ground. Poor people's water access outcomes are not best explained by the relative (in)efficiency of market-based mechanisms, lack of

money investments, technological engineering, demographic or political factors (i.e. bad politicians). Poor people's water access outcomes depend on power relations, which in El Salvador are asymmetric and characterised by deep social inequalities.

In sum, the research rejects long-held beliefs that water access outcomes in El Salvador are somehow a faulty material design of the water governance machine. The research puts the emphasis of responsibility on people and their complex social relations.

Contribution to Knowledge

The thesis will make a novel contribution to knowledge in five distinct ways:

(a) Adding the missing link: power explains water access injustice

This thesis adds valuable knowledge to the discussion on water governance problems in El Salvador by exploring the impact of power relations on actual outcomes of water access. The research argues that the dominant approaches explaining water access and sustainability problems in El Salvador have so far failed to address the fundamental role played by power in shaping outcomes of water (in)justice. Leading water politics researchers have suggested that *“demands for greater water justice require a critical view that acknowledges its cultural, political and material dimensions— which, moreover, are all embedded in socio-natural environments asking for stewardship”* (Zwarteveen and Boelens, 2014, 153). The research suggests that previous explanations have missed or ignored the specific nature of social inequality.

(b) Providing an Innovative Conceptual Synthesis

Conceptually the thesis offers an *original theoretical synthesis* to explain outcomes in people's water access. It focuses on the types of strategies and means used by different groups of social actors to influence each other and achieve their water access

objectives. This research includes the examination of people's everyday interactions along three interrelated axes or dimensions of power. These are conceptual spaces within which to observe, critically assess and detect hidden forms of power relations. Such an analysis combines existing bodies of theory in a new framework that simultaneously examines power relations between hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collectives groups of people. It explores the strategies, tactics and social actions of these three major groups of social actors, which cut across local/global, material/ideational and agency/social structure dimensions of power. It breaks free from previous approaches in the water governance arena that marginalise power from its central role in the outcomes of water governance.

(c) Incorporating New Empirical Sources

Empirically, the thesis introduces new sources of primary data that arise from particular groups and collectives. For instance, the relative exclusion of 'power' in the literature on water access of El Salvador has also brought along with it an exclusion of information about issues of responsibility in the country's water governance. Indeed, current literature on the subject has scarcely addressed issues of discourse, ideology, instruments and means used to gain control, colonise and conquer ways of thinking and behaviour in water governance. Examples of academic work on El Salvador's water governance fixated on material rather than power relations aspects of water governance can be seen in diagnoses about the country's water governance (e.g. (Barry et al., 1994, BID, 2008, Dimas, 2007b, Dimas, 2007a, Herrador, 2001).

Unlike past efforts in the analysis of water access in El Salvador, the thesis draws on an array of sources: symbols and texts in documents, one-to-one interviews, collective workshops, observation, questionnaires, and socio-cultural references to detect normalising ideologies and discourses as well as changes in behaviours and actions. Overall, the research taps into more interdisciplinary sources. The aim is to give a more rounded understanding of the links between people, water and power.

(d) Focusing on a novel country-specific case study

The extant literature has largely omitted El Salvador from political maps of water politics and governance. For example, recognised water politics academic associations in Latin America such as WATERLAT-GOBACIT to date, have mainly focused on North and South American case studies, with the noticeable absence of any research on El Salvador (see (WATERLAT-GOBACIT, 2014).

This thesis addresses the need for new knowledge by providing a detailed country-specific study of the water politics of El Salvador. The case study provides fresh new insights about the water/power nexus and its underlying tensions across local and global social scales.

(e) Creating Relevant Knowledge: Right Knowledge at the Right Time

This thesis, undertaken between 2010-14 presents timely, relevant knowledge about water access conflicts and power relations in El Salvador at a turning point in the history of the country. This research commenced in 2010, coinciding with a deep shift in the country's political power. The political pendulum has swung from the formerly prevailing right-wing party ARENA (1989-2009) to a left wing government coalition led by President Mauricio Funes and politically backed by the ex-guerrilla political party FMLN. This situation has supposedly marked an end to the leadership of the conservative, market-based style of governance promoted by ARENA. This fundamental change in political direction has opened up a window of opportunity for social change, including potential changes in environmental and water governance.

Since then, momentum has been increasing through the concerted interaction of many organised groups and collectives, which are pushing forward the democratic process to establish a General Water Law. The GWL is the first water law the nation has ever had which regulates all uses of water in the country. Its negotiation has presaged the

creation of institutions that could lead and guard the sustainability, fairness and accountability of water access and distribution.

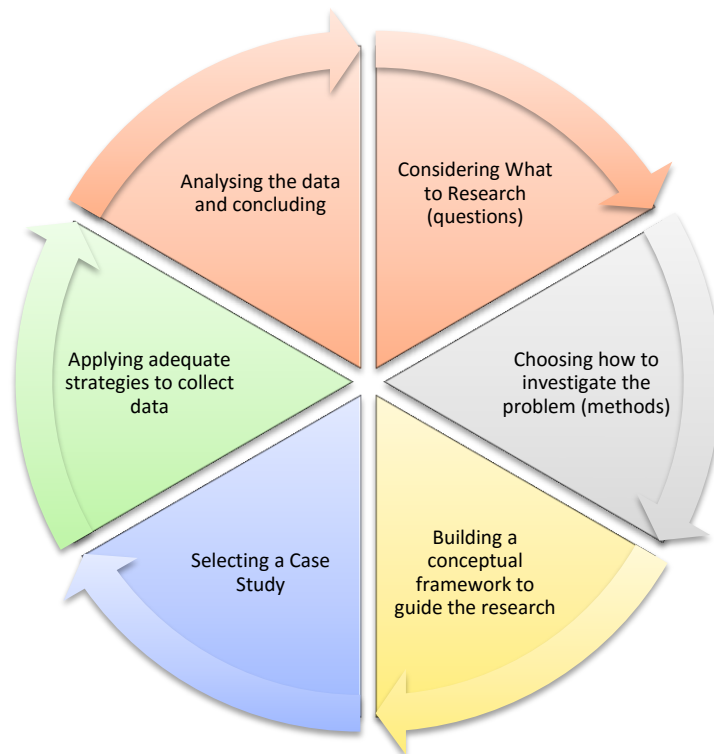
This research has therefore an opportunity to inform and influence the ongoing public policy debate on water access in El Salvador and perhaps more widely in Central America and elsewhere.

Methodology

“Treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything in proper perspective so that each side of an object or a plane is directed towards a central point”. (Paul Cezanne)

This methodology section outlines the overall plan and specific strategies this study used to find answers for the research question. The research plan divided in six steps.

Figure 13: Making research with a plan



Source: Own construction

Overall, this research plan used methods that as will be argued in the next sections, were ideal to approach and make sense on El Salvador’s water politics. The following is

an account of how these methods helped extract and filter the necessary data to answer the research question. In addition, the section indicates the weight this research assigned to different sorts of data including how it dealt with data variations.

(a) Considering What to Research (questions)

By asking '*How does power affect poor people's access to clean and sustainable water in El Salvador?*', this research embarked on a holistic and multidisciplinary endeavour. This is because human interactions happen through a complex web of social power and water relations that defy neat disciplinary boundaries. Describing the key multidimensional interactions or relationships between people and water obliged using multidisciplinary sources of data on people, power and water. The context of poor people's water access struggles living in El Salvador in the 2009-2014 period was the rich social canvas this research used to reach for new knowledge.

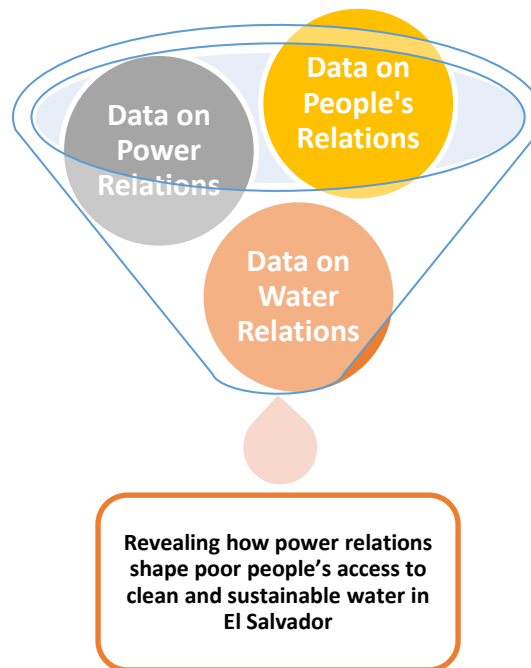
The choice of research methods needed to consider collecting at least three kinds of elements to analyse from the potential case study:

- i. **Data on People's relations:** Studying the context of El Salvador in a specific time and space requires an approach adapted to understand the kinds of social relations people that make this reality unique. It means considering for instance, how the distinctive features of Salvadorean's social relations have evolved historically from their social political, economic, social, cultural and environmental practices. In the case of El Salvador, the researcher needs to know, for instance who the key social actors in the country are. Who for instance, constitutes the poor, vulnerable people in El Salvador? Who are the powerful? What sort of social relations have they practiced so far? The research needs an appropriate methodology that puts the poor at the centre stage and approaches their relations in a multidisciplinary fashion.

- ii. **Data on Power relations:** People's social practices tend to contain efforts to influence both the circumstances and the way in which people behave to achieve desired goals and outcomes in relation to water. Hence, this research needs to consider the strategies, tactics and actions people use as part of their everyday social practices to achieve control of water and use it to fulfil their interests. People's power relations occur in different dimensions of people's social lives and blend beyond clearly defined geographical or disciplinary spaces. Indeed, Salvadoreans live fully immersed in a globalising world, which pushes Salvadoreans towards weaving power relations simultaneously across local to global scales. Capturing people's power relations needs to consider the full breadth of social political, economic, social, cultural and environmental practices, strategies and behaviours that Salvadoreans deploy across social scales to achieve their goals related to water governance.

- iii. **Data on Water relations:** The research needs to consider how water has shaped and fed power relations in El Salvador as much as the other way round: how social power relations have shaped the way Salvadorean society harnesses water for its own benefit. This dialectical and ongoing interaction between people and water is what researchers have called a hydrosocial relation. For this reason, the research has informational needs that run both ways of the water/people relationships. The researcher needs to dig deep into this relationship and unpack data that illustrates how El Salvador water's flows have shaped power relations in Salvadorean society and vice versa.

Figure 14: Considering What to Research



Source: Own construction

(b) Choosing how to investigate the problem (methods)

Having considered the research question's informational needs this section now considers the appropriate research methods that fit into the criteria discussed. In order to grasp the key power relations shaping poor people's clean and sustainable water access in El Salvador this research used the in-depth case study approach.

The in-depth case study method offers several advantages that if combined with other more specific methods of data collection fittingly answer the research question at hand. The in-depth case study approach allows the researcher to explore a particular social context in detail and collect different multidisciplinary data from people's ongoing social relations. Examining people's social relations means embracing all sorts of empirical sources to trace them and finding out who are the key social actors, their

actions and strategies, attitudes and behaviours characterising the way they shape water and how water shapes their own power, holistically and in-depth.

The case study approach is advantageous because the research can draw upon information from multiple, eclectic primary and secondary sources both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Some examples of sources include: pre-existing academic research providing background and context on the subject; documentation from official, journalistic and civil society sources; interviews with policy makers and a variety of social actors in different positions of power in and out of the water governance field; and of course, last but most importantly, poor people's own narratives and accounts.

Using the case study approach as the core method of analysis means grasping who is who and who does what and how, in El Salvador's power relations context. Crucially, the case study approach does not imply missing 'the big picture', that is, the case study as a method makes a commitment to study in-depth a particular reality by fixing the researcher's gaze in a set of social actors and their relations. Therefore, precisely because of this commitment, the case study approach is open to explore the full extent in which those relations transcend geographical or disciplinary barriers.

The case study approach is for these reasons recommended as best practice "when dealing with a process or complex real-life activities in great depth" (Noor, 2008, 1602). Its strength lies not only in that it provides "an in-depth, multifaceted investigation using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon"(Feagin et al., 1991, 2) but also that "it can 'close in' on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena *as they unfold in practice*" (italics emphasized here Flyvbjerg, 2006, 225). In this sense, the practical nature of this research combines a post-positivist and interpretive social research approach as it is concerned with human beings and their complex power relations.

The in-depth case study approach matches the information requirements of the research by making it practical to gather multidisciplinary data while combining it with

specific methods to capture data. Fusing the case study approach with more specific methods to grasp events and social actors 'on the fly' , that is, as they occur is a significant advantage as it can include qualitative and quantitative data sources from: questionnaires, surveys, interviews, observations and discussions groups as well as evidence from statistics, documents, multimedia recordings, social media, literature among others. The openness of the case study approach to incorporate other methods is crucial. For instance, understanding El Salvador's current water governance context of power relations calls for a full deployment of qualitative methods to observe, interview and trace the actions of the key players dominating El Salvador's governance structures.

Equally, the case study approach is opportune for El Salvador's present context. It facilitates a full immersion in a reality of country that is undergoing radical political swings from right to left ideologies due to the new Funes-FMLN government administration for the period of 2009-2014 and which already has become a watershed moment in the country's history. Moreover, the time is ripe to observe power relations 'on the fly' as pivotal changes have also occurred during this period at a global scale, e.g. the recognition of water as a human right by the United Nations (UN-GA, 2010, Khadka, 2010) and how this is affecting social actors' demands for social change across local to global scales.

(c) Building a conceptual framework to guide research

This research captures a case study sample from Salvadorean society's power relations and looks at its ramifications across social scales. It looks at how power relations radiate into strategies used by real people, that is, by identifiable social actors and social structures, which end up shaping the way poor communities access clean water in the country. Where water goes, to whom it goes and how it travels from nature to poor people across institutions, economic, legal and social frameworks dictate this thesis' quest.

Because the research examines power relations going on between people and water the research methodologically had to identify from the very beginning, exactly who make up the key social actors of Salvadorean society. For instance, would exploring how the state of El Salvador governs water suffice to understand the complex power 'battles for water' going on between people in El Salvador? This research argues that studying the state and its water governance institutions is not enough. Within and beyond the water governance structure of the Salvadorean state it is crucial to understand the social fabric that constitutes Salvadorean society in the first place.

Hence, building on top of the already solid academic literature that has tried to understand the inner workings of Salvadorean society, this research identifies three key groups of social actors interacting beyond (or within) the Salvadorean state. These are the hegemonic water actors (powerful collectives that stem or form part of the country's economic elites), counter-hegemonic water actors (those resisting and opposing the economic elites' power) and marginal collectives water actors (the communities of people systematically deprived and socially excluded that struggle to access basic needs and rights such as clean water).

Power relations between these social groups constitute the heart of the thesis. They are difficult to explore because they occur in multiple dimensions of people's lives and may be partly visible and invisible. They may be visible when people use force to achieve their interests. However, they may be invisible in the sense that they may happen through battles on visions, ideologies and discourses, which most Salvadoreans may not be aware, could be influencing how they relate to water. Ideological battles unfold into concrete strategies, behaviours and actions from people. Thus, a theoretical framework on power relations happening around people's water access should capture these dimensions as much as possible.

What the different water governance groups in El Salvador do to influence each other and achieve their interests is part of what this research conceives as 'power'. This thesis' conceptual framework (chapter 3) outlines in full detail the concept of power

used here. However, as a brief working definition 'power' here refers to "*the ability to make people (or things) do what they would not otherwise have done*" through strategies designed to achieve their desired outcomes. These strategies may include the use of force, persuasion, authority, coercion and manipulation. In other words, power in this thesis is a concept that highlights people's inter-relations with others and acknowledges they happen through various dimensions. This research uses a *conceptual synthesis of power* (developed in detail in Ch.3) that aims to capture as much as possible the multidimensional nature of people's power relations in water governance.⁷

Conceptually, the research uses a set of three lenses to capture dimensions or axes of power to map people's strategies, tactics and actions to influence others and achieve their interests. This is a very important methodological step too for this thesis. The lenses used in this research correspond to *three dimensions* in which people's power relations occur and calls them 'axes'. These are the local/global, material/ideational and agency/social structure axes of power. Describing these three dimensions of people's power relations requires different sorts of information.

⁷ For an in-depth discussion on the topic of the multidimensional aspects of power, see Clegg, S. and Haugaard, M. (2009) *The SAGE Handbook of Power*. London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, Haugaard, M. and Lentner, H. H. (2006) *Hegemony and power : consensus and coercion in contemporary politics*. International Political Science Association. Research Committee on Political Power. Meeting (2004 : Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York), Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, Lukes, S. (2005b) 'Power: A Radical View', *Power*..

Exploring a local/global axis of power

The first dimension or axis examines how local and global social actors use power relations in the form of strategies, tactics and actions across different social scales simultaneously to achieve their objectives. The conceptual roots sustaining this view are founded on social transformations research which have studied issues of scale in globalising forms of neoliberalism and how these have become hegemonic in the world (Scholte, 1997, Scholte, 2000, Scholte and North-South Institute (Ottawa Ontario), 2002) (Harvey, 2005b, Harvey, 2006c, Harvey, 2006b). These forms of globalising neoliberal relations are also present and have made substantial impacts in El Salvador (Roggenbuck and Konrad Adenauer, 1996, Van der Borgh, 2000, Wisner, 2001, Zepeda, 2006).

For instance, a Salvadorean woman water activist today enjoys different power capabilities to influence decision-making processes around her that did not exist in the past. She may relate to others around the world by campaigning on the human right to water using her mobile phone and Internet technologies like Twitter or Facebook. This increased power to reach out and influence others across social scales makes it important methodologically speaking, not to constrain the study of power relations to a geographical space. Time and space barriers today contract with globalisation processes. This is why the capability to act and relate to others, simultaneously and at lightning speed across scales is in fact, a new kind of power. A person living in a globalising world interacts using different new kinds of power relations and this research considers this dimension to examine the politics of water governance.

Exploring a Material/Ideational Axis of Power

This leads to the second dimension, which is the *material and ideational power relations* that people use to influence each other and achieve desired outcomes.

This dimension of power explains how groups and collectives of people in El Salvador use strategies, tactics and actions *simultaneously* to influence others and achieve valuable objectives in water governance.

These groups of people may use *material and ideological means* and strategies to best achieve their objectives. These strategies may include the use of force, authority, persuasion, manipulation and or coercion in water governance. Hence, this dimension necessarily requires information about how people's ideologies and discourses are influencing behaviour and vice versa. The knowledge sustaining this particular dimension relies in conceptual notions of power in social relations (Blair, 2006, Haugaard and Lentner, 2006, Lukes, 2005a). For instance, a Salvadorean water expert may spread ideologies and discourses about water. He or she may for example, frame water is an economic good that should be governed by the self-regulating mechanisms of the market and sold for a price. The expert may promote the privatisation of water services and could act upon making material changes in policies, money invested in water institutions and so on to make this policy strategy happen. The ability of using ideas and actions to influence outcomes and other people's behaviours is what dimension is all about and is key for power relations in water governance.

Exploring a Social Structure/Agency Axis of Power

Finally, the third dimension this research uses to map people's power relations is the *agency and social structure dimension*. This refers to the power people have to tap into their own skill sets and use them to promote changes in the particular social environment and structures of governance they live in. The idea of agency and social structure used here support the idea that for someone *to be able* to achieve access to

clean and sustainable water he or she first has to be *capable* of fulfilling a series of conditions in her society's own particular context. These conditions may be physical, social, economic, political or cultural (Agarwal and Humphries, 2006, Sen, 2009)⁸. In other words, just as Sen defines a capability as 'the power to do something' (Sen, 2010) this thesis claims that the capability to 'access to clean water in society' is also a particular form of power. Therefore, we need information to explore the pulls and levers that shape Salvadorean's agency/social structure.

For example, a Salvadorean woman may enjoy fewer capabilities (power) than others do to influence and change the way the model of water governance runs in her community due to tightly sealed authoritarian structures of governance in the country. It could be that her agency is diminished due to structures of neoliberal policies, globalisation or capitalism that favour economic elites rather than the poor (Bull, 2012a, Bull, 2006, Segovia, 2005b, Robinson, 2008, Robinson, 2003). Alternatively, the agency power of this Salvadorean woman could be weak or diminished due to her suffering of machismo social structures, lack of education or health to the point that she may not be able to engage in political activism. Consequently, the agency/social structure dimension of power becomes crucial for the understanding of power relations in water governance.

In sum, the thesis uses a methodological structure adapted to explore power in a specific context. By research design, the thesis identifies the key social actors shaping El Salvador's water access context and categorises them in a power landscape of

⁸ According to Amartya Sen power as 'capabilities', is the range of potential available freedoms for a person to do and to be what he or she values essential in order to flourish in life (Sen, 1992).

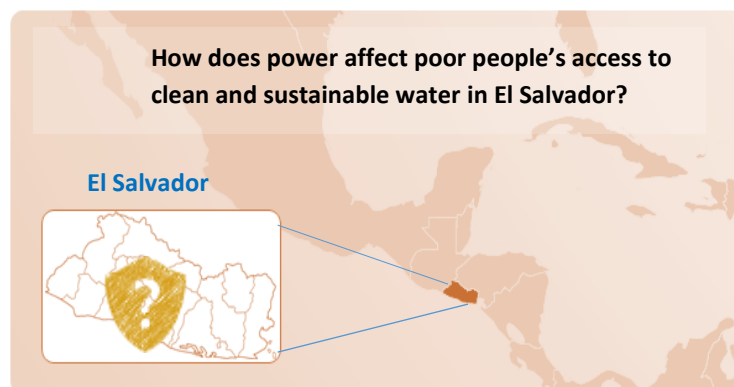
hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal groups of water actors. These social actors shape each other's competing visions of water using a variety of strategies to push their interests be it to influence the state, market or social structures along three dimensions of power: local/global, material/ideational, agency/social structure.

(d) Selecting a Case Study

Procedural Steps and Criteria Used

Choosing carefully the case study is a vital step to answer the research question in the best possible way. The research question that forms the backbone of this thesis makes it a priority to find a case study where the poor and their water access struggles occupy the centre stage of the analysis while in parallel exploring the transcalar power relations that shape their water governance. Even then, after careful consideration of an illustrative case study, the information gathered will always be partial or incomplete, as its valuable information may not be applicable to the experiences of other poor communities in the country. Nevertheless, by choosing a relevant case study the new knowledge derived from its analysis may provide tentative answers to a research question with more in-depth examples while illuminating matters often obscure or absent from current academic discussions on water governance in El Salvador.

Figure 15: Choosing a case study within El Salvador



Source: Own construction

The research made a deliberate and planned choice to find and select an illustrative in-depth case study with particular features. To select the case study methodologically, the research made provisions to make an exploratory visit to El Salvador in January 2011 to carefully gather and contrast information sources about possible case studies and make a critically informed and balanced decision.

During the exploratory field trip, the strategy involved visiting key institutions and social actors in the realm of water governance in El Salvador, including institutions of the state, such as ANDA, the Legislative Assembly or NGOs and communities working on problems of water access, and arranging exploratory interviews with them. The primary objective of the field visit was selecting an ideal case study. However, the exercise also involved gathering information sources to be able to take an informed decision about which collective(s) of poor people could be ideal for an in-depth case study analysis of power and water relations.

The critical choice of the case study followed the criteria that:

- The case study should be paradigmatic and illustrative of the struggles for clean and sustainable water access poor people suffer in El Salvador. In this sense, the case study has to faithfully represent and centre itself on a specific profile of people: a set of poor, marginalised rural communities of people struggling to access clean water. This profile for a case study takes into account that El Salvador is a society of six million people whereby at least 4 out of 10 people are poor, 1 out 10 people are extremely poor and at least 5 out 10 of those people that are poor come from rural areas.
- The case study ought to emerge as an example of ongoing chronic conflicts and clashes between social actors for water access and control, which involve poor people not just locally, but have resonance across different social scales.
- The case study is relevant for the ongoing discussions of water governance in El Salvador as it reflects the backdrop of the wider national and transnational discussions on the politics of water.

To achieve access to information and be able to connect to key social actors this research benefited from the legacy left by past professional network of contacts from the author of this research. Such professional network was built during a three year professional experience as Political Advocacy Officer for Central America and the Caribbean at Oxfam Solidarity, Belgium (based in El Salvador from 2007-2010) working on projects related to the human right to water. Indeed, this first-hand experience on water issues prompted and motivated this research's interest on power relations.

Once having chosen the case study, the research included four further field visits to El Salvador between 2010 and 2014. During that period, over 85 interviews with key social actors were undertaken (see annex). In addition, the research included two large community workshops delivered in San José Villanueva and participation as observer in water events across El Salvador. The collection of primary data included two field study visits beyond the geographical scales of El Salvador and the in-depth local case study.

The first field visit aimed to study the power relations and decision-making processes observed in the sixth edition of the World Water Forum held in Marseille, in March 2012. The visit intended to participate in the World Water Forum as an observer and to hold interviews with some of the social actors joining the event in relation to El Salvador's water governance. The present thesis included the World Water Forum as part of its analysis as it is one of the most important summits organised by hegemonic water actors in the world. In addition, in order to observe and contrast the ongoing power relations the field trip included a visit to the Alternative Water Forum 2012, a parallel event set up as a form of resistance to the WWF-2012 organised by local/global counter-hegemonic actors.

Finally, the research also included a visit to the European Parliament in March 2012 to participate as an observer and interviewer. In this case, the aim of the research field trip was to interview some of the Parliamentarians and social activists upon the contentious issue of threats to the human right to water in El Salvador posed by transnational neoliberal policies. In this case, the interest of the research was to

observe and analyse the potential commoditisation and privatisation of water through free trade agreements like the Association Agreement signed by El Salvador as part of Central America with the European Union (AA-EU-CA) in 2012.

Describing the Case Study

The selected case study consists of seven communities of poor, vulnerable people living in the semi-rural region located around the town and municipal area of San José Villanueva, province of La Libertad, El Salvador (see map location in fig.3). The communities selected were: Las Veraneras 1, Las Veraneras 2, Sosa, El Cementerio, Escalón Centro, Espíritu Santo and El Amate (see map location in fig. 15).

The reasons to select these communities stem from the exploratory field trip, interviews and documentation. Social activists and state officials indicated through the exploratory field trip interviews that these communities were 'special' in the sense that their water access struggles were evident, persistent and known to the public opinion thanks to their persistent protests for clean water access.

The communities of San José Villanueva selected for the case study presented the common characteristics of having water access problems, but also of working as a collective group or alliance to defend and fight for their right to water. They have made alliances or joined events of resistance with other water activists groups. These range from having strong links with ACUA, a very active local grassroots NGO with strong leadership in the defence of the human right to water at local and national scales, to participating in wider social movement protests such as the ones led by the National Water Forum (NWF), a counter-hegemonic social network of water actors.

Figure 16: Case Study Map of San Jose Villanueva



Source: Own construction based on maps in (ACUA, 2008)

Overall, the communities selected match all of the selection criteria described previously and reflected in the research question. The reasons to select seven communities in the rural areas of the town of San José Villanueva are many. First, the majority of the communities of San José Villanueva (SJV) are characterised by people living in poverty and deprivation in multiple domains of their lives including a daily struggle to access clean water (ACUA, 2008, San Juan, 2013). Second, these communities live in a milieu experiencing lack of water access and environmental degradation. The deforestation and contamination of the area around its fresh water bodies, river Aquiquisquillo and fresh water springs in San José Villanueva is growing according to studies in the region (ACUA, 2008) and echoed by social activists like ACUA (Gómez, 2011, González, 2011) and ISF (Collado, 2013).

The water basins located in this case study are also symbolic to El Salvador. They are part of a wider environmental ecosystem of *Cordillera del Bálsamo* or the Balsam Mountain Range. This range is rich in natural habitat and resources but the territory is highly contested by the different social actors in this region (ACUA, 2008). Predatory practices from urbanisations processes are putting the local water resources at risk of unsustainable levels of depletion. Social activists blame the construction projects of rich corporations in the region. They accuse them of extracting great amounts of water for superfluous reasons: e.g., from water used for swimming pools or washing cars to strong extractions of water to irrigate the massive golf course and gardens of these homes. At the same time, these same social activists have blamed these urban developments for discharging wastewater into the rivers and water catchment areas of the region. The dual impact of high rates of extraction coupled with contamination has resulted in a reduction in both the quantity and quality of water available for the communities of San José Villanueva (ACUA, 2008, Collado, 2013).

In addition, the selected case of communities of San José Villanueva expose illustrative power struggles related to water access in El Salvador. The case study exhibits a clash between hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collective water actors over water control. The communities of San José Villanueva are all marginal collective water actors, but a sub-set of these have also been part of a wider set of counter-hegemonic water actors in the country. Those in the resistance side of the communities of San José Villanueva have tried to influence key projects and decision-making processes that affect them. For instance, many of the key players embedded in the conflicts for water access also participate in advocacy groups trying to influence the content and nature of new legal and institutional frameworks to change the current model of water governance operating in the country. The most iconic one these communities have engaged in activism is the General Water Law (GWL) process of negotiations.

Locally and nationally, these seven communities of San José Villanueva have been engaged in protests and frontal displays of resistance against three very iconic hegemonic water actors' related projects. The projects exemplify the schism of social

inequality occurring in San José Villanueva and illustrate why the creation of rules and institutional frameworks like the GWL represents an important tool for water justice for these communities. The projects are:

- **The rich residential neighbourhood of La Hacienda:** This project of luxury homes built since the 1990s by Grupo Roble across 86 acres of tropical forestland⁹ (Casas Roble, 2014) right at the heart of the selected communities of San José Villanueva are symbolic of the rich/poor divide in El Salvador. These homes came to be iconic because of their luxurious ‘American style’ houses of up to 155 m² of space built in an area of significant natural beauty. However, the luxury of these homes comes in sharp contrast with the standard of living in the surrounding communities. Their water access in theory should be the same as communities around them, but in practice, that is not the case. While the communities of San José Villanueva struggle daily to access clean water, the families in La Hacienda living beside them have a potable water plant that extracts water from the shared local river Aquiquisquillo.
- **The large golf course and rich residential urbanisation projects of ‘El Encanto Villas & Golf Course’ —planned to be fully operating in 2015— (El Encanto, 2014):** El Encanto Villas & Golf Course is a large construction project located in an area of 1,032 acres of land¹⁰ located beside the communities of San José Villanueva. It incorporates 610 lots for the construction of luxury villas around a golf course with 18 holes and a Country Club (El Encanto Villas & Golf, 2015).

⁹ The project is advertised as 50 “manzanas” of land, a traditional measurement used in Central American countries. One ‘manzana’ is the equivalent of 1.72 acres or 6,961 m²

¹⁰ This is a project with an area of 300 manzanas. (1.72 acres =1 manzana)

Although not completely finished at the time of this research, this project is already famous for the various impacts it is having in the region's environment and water resources. Because it is designed to cater rich Central American and international economic elites due to its elevated prices (membership prices range from \$15,000 to \$30,000) (El Encanto Villas & Golf, 2015), the surrounding communities and social activists saw this project right from the very start as an expensive club of the rich and a massive water thirsty and environmentally project damaging for the communities. The project "reinforced by a camera surveillance system, mobile communications and personal security" (El Encanto Villas & Golf, 2015) when finished would be the biggest and most luxurious golf course & villas in Central America, located within walking distance of the communities of San José Villanueva. The grandeur wealth of this project could not be sharper with the current reality lived by the communities of SJV. Both La Hacienda and El Encanto construction projects have in common that they resulted in the acquisition and destruction of large tracts of forest, in important and sensitive hydrological zones upon which these seven poor communities depend.

- **The public-private partnership FIHIDRO:** This initiative is the first public-partnership agreement to come to fruition in El Salvador in the water sector in all its history. FIHIDRO is a public-private fund set up as a collaboration with the public water service provider ANDA to extend its water provision services across the province of La Libertad. The FIHIDRO fund, designed, injected and led by private corporations has as its main goal securing water resources for the participant corporations' growing investments in the province of La Libertad such as El Encanto and La Hacienda. In other words, the corporate leaders investing in the FIHIDRO scheme have pressing needs to secure water for their investments. An illustrative example is that of Rafael Castellanos, who is at the same time President of the FIHIDRO public-private partnership scheme and the executive chairman (CEO) of 'El Encanto' Golf course and Villas project.

Empirically, the selection of the communities of San José Villanueva as the in-depth case study is well justified. The communities of San José Villanueva are ideal for this research as it highlights several issues.

First, a *problem of water access injustice*: The research studies a community of people living in a context where water is scarce for some and plentiful for others. The contrast in water access with their wealthy neighbours serves as good start to explore how the existing power relations have shaped these communities water access outcomes.

Second, *a space for power conflicts in the making*: Thanks to the selected case study, the research can focus on ongoing *tensions, collision and conflict* over how water ought to be allocated and governed, showcasing the ongoing power dynamics displayed by social actors when they want to achieve their different interests.

Finally, an *opportune time for analysis*: The selected case study has already water access conflicts developing and unfolding simultaneously in power relations across different scales and at the time of the research, so it provides the perfect setting in which to explore the dynamics of power relations as they happen.

Identifying the Key Social Actors

The thesis argues that, beyond the existing water governance structure of the State, today three groups of water actors are crucial to understand El Salvador's water governance politics. The first and most powerful group of social actors shaping El Salvador's water governance are those part of the country's **hegemonic water actors**.

This thesis argues, backed up by an extensive cumulative evidence from previous research (see (Bull et al., 2014, Paniagua, 2002, Segovia, 2005b, Bull and Cuéllar, 2013, Bull and Kasahara, 2012) that the economic elites of El Salvador have been —and continue to be— a key influential set of social actors remarkably influential in the country's water governance. For this reason, this research includes economic elites as key 'social actors' in the country. This entails analysing how today's economic elites - now increasingly transnational manufacture consent to further their interests, set the water governance agenda and legitimise the existing water governance order in El Salvador. Indeed, previous research backs up part of this argument at least on a global scale. Goldman (2007) showed that “transnational policy networks” have commanded powerful webs of relations across the world to shape policies in water governance. A fragment of these networks, this research suggests, is present in El Salvador. They are powerful insofar as many of their members also constitute part of elites in the country.

In essence, hegemonic water governance actors in El Salvador stem from the same family of social groups that:

- a) control the key economic sectors of society (industries, financial sectors, agriculture, among others),
- b) control large parts of the mass media (TV, radio, newspapers) and,
- c) Hold influential historical ties with transnational hegemonic networks that include corporations, associations and like-minded think tanks (Segovia, 2005b, Bull, 2006, Bull, 2012a, Bull and Cuéllar, 2013).

The key identifying political feature of hegemonic water actors then is that they stem from the same branches of powerful economic elites that in the case of El Salvador have promoted and used to their best benefit market-oriented neoliberal strategies of water governance and policy-making. These groups are also a highly influential force in contemporary environmental governance (Bull and Cuéllar, 2013) historically favouring the vision of defining water as a an economic good susceptible of being privatised and traded for a price (CDC, 2008).

Solid research outputs already exist showing how hegemonic water groups have emerged and colonised the rules of water governance across the world (Goldman, 2007). Today, a classic example of water governance rules increasingly shaped by economic elites is the 'integrated water resources management' (IWRM) approach. This approach frames water as an economic good and plays key roles in the dissemination of ideology, discourse, actions and behaviour on water management (Zwarteveen and Boelens, 2014, 145). Through this approach, hegemonic water actors have made consistent holistic efforts to control the matrix of uses of water in different regions across the world. By promoting IWRM practices consistent with their interests in water, hegemonic elites have populated local water governance regimes around the world. El Salvador's has been for the last two decades in a slow transit to develop its own IWRM regime and hegemonic water actors have sought to make it happen according to a General Water Law that favours their interests.

Studying power relations in Salvadorean water politics today means taking into account how some social actors may use apparently neutral policies like IWRM as strategies to dominate water governance, which in the end affects poor people's water access outcomes.

The thesis identifies a second powerful group of social actors in Salvadorean water politics: those in the resistance, counter-hegemonic side of water politics. These are all those individuals and collectives who typically have opposed neoliberal water

policies, rules and institutions and reacted against their decision-making processes in the country. This thesis identifies these groups as **'counter-hegemonic water actors'**.

These counter-hegemonic water actors include all those individuals and organised collectives of people that favour alternative visions to market-based neoliberalism in the country's water governance and policy-making practices. A key identifying feature of this group is that they are radically opposed to ideas that frame water as a commodity susceptible to privatisation. One key example of a counter-hegemonic water governance group is the National Water Forum in El Salvador (NWF, 2014c, NWF, 2014b).

The NWF is a group of more than a hundred organisations that have organised themselves to defend the human right to water and its sustainability in El Salvador. They have promoted these ideas by proposing a General Water Law that reflects these rights and ideals.

Finally, this research identifies the communities of poor, vulnerable Salvadoreans suffering clean water access deprivations as social actors too and classifies them in a separate category as **'marginal collective groups'**. The justification for separating communities of poor people in El Salvador as social actors —whether formally organised or not— is because their category is more or less defined by a clear sense of structural exclusion. Moreover, the marginal and the poor constitute the focus of this research. The poor experience power relations and water access in a unique way in Salvadorean society. They relate to water from their own particular standpoints, unlike NGO social activists, politicians, or academics they experience water scarcity 'in practice' and entertain their own unique viewpoints about water access. For instance, clean water access may be more a matter of short-term urgency and survival rather than a question of long-term water governance issues. They may be less inclined to endorse water governance ideas from hegemonic and counter-hegemonic water actors. Hence, this thesis methodologically allocates the poor at the heart of its analysis by studying them as social actors and uses an in-depth case study to look at

their own embedded power relations within them and in relation to the other water actors.

Without a doubt, hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collectives in Salvadorean water politics do not sum up the variety of political positions towards water existing in the country. However, these groups of social actors illuminate as a whole the rough backbone of individuals and collectives that shape the water politics of Salvadorean society. These people have created politics, policies, ideas, tools, social practices and social movements, which overall have had the most weight and power to change the political water futures of the country. In their conjunction, they have dominated and determined the governance structures of Salvadorean society. Their clashes over water governance rules in the country provide today the empirical sources of information that this thesis explores. Hegemonic water governance groups clash with those in resistance over key policy-making processes.

Researching the Key Water/Power Struggles

El Salvador's water politics offers a distinct research challenge: how can we best study poor people's power struggles for water access from an in-depth case study without losing resolution on the 'big picture', that is the major power structures and players shaping water governance around them? Methodologically, this research chooses to study a local set of communities of poor people suffering water access but studies their power relations *transversally across social scales*. This means that the research investigates evidence of key decision-making processes and events capable of shaping poor people's water governance outcomes, even without them consciously knowing about them.

An example of a big event that exposes power relations and is capable of shaping the way water flows for the poor in El Salvador is the General Water Law formulation and negotiations process. In El Salvador's an invisible water war has been brewing for quite some time in the form of the potential creation of the country's first-ever General Water Law (GWL). It is a major scenario where today ongoing discussions politicians,

civil society and business groups are trying to influence what they see as the ‘rules of the game’ in water governance. This fundamental law has been on stand-by for years. Every time different water actors have submitted proposals for a GWL in El Salvador’s Legislative Assembly they have been aborted, put aside or ‘frozen’ by the political parties interacting within its conference rooms.¹¹

The result has been that despite repeated efforts from various groups of Salvadorean social actors, neither hegemonic nor counter-hegemonic groups have been able to advance a GWL compatible with their interests beyond the stage of a first consensual draft. It is easy to see that powerful interests and social groups may be interacting behind the scenes and stopping the realisation of a GWL in the country if it does not favour their interests. The consequences of a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ GWL may be felt most profoundly by the vulnerable poor who currently do not enjoy clean access to water and have no institutions nor laws to make the government and other social accountable for their water governance actions. The question is then, not just who about who sets the rules of the ‘water governance game’ in El Salvador, but most importantly *how?*

¹¹ Currently the majority of Central American countries have still not incorporated institutional arrangements (policies, laws) that would effectively make water a practiced human right: only Nicaragua has ratified a law on water in the 2007 Asamblea Nacional de Nicaragua (2007) *Ley General de Aguas Nacionales. No. 620*. Managua: Diario Oficial La Gaceta. In the case of Costa Rica, Guatemala and El Salvador only draft legislations have been put in place or are on hold. Many law proposals directed towards regulating water access have been waiting for years in the Legislative Assemblies of the region.

(e) Applying Adequate Strategies to Collect Data

The research strategy and approach of this research aimed to be as holistic as possible in the information sources gathered. The goal set up was to collect multiple 'snapshots' of evidence about the power relations affecting poor people's water access in the seven communities of San José Villanueva. To do this, the thesis relied on ensuring the collection of various types of information sources. This included primary qualitative sources of evidence: interviews, workshops, participation as observer in different events shaping the water governance of the communities, original written documents, photographs, and secondary sources: journalistic accounts, literature, statistics and raw data, among others.

Collecting the necessary information to satisfy the research question implied meeting several conditions:

First, it was necessary to draw a line of neutrality and give ethical guarantees such as anonymity and crosschecking of sources to be able to cite and quote the sources collected. The research process confronted a politically charged and extremely polarised environment of social actors in El Salvador. Nationwide, right and left leaning views colour almost every arena of governance and spark passionate reactions, mistrust and debates from people, which can potentially lock doors to information. To surpass the political tensions as a possible barrier, the field trips included exploratory 'warm-up' sessions, which consisted in e-mails, telephones calls or visits to arrange the possibility of an interview. When possible, recommendations from other social actors in the realm of their circle of trust would be used to connect with other more 'unreachable' players. To build a connection and trust to the key social actors in the water governance sphere, in the government, private sector, communities and beyond geographical borders, this research heavily relied on 'the snowball effect' of the social actors recommendations on who could provide vital pieces of information about each of the aspects discussed in the thesis.

For instance, sketching a more refined picture regarding the power relations shaping the communities of San José Villanueva's water access outcomes implied ensuring trust from the social actors involved. The way to connect with the communities was by means of recommendations from officers from the local water and human rights NGO, ACUA to connect with leaders of these communities. Through ACUA, community leaders already engaged in social activism in San José Villanueva were readily available for interviews.

As part of its methodological approach, the research included doing 'open-ended' interviews, participation as observer and engagement in social events carefully considering each social actor's political leaning. For a detailed account of the interview questions, allocation of social actors and workshop methodology see the appendix 1).

The research plan consisted in connecting with more than 85 social actors and engage in ongoing 'conversations' with them about the strategies they were using to reach their objectives in water governance. To balance the informational flow, the methodology of data and interview collection included as much as possible to give an equal weight to the amount of interviews collected from each of the three groups of social actor discussed in this research: the hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collectives social actors.

Similarly, as part of the methodological weighing and selection of interviews and other social interactions, the research examined the institutions of the state in a class of their own, without necessarily allocating them as hegemonic or counter-hegemonic.

The reason for not using *ex-ante* a political tagging of the social actors sitting in the structures of the State is contextual and obeyed the mixed nature of the 2009-2014 Funes administration government. Because the Funes administration was the first left-leaning stable government democratically elected in El Salvador, from 2009-2014 many of its personnel and structures had to transition very slowly from former right-wing professionals and styles of governance. Furthermore, the Funes administration did not remove all officers from previous ARENA administrations, especially in

positions of medium to low levels of authority. This was certainly true when examining the structure of autonomous institutions like ANDA, where many of its professionals were part of previous government structures. In other words, in total, approximately a third of the interviews corresponded to each of the hegemonic water actors, to counter-hegemonic and the rest to marginal collective communities and the state.

(f) Analysing the Data and Concluding

The thesis distils the information needed to answer the research question across seven chapters. The thesis divides into two halves. The first half, which includes chapters 1 to 3, provides the pillars that sustain the research's analytical foundations. This first chapter 1 provides the route map of the research. Chapter 2 explores the historical context in which this research unfolds. Chapter 3 looks at what researchers already know about water access as problem of power, and elaborates an 'axes of power' approach as an innovative and holistic conceptual framework to understand people's power relations regarding water access.

The second half of the thesis is its empirical one. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 apply the 'axes of power approach' as a tool for the empirical analysis of power relations. Chapter 4, examines marginal collective groups of people and examines their power relations along the three axes: local and global, material and ideational, agency and social structure power relations. Chapter 5 applies the same framework to the hegemonic group of social actors in El Salvador's water governance. Chapter 6 does the empirical analysis of the counter-hegemonic groups of resistance in the water governance of El Salvador. Finally, Chapter 7 synthesises the findings and concludes.

The following pages introduce the historical context of El Salvador's water politics. This chapter 2 sketches how the cradle of hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collectives in El Salvador and beyond have extended to shape what water governance looks like today in the country.

Table 1: Summary of methods used to study the politics of water in El Salvador

Methodological steps	Methods used	Information analysis
Setting the Research question problem and informational requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulation of research question • Justification of relevance • Literature review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary sources
Choosing a methodological approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth case study approach • Literature review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary sources
Case study selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploratory field visit to El Salvador (Jan. 2011) • Literature review of sources • Interview techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary sources: exploratory interviews and workshops • Data on who's who in the governance of water • Newspaper and institutional reports on socially excluded population's water access situation
Case study exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic, ongoing social power/water relations Interview techniques • Observance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about poor people's water access situation • Empirical data
Case study analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a map of social actors related to social power/water relations • Field visit locally to the case study itself • Field visit to national social/water governance institutions • Interview techniques • Snowball technique • Observance • Document and literature collection • Field visit to a range of key global events shaping the case study's social power/water relations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empirical data from mixed sources
Setting the stage and historical context of the case study's situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical data collection • Trends in water access • Key events shaping the water access of the people in the case study • Key social actors shaping the water access of the people in the case study Historical accounts on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical data • Secondary data: e.g.

	the institutional governance of water in El Salvador (led by state, civil society, private sector)	
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Source: Own construction

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: WATER & POWER FLOWING FOR THE FEW



Source: (ACUA and NWF, 2013)

Introduction: From Water Commons to Water Injustice

This chapter explores El Salvador's historical context. It looks at how people, power and water relations have interlaced through time and space producing a tight knot of socio-natural relations. The chapter helps clarify how El Salvador's society has produced its own particular waterscape, that is, an outcome of "socioecological arrangements" produced by the blending of society's power relations and water's material and ideational flows (Budds and Hinojosa, 2012, p. 124). To do this, the chapter samples the most pivotal events that have marked El Salvador's social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and water governance practices. The chapter illustrates how these socio-historical episodes have ultimately shaped

Salvadoreans' lives, their institutions and governance frameworks. Has this context enabled clean water to flow to all Salvadoreans?

The chapter divides in three parts.

The first part, starts by characterising El Salvador's water flows and the current ill health and crisis point in which they are. It depicts the current context of chronic degradation in the quality, quantity and regularity in which water to people and the environment in El Salvador. It then shows that by going back in time through the history of water, we can also see the history of people and power relations. In this way this part goes briefly 'upstream' and shows how some historical events going as far back as colonial times and in the 20th century (1520s up to 1950s) sculpted and are partly responsible for today's relationship between people and water in El Salvador. This era lacked a central government or state involved in the governance of water. However, the period is interesting as this section argues that the history of degradation of El Salvador's waters and prevailing inequality in power relations and social injustice evolved since colonial times from a set of key economic and social activities, some of which remain central to the country today.

The second part, explores the more recent period in which the state of El Salvador rises as a government that actually seeks *to govern* the different uses of water in its territory. In this section, especial attention is given to the role key social actors have played in forging the state of water governance in which the country is immersed today. It examines how key social actors have used many times their power relations to hijack and colonise the key institutions, rules and legal frameworks of the state in relation to water. The section presents a chronology of key events in this regard and discusses its implications for people/power relations.

Finally, the third part explores the general historical context of the communities of San José Villanueva in the light of the chronological accounts given before. This section presents a full characterisation of the key social actors and events that illustrate the

case study and finalises discussing what it all means for the research question and concludes.

Ungoverned Flows

The following section examines how the ill health of Salvadorean waters can be the trigger for an analytical exercise: going back in time, 'upstream', so to speak, to discover how this 'bad governance' of water came to be in the first place. In other words, by discussing how people in El Salvador used to relate to water in the past, we can better understand the water access paradox of the present and perhaps recognise patterns in the end. The Salvadorean water scarcity paradox may have modelled itself since pre-colonial times. Where and how has water governance in El Salvador allowed this? As we will see in the following account, a large part of the answer lies in the country's own particular experience of an *accumulation by dispossession* process as identified by David Harvey (Harvey, 2003).

El Salvador's history is one plagued by social injustice and violence. Waves of conflicts and struggles between powerful social actors have carved El Salvador's current institutions, rules and social arrangements work. However, the poor and the vulnerable have suffered the most. From dictatorships to civil war massacres and waves of corruption or delinquency, ordinary Salvadoreans have survived extreme social conditions and continue to do so today (Dunkerley, 1982, Danner, 1994, Lindo-Fuentes et al., 2007, Popkin, 2010, Binford, 2002).

This section briefly explores the legacy of pre-colonial, colonial times (1520s-1810) until the 1950s. Following that, come the 1960s-1970s period that marks the start of first water governance institutions and frameworks created on a wider national scale in El Salvador. The 1980s period explores how the violent civil war of twelve years worsened the country's ecological crisis and affected the existing services for clean water provision. It depicts how a state of '*structural water governance chaos*' was normalised. The 1990s period illustrates how the neoliberal structural adjustment

programmes propagated by international financial institutions (IFIs) went on to insert their policies and vision in El Salvador and across the world over. This period marks the successful rebranding of water as ‘an economic good’. Finally, the last section studies the rising paradigm of the human right to water and its clash with the resilient neoliberal governance of the 2000s right up until 2013.

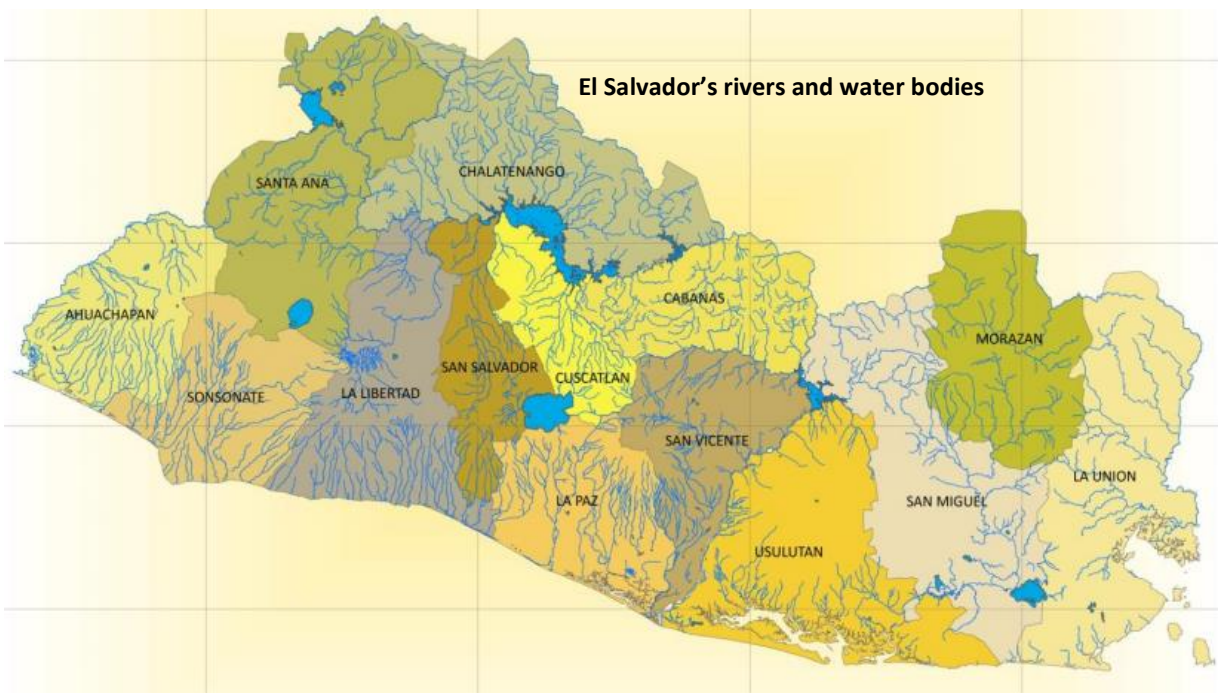
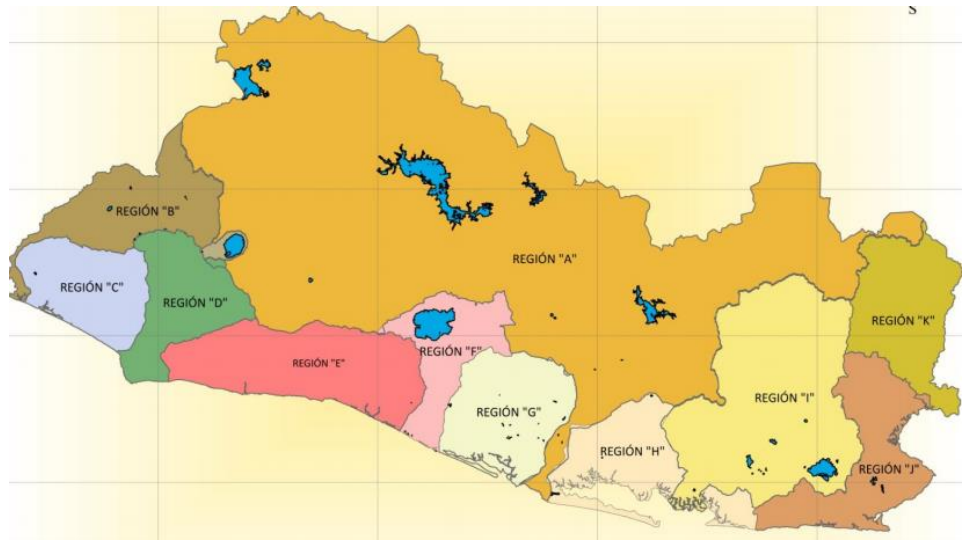
El Salvador’s Waters Now

Salvadoreans’ historical relationship with water has been marginally explored in the existing historical literature, see for instance, Barberena (1966), Castro (1942), Cardenal (1996), MINED (1994) and Gavidia (1958). Water usually appeared to have emerged in the background of Salvadorean history mostly rendered as a given part of nature’s scenery. However, as this chapter argues, the history of water in El Salvador is much more than its materiality. Water has changed co-dependently with the twists and turns of the history of its people. Water is just as much about human social relations as about nature. Today, water is widely seen not just as part of the current Salvadorean ecological crisis (Rubio Fabián et al., 1996) but as a symptom of a larger, more endemic problem: the chronic presence of social inequality.

Today, the geographical and hydrological setting of El Salvador reveals a water availability paradox. It follows the logic of experiences in the world of having “water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink”(Sultana, 2007). Although the country is geographically located in a water rich region, a large part of its population struggles to get access to this vital liquid. El Salvador is located in the Central American isthmus, a region internationally deemed as rich in freshwater resources with approximately 23,000 annual cubic metres per capita, almost three times the world average according to today’s statistics (Jiménez and Asano, 2008) quoted in (CEPAL, 2011, p. 94) and (USACE, 1998) .

Figure 17: El Salvador's Basins Map

- A. River Lempa
- B. River Paz
- C. River Cara Sucia
- D. River Grande of Sonsonate
- E. River Mandinga
- F. River Jiboa
- G. Estuary of Jaltepeque
- H. Jiquilisco Bay
- I. River Grande of San Miguel
- J. River Sirama
- K. River Goascorán



Source: (MARN, 2011a)

Within Central America El Salvador has been geographically fortunate to be irrigated like open veins by more than 360 rivers and natural water bodies below or above the ground (such as lakes, Guija, Coatepeque and Lake Ilopango), (AQUASTAT-FAO, 2000) (See El Salvador’s general map and basins map in figs 17). However, even in peak times of water availability such as in winter water availability in El Salvador amounts to only 3,177m³ per head. This is much lower than neighbouring countries (Guatemala, Honduras) which enjoy more than twice this amount and others like Nicaragua, Panama and Costa Rica more than seven times this amount. In fact, analysts predict that given the historical trend of fresh availability in El Salvador, the country will soon be entering into ‘*water stress*’, that is below 1,700 m³ annual water availability per head (Tábora et al., 2011, p. 28). See the comparative table below.

Table 2: Supply and Demand of Fresh Water in Central America

Country	Availability (supply in Mm ³ /year)	Availability (supply in m ³ per capita)	Demand (Mm ³ /year)	Percentage of total water supply used
Panama	193,500	59,985	12,500	Less than 7%
Costa Rica	113,100	24,784	23,500	Less than 20.73%
Nicaragua	189,700	34,500	1,956	Less than 1.03%
Honduras	92,850	11,540	8,450	Less than 9.1%
El Salvador	18,252	3,177	1,844	Less than 10.1%
Guatemala	97,120	6,900	9,596	Less than 9.88%
Belize	18,550	53,156	568	Less than 3%
Total	723,072		58,414	

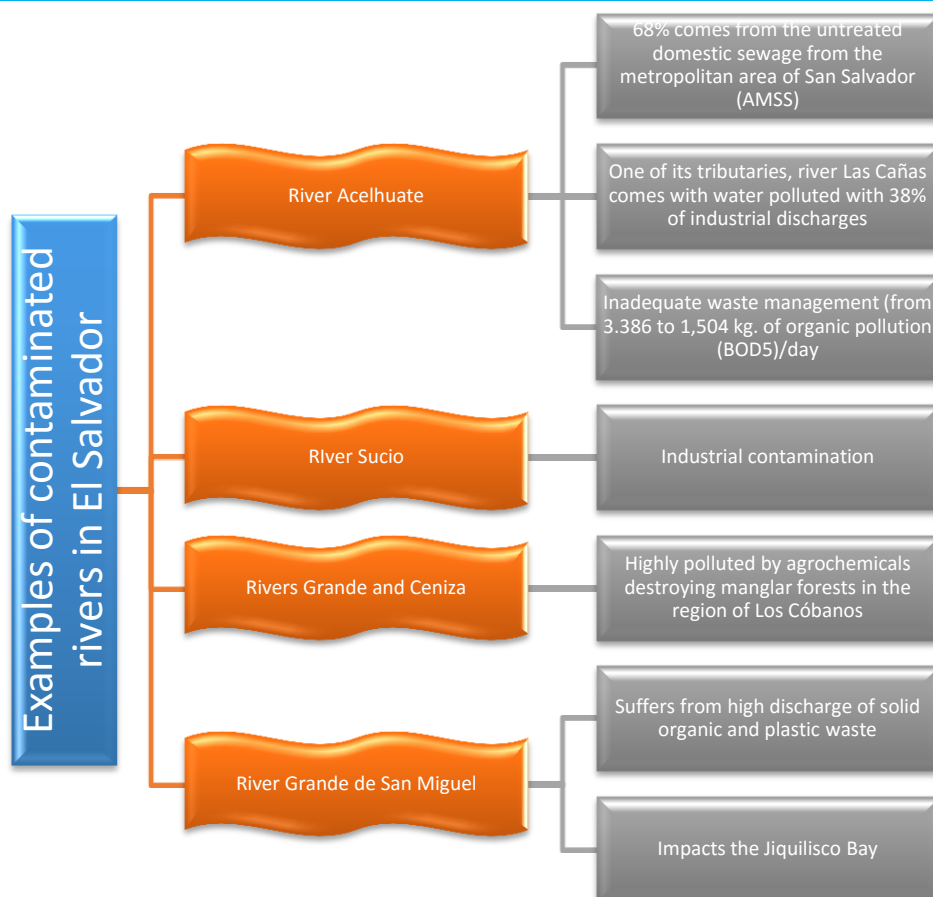
Source: (Tábora et al., 2011, p. 28)

The reduced physical availability of water resources per year in El Salvador indicates problems. Of the total 18.252 cubic kilometres around 67% is surface water (11.6 km³) and 33% is ground water (5.7km³) (OIRSA, 2005). Nearly 360 rivers distributed in 10 water basin regions from the total surface water of the country (SNET, 2009). These numerous rivers constitute the main source of surface waters of the country. However, Salvadoreans rely more on groundwater for their consumption because most surface water to date remains heavily polluted. In fact, according to the Report on Water Quality by El Salvador’s Ministry of the Environment (MARN) only 12% of these rivers contain water categorised as “good”, 50% have “regular” water and 31% have “bad” quality and 7% “extremely bad”. In other words, the water in nine out of every ten

rivers in El Salvador is not adequate to undergo treatment for human consumption. Moreover, according to the same report, the majority of these rivers do not even meet the required standards to irrigate crops. Only 26% of the rivers do and only 17% meet the criteria needed to make them potable again (MARN, 2011a).

The chronic degradation of El Salvador’s rivers also represents a chronic history of the economic and social practices that have prevailed over the last decades in the country. The agro-industrial practices that been tied to the agro export economic model of the country and have had a massive impact in the waters of the country. A selection of some of the rivers in the country illustrates some of the causal factors for their contamination (see fig.18).

Figure 18: Contamination in Salvadorean Rivers



Source: Adapted from (Romero, 2014)

For instance, river Acelhuate has for long ranked as the most polluted river in El Salvador. River Acelhuate is one of the rivers that form part of the Bajo Lempa river basin¹², the most important in El Salvador. The pollution in the Acelhuate River is illustrative: 68% of its pollution originates from water discharges of untreated domestic sewage from the main metropolitan region of the capital city San Salvador (AMSS) and from one of its key river tributaries, river Las Cañas. River Las Cañas comes already so polluted that 38% of it constitutes contaminated discharges. At the same time, the lack of management of waste makes river Acelhuate reach severe levels of organic waste (a range of 3.386 to 1,504 Kg of organic waste BOD₅¹³/day). Domestic and agro-industrial wastewater activities have historically run out of control and contaminated the country's waters to unsustainable levels (Romero, 2014).

As ecologists declare, "nature is poor people's wealth" (FOE, 2005) and this is true for the Salvadorean rural poor, who many tend to see rivers as their primary sources of water access. The degradation of El Salvador's rivers is the first of many other deterioration processes that have happened in the water governance structures of the country.

¹² The Bajo Lempa basin watershed covers half of the country, at 422 km long originating in southern Guatemala and travelling through Honduras for 31 km before entering the northwest of El Salvador.

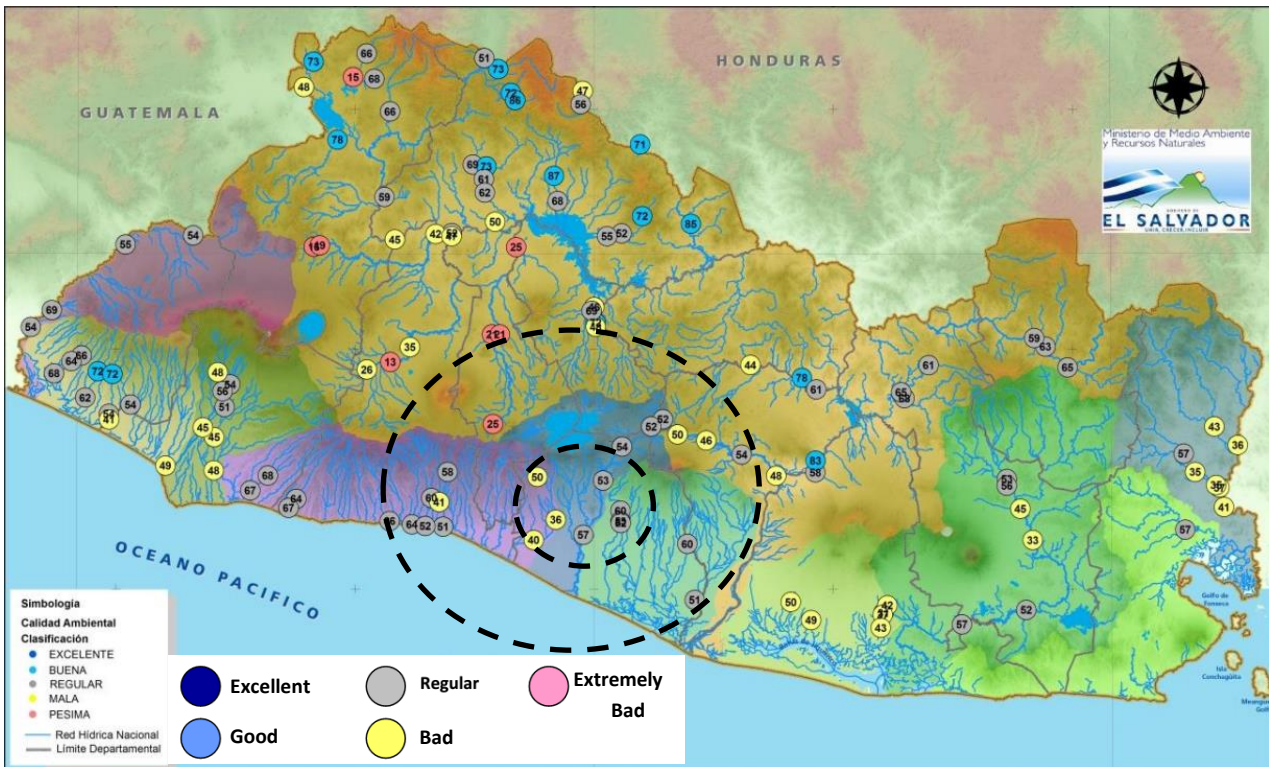
¹³ According to the Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems a Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) is "a measure of the dissolved oxygen consumed by microorganisms during the oxidation of reduced substances in waters and wastes. Typical sources of BOD are readily biodegradable organic carbon (carbonaceous, CBOD) and ammonia (nitrogenous, NBOD). These compounds are common constituents or metabolic byproducts of plant and animal wastes and human activities (domestic and industrial wastewaters" Mihelci, J. R., Penn, M. and Pauer, J. J. (2003) 'Biochemical Oxygen Demand', *Environmental and Ecological Chemistry*, II, Available: Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS). Available at: <http://www.eolss.net/sample-chapters/c06/e6-13-04-03.pdf>.

Figure 19: Rivers of El Salvador, polluted from domestic and agro-industrial wastewaters



Source: (Romero, 2014)

Figure 20: Water Quality Index Map for El Salvador's Rivers (2011)



Source: (MARN, 2011a)

The contamination levels of the water bodies in El Salvador summarises also the hotspots in which contentious urbanisation processes have made an impact on the quality and quantity of the water available in the territory. As fig. 20 shows, the bad to extremely bad quality water in rivers lies in areas close or within the perimeter of urbanisations and areas destined for irrigation in the southern and central parts of the country. The communities of San José Villanueva the centre circle in fig. 20.

A Brief History of El Salvador's Waters and People

Pre-1520s: Pre-colonial times

Existing research has shown how in the past people regarded water as the spiritual and material beginning of the land that is today known as El Salvador. The current boundaries of El Salvador extend for 21,041km². El Salvador known in its original indigenous Nahuatl language as Cuzcatlán or "*The Place of the Diamond Jewels*"¹⁴ (Montoya, 2012) has also been fortunate enough to be enriched in the past with fertile soils due in part to its geological features of 21 volcanoes (GVP, 2012) (AQUASTAT-FAO, 2000).

All this water richness has been thanks in part to the country's tropical climate and heavy rainfall; an advantage that for the first indigenous dwellers was a blessing coming directly from the gods (Browning, 1971, p. 5). However, although hydrologically speaking, El Salvador has always been ideal for life, it is also true it is a geologically unstable zone for various reasons. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and landslides frequently hit El Salvador's landscape. Its volcanoes and mountains are so prominent that they divide the country into regions and its recurring earthquakes so frequent that San Salvador (the capital) is known as 'The Valley of the Hammocks' as it is always being shaken by earth tremors (Levin, 1940). As land always 'shakes and moves' in El Salvador, so do its topographical features. El Salvador divides its territory

¹⁴ The name "Cuzcatlán" first originated from the Nahuatl word "Kozkatlan" (Cozcatlan Spanish form), which stems from "Kozkatl", which means "diamond" or "jewel", and "tlan", meaning "next to" or "in between". Kozkatlan means "The Place of the Diamond Jewels" Montoya, J. (2012) *Señorío de Cuzcatlán*. Available at: <http://www.cuscatla.com/cuzcatlan2.htm> (Accessed: June 23, 2012 2012)..

from East to West by mountain ranges (the Coastal and Cordillera Apaneca Mountain ranges). From North to South¹⁵ it also divides into three topographical regions. First comes the northern lowlands, which are formed by the valleys of the Lempa River and Sierra Madre. Second, comes the central plateau, which is interspersed, by mountains, volcanoes and valleys. Finally comes the southern coastal plain. This is a tropical flat coastal belt and it forms the region where this research's case study is located (the southern part of the province of La Libertad) (see figs, 21 & 22).

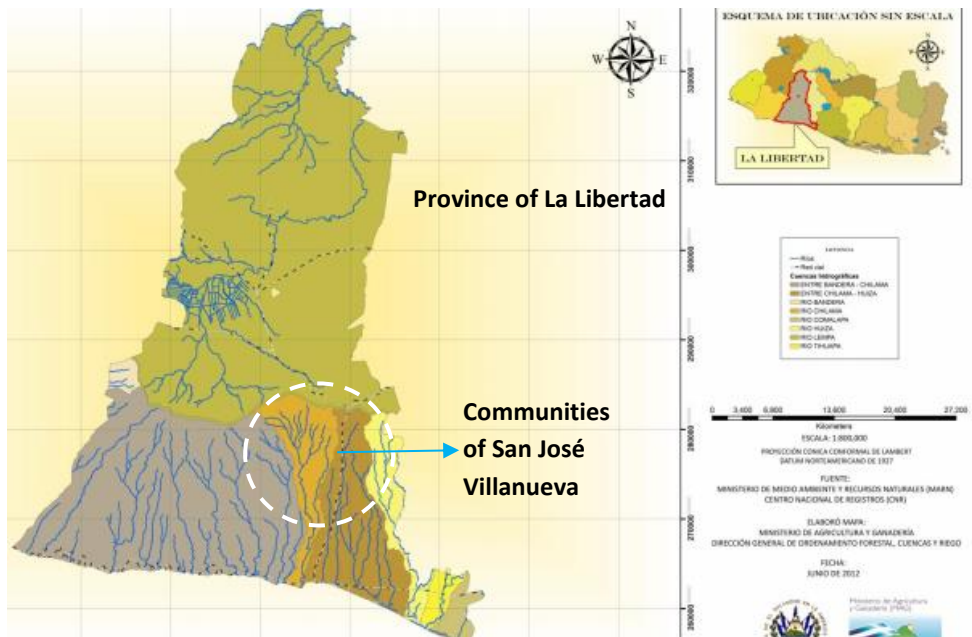
Figure 21: Map of El Salvador with province of La Libertad



Source: Source: (MARN, 2011a)

¹⁵ <http://www.atlapedia.com/online/countries/elsalvad.htm>

Figure 22: Province of La Libertad and its Rivers



Source: (MARN, 2011a)

In addition, the patterns of the seasons in this part of the planet have always affected the natural availability of water in the country. The 'dry' summer season (November to April) reduces the flows of water levels and then the abundant rainfall period of the 'wet' winter season (from May to October) increases it making this region suffer from frequent hurricanes and floods.

In summary, the geographical features of El Salvador created a rich and natural ecosystem where water, land, its seasonal weather systems and other caveats of nature would shape the lives of its inhabitants in visible and invisible ways (BSP, 2011).

Water Commons: The Way of the Indigenous People

At the time of the first Spanish expeditions in the 1500s, there were various Indigenous groups from diverse cultural backgrounds living in the land that was to be called El

Salvador (Arocha, 1990, Robinson, 1987, Barberena, 1980, Montes, 1977). These were the Pipil indigenous natives¹⁶ constituting the major group at the time, then came the Pokomans¹⁷ and finally the Lencas¹⁸ (Browning, 1971, p. 21, Fowler et al., 1995, Arocha, 1990, Foster, 2000). The indigenous native groups were the first inhabitants of El Salvador and although they were not homogenous, they had common social practices and beliefs and most importantly *they were all linked by their spiritual attachment to water and nature* (Tilley, 2005, Fowler et al., 1995, Arocha, 1990, Robinson, 1987, Barberena, 1980, Vivó, 1973). The indigenous natives believed in gods that were centrally embedded in water and nature (Browning, 1971, Serrano, 1995).

The indigenous people's material practices included water as the vital element for life to drink and water their crops. The indigenous tribes were from the very start cultivators and embraced agriculture as their main and almost exclusive mode of living (Browning, 1971, Serrano, 1995). Moreover, the indigenous populations saw that the fertile well-watered soils of El Salvador were ideal for cultivating a variety of plants that could yield fruits and important means of subsistence according to the rhythms of climate and weather. However, the water cycles created by the weather systems of the seasons affected this apparent state of abundance. Nature was at the same time their source of joy, but also of anxiety and suffering. For example when drought or floods struck, social instability would also strike. This had to do with the fact that the crops they planted were for their own consumption and had central roles in the indigenous way of life (Barberena, 1980, Lardé y Larín, 1957).

¹⁶ —whom derived from the Aztec-Mexican civilization—

¹⁷ —whom derived from the Maya civilization—

¹⁸ who were more marginal and were situated at a more primitive stage

For these reasons, the indigenous people sought persistently to secure 'good terms' with nature and water. Maize was by far their most relevant crop in their diet and they intimately depended on water to sustain it for the maintenance of their livelihoods. If a crop like maize died due to drought, they suffered. Ultimately, an event like this severely hampered their chances of survival. The indigenous population had to channel water for the development of agriculture. They saw that using water coming from natural springs and rivers in the mountains and descending to the valleys, irrigation techniques could secure their crops even in times when drought was fully fledged.

The indigenous natives' 'material logic' grounded in ideational beliefs of respect for nature had its advantages and disadvantages in the water domain. It is said by some scholars, (see for example, Mann (2005) to have been one of their key successes: whatever was taken out from the land, returned to the land and this also applied to water. However, in this respect, the scholarly literature is at odds. Some researchers have called this the '*Pristine myth*' or the view that indigenous people's societal practices were in material harmony with nature has been debunked. Their evidence collected shows that indigenous agricultural practices were not as ecologically and water friendly as once thought. For example, the extensive cultivation of maize did actually harm the physical cycles of nature in large-scale patterns. Evidence has been gathered showing that precisely in this period; more harm was done to nature due to deforestation processes which made space for their agricultural patterns (Butzer, 1992, Denevan, 1992, Doolittle, 1992, Whitmore and Turner 1992). This meant that fresh water resources would suffer indirectly from the degradation of the natural ecosystem, where evidence has shown that in pre-Columbian times already the Lagunas Guija and Cuzcachapa in El Salvador had "severe" human disturbances (Tsukada and Deevey, 1967).

However, one fact is certain; the material modification of the natural ecosystem did not entail its appropriation (Barberena, 1966). Water and land were common to everyone in the community. They were 'free' resources and readily available for everyone living (as long as they were part of the community that is) and were not

concentrated in the hands of a few. Whatever came from nature was for everyone in the indigenous collective and this was how they distributed the outputs of their agriculture, following the cycles of nature, weather and water (White, 1973, Barberena, 1980).

Even when the indigenous people's material practices have shown to have damaged the natural ecosystem with deforestation and erosion patterns (see (Dull, 2007), it is also true that native people believed they were one with water and nature. In fact, their 'unity' with water and nature was tightly knit. All their social activities rotated around this belief. Some scholars argue that no single creature, no single aspect of their lives was disconnected from their bonds with nature. Indigenous people believed that to cut a tree, plant a seed, kill an animal, or any action that could affect the cycle of life or the balance of their ecosystem was an act equal in importance as their most meaningful ritual sacrifices and religious ceremonies (Browning, 1971, pp. 6-7).

Essentially, though, indigenous beliefs and practices towards water and nature *did not intend to govern them*. Rather differently, their objective was always centred in only taking from nature enough water and elements to sustain life and no more. To them water was beyond the material. Water was a spiritual element already governed by the will of gods. Consequently, this deity centred governance followed that *no human beings could govern water*. Indeed, from the indigenous natives' cosmological perspective, governing nature would have been as foolish as thinking one could govern the air, the seas or the sun (Browning, 1971, pp. 6-7). Similarly, indigenous' religious practices celebrated water in its different forms. Nature was both the source of and the reason for their beliefs.

The Indigenous people's Ideational Practices: Spiritual Water

Indigenous natives saw water as something beyond the material. For them, water had meaning, spirit, a life of its own. They saw water alternatively as a goddess, or god depending on its multiple variations in indigenous' beliefs across the regions¹⁹. Their Mayan languages did not assign meanings of water as 'resource' as it is the common contemporary description (Bello Suazo, 2008, 4). Their spiritual beliefs lead them to see gods according to the different forms and roles water played in their lives throughout the seasons. For instance, beginning from February as the dry season progressed, the river-levels dropped and the risk of drought was present, the indigenous tribes would perform ceremonies in honour of Tlaloc the god of rain (in Aztec mythology) or Xtoh, the Mayan goddess of rain or Chalchihuitlicue, the goddess of water. If the rains delayed, the sacrifices to Chalchihuitlicue acquired crucial relevance

¹⁹ Early historical accounts describe the geographical landscape known as 'El Salvador' in 1521 as a fertile, water rich land. According to the Pre-Columbian Indian Mayan book of legends Popol Vuh Mayan Legend (1954) *Popol Vuh: The Book of the People*. Translated by: Recino, A., Goetz, D. & Griswold Morley, S. Los Angeles: Plantin Press., —the earliest written record of legends in Central America— water and land were the first ingredients of history and everything that was to be. In the Mayan legend, "mountains rose from the water" and it was through water that the creators of 'all that there is' came "like the mist, like the cloud and like the dust of creation, making man and woman to live in this newly created land and making them all one with nature" *ibid.*.

Figure 23: Chalchihuitlicue: The Water Goddess (left), Tlaloc, the Rain God (right)



Source: (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006) and (Mrpsmythopedia)

Similarly, when the rainy season was at its highest, raining night and day, then other ceremonies to the water gods were performed. Examples are: the festival of Tepeilhuitl —on the 30th of September- in the high mountains, the sacrifice to the god Mixcoatl, the cloud serpent—on the 20th of October—and the celebration of Atemoztli (29 November), when Tlaloc and the gods of the thunder storms were remembered and requested to return (Browning, 1971, p. 10).

In sum, the indigenous population's religious philosophy and practice recognised and reinforced this interdependence and sought to promote this co-dependence and unity of man with their habitat (Browning, 1971, pp. 5-6). The winners and losers of this period in terms of water access were clearly undistinguishable in anthropocentric terms whereby humans treated water through a conception of 'the commons' albeit from spiritual roots. Nature and freshwater in the form of lakes, lagoons and other water bodies on the other hand, did become a victim of the indigenous people's growing transformation of the landscape to give way to its agricultural practices of maize crop production.

1520s-1810s: Water in Colonial Times: the Way of the Europeans

“They lifted up the gold as if they were monkeys with expressions of joy, as if it put new life into them and lit up their hearts. As if it were certainly something for which they yearn with great thirst. Their bodies fattened on it and they hungered violently for it, they crave gold like hungry swine.” from the Nahuatl text preserved in the Florentine Codex (Galeano, 2009, pp. 18-19)

When the Spaniards colonized the Mesoamerican region, they quickly recognized the ability of the indigenous population to reap the benefits of their environment and aimed to harness this talent for their own commercial and economic ends (Galeano, 2009, Browning, 1971). The Spaniards primarily sought a new source for commerce and they found in the indigenous people a source of ‘free’ labour they could harness using their military power and in the land, a wealth of natural resources they could exploit from activities like agriculture and mining.

In this sense, crops like coffee, indigo, cotton and others were on the rise and precious minerals and stones, such as gold, diamonds, etc., were exploited too (Martínez Peñate, 2008). However, the Spaniards did not recognise the fundamental relationship that the indigenous people had with nature, their unity with their environment and the mystical spiritual side of this relationship. Instead, the model of governance the Spaniards imposed on nature only focused on its material side. The point for them was how they could exploit water best for their own economic and commercial benefit.

The Spaniards tried to convert the indigenous population to their own ways and mind-sets based on their own set of fanatical beliefs on Christianity and commerce while also exterminating their native beliefs, their gods and their values over nature (Browning, 1971, p. 26). Thus, it is here that the mystical spiritual bond with their environment was broken and the view that nature is for profit started to gain ground. The Spaniards reduced the relationship with nature to one of *a material resource*. What was then a non-harmonious but sustainable relationship between the

indigenous population and nature started to degrade even more. The conquest brought an economic model hungry for the exploitation of natural resources (Barberena, 1980, Cardenal, 1996). The traumatizing impact of the colonization process included change in the views of private property and governance of natural resources. It started with the ownership of land, the yield it gave for agriculture and in turn, this included water. New winners and losers emerged from this colonial model of exploitation of indigenous populations and nature.

The economic elites of the colony embodied by the Spaniards and their societal structures organised around the Crown and the Church were confirmed as the winners. Meanwhile the indigenous population suffered severe losses in terms of freedoms and wellbeing (Lardé y Larín, 1978, Martínez Peñate, 2008). This did not, however, completely erase their ideational conceptions of unity with nature (and within it, to water), but change was gradually leaning to a conception in which 'the idea' of the 'gods' in nature was replaced by the monotheist conception of a single god.

The winners were in effect all those elites attached to the economic model of production as ever, producing not only benefits for those in power at both sides of the Atlantic, but changing completely the Salvadorean landscape with an agriculture that favoured crops 'on demand' for profit on the European side such as indigo, vegetables and fruit (White, 1973, Martínez Peñate, 2008, Monterey, 1977, Burgos and Equipo Maíz., 1990). This turn of societal events decidedly produced a new set of elites that had changed their modus operandi in relation to nature and degraded even more the relationship with land, forests and water.

1820s-1950s: Post-Independence Blues, Water Commons & Communists

After independence, the upper economic classes in El Salvador left at the time were those that had the ownership of the land. It was here where Harvey's accumulation by dispossession (Harvey and Marx, 2010, Glassman, 2006) was made more evident as

part of the Spanish colony's legacy. New elites concentrated their material riches in the hands of a few families that reaped the benefits of the agricultural exports.

The political and economic redistribution with Spain that came with the independence of El Salvador in 1821 did little to re-democratise the now more concentrated and parcelled land. In fact, the drive for the economic exploitation of crops and the expansionist crop production focused on the external demand. Independence brought a consolidation of the hierarchy of the local elites and from then on, there were successive waves of 'elites in power' that established a governance of the agriculture products and a model of exports directed to lands abroad. By the 1820s, El Salvador had already started showing signs of environmental exhaustion, after decades of exploitation of its natural resources to satisfy the dominant economic models, up until now, based in the agricultural model exporting goods to demand abroad. In fact, deforestation was one of its most prominent manifestations; by 1900, the majority of forests in El Salvador had already been depleted (Yih, 1994) and erosion had already become the new trend in environmental degradation spreading in the Salvadorean countryside (Murray and Barry, 1995).

The economic model of this period predominantly based on the exploitation of the indigenous people and nature, also evolved to provoke further conflicts. In this period, therefore, the relationship with nature and water followed its process of gradual disconnection from the concept of the 'commons'. Now the new 'rules of the game' implied that those in the upper economic castes left in the pyramidal caste system left by the Spaniards had the ultimate benefits of the land and control of the way the riches were distributed.

The peak of the disconnection to the philosophy of *water commons* came with the gradual extermination of the 'lower caste' in both material and ideational ways: the indigenous population suffered several waves of massacres, the worst being the 1932 massacre of the indigenous population. This became an event that represented the most important evidence of the hegemony of power of the few families that controlled

the land in El Salvador (Alvarez-Solís, 1982, Ching et al., 2007, Méndez, 1932, Dalton, 1972). The massacre was dubbed the ‘massacre of the communists’ because their claim was for the decentralisation of the land ownership that had previously accumulated in the colonial and recent post-colonial period. In effect, putting an indigenous claim on the land, was also being, in a way, a ‘communist’. A rationale favouring the appropriation of natural resources by some and the eradication of the ‘commons’ strongly influenced the governance of water at the time.

Misgoverned Flows: A State of Weak Water Governance

1960s to 1970s: From Water Commons to Governing Water

In the 1960s and 70s Salvadoreans’ relations to water was again intrinsically linked to crops, this time coffee. At the beginning of the 1950s Latin America was the coffee powerhouse of the world supplying four fifths of the coffee consumed around the globe and coffee was for those fortunate enough to produce it, the new petroleum (Galeano, 1971). Central America’s three main coffee producers El Salvador, Guatemala and Costa Rica were in the right place at the right time when coffee exploitation reached a grand scale (Galeano, 1971). However, this also took its toll in the environment.

The literature in this respect argues that the degradation of soils at that stage was mainly due to Malthusian perspectives on the overpopulation of El Salvador. Others argue that broadly agriculture on a massive scale was the main culprit. However, it was not agriculture itself, which was causing the imbalance, but rather the *very unequal patterns of land ownership*. The distribution of the benefits of production of these highly fertile lands in the hands of a few owners translated into the reproduction of elites. Even the so called “*Soccer War*” of 1969 between El Salvador and Honduras had partial ecological origins (Durham, 1979). As Durham notes, the origin of this so called

'100 hour war' had hardly anything to do with sport, but rather everything to do with the manifestation of the concentration of power in the hands of a few.²⁰

In other words, the pattern of land ownership was a key factor of material power in this period. Whoever had ownership of the land, had the ownership of water. By then the ecological imbalance was a ticking time bomb. Pressure for land even led some to search for new areas to explore in Honduras.

The rise and decline of the Salvadorean Water Governance Structures

In parallel to the reality of the societal changes that were happening in the 1960s in El Salvador, new institutional structures began to rise. The evolution of the structures of governance around water in El Salvador properly began to be centralised by a single government since the creation of the National Administration of Water and Sewers (ANDA) in 1961. It was in the decade of the 1960s when arguably the Salvadorean State created its first central water dedicated institutions to govern the flows of water in the territory. The government created ANDA from its inception as an autonomous government agency dependent of the Presidency of the Republic.

ANDA's birth was symbolic of a new beginning in water governance in the country as it represented the first real centralisation of the water sector on a national scale. Before

²⁰ The use of political and military power in the 'Soccer War' by the Salvadorean government against the Honduran counter-part was a strategy to distract the attention over underlying problems of inequality in the distribution of land and its benefits Durham, W. H. (1979) Scarcity and survival in Central America : ecological origins of the Soccer war. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

that, it was left up to the municipalities of the country to provide water services as best as they could. Nevertheless, this centralisation was only a partial success. At the time, still 60 municipalities provided their own potable water services, although many of them were the smaller sized municipalities (Gornés Cardona, 2011).

It is in 1962, that a more elaborate effort to govern water came from the Salvadorean state. In that year, the Ministry of Public Health created an ambitious plan to extend and secure water coverage in rural areas. This would later be known as the National Plan of Rural Basic Sanitation (PLANSABAR) (STP, 2011). This plan had as its main goal the objective of managing hundreds of systems of water supply in rural areas. ANDA's initial scope was to cover only the urban areas of the country and it did not have national reach. At the time it aimed to cover populations of over 2,000 people and within geographical proximity to the capital (Córdova Macías and Salvador, 1996).

The problem with ANDA was that since the 1960s its pace of expansion and evolution was seriously slow and precarious. Furthermore, ANDA became a symbol of inefficiency in water provision and a symbol of corruption too. In 2003, a corruption scandal in ANDA exploded. Authorities discovered that Carlos Perla, the President of ANDA, together with several members of his family and ANDA's senior officials had been systematically channelling ANDA's public funds for their own private hands. Thousands of dollars trickled from bribes (e.g. one bribe consisted in \$10,959 dollars for Mr. Perla for adjudicating privileged access to private corporation tenders) to funds diverted to build a luxury home for his family in the lush slopes of the San Salvador volcano (Henríquez, 2007). The Salvadorean Justice system also charged the general manager of ANDA, José Mario Orellana with money laundering from bribes of up to a million dollars under Perla's period (ALD, 2009). The Perla corruption ring which

lasted two government administrations of ARENA from President Calderón Sol's period in (1994-1999) to President Francisco Flores's (1999-2004) period²¹ crippled even further the already depleted funds from ANDA instead of channelling those funds into the urgently needed expansion of the nation's water coverage system. Corruption cases continue to emerge. The latest one to arise has been the accusation that at least 12 wells were built with machinery and funding from ANDA to members of ARENA's political party. Among the beneficiaries stand out the former mayor of San Salvador and ex-deputy for ARENA, Norman Quijano (Transparencia Activa, 2014) and the political leader Mario Acosta Oertel (NWF, 2014a).

1980s: From Civil War to Water Chaos

The country's *civil war* raged from 1980-1992. In this conflict, 75,000 people died or 'disappeared' leaving a traumatic legacy of destruction and a polarised political backdrop between its people (United Nations, 1993). The conflict had two key political actors: those governing used the military to advance their interests closely tied to powerful economic elites and right-wing political actors in the government. As researchers show the Salvadorean military state of that era, was essentially a "protection racket" of the Salvadorean elites, which via "mass-murder" gave "protection to the elites from civilian uprising and in return received a concession to

²¹ Furthermore, Salvadorean authorities discovered in 2014 that President Francisco Flores himself diverted public funds. They accuse the ex-president of receiving cheques worth \$10 million donated by Taiwan's government during his presidency. The funds received were supposedly destined to attend victims of the 2001 earthquakes, combatting drug trafficking and to help crack down on crime and gangs. The money never reached the victims or its stated purposes and disappeared. Authorities are currently investigating this corruption charge Rentería, N. (2014) 'Former El Salvador president wanted for corruption given house arrest', Available: Reuters. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/05/us-el-salvador-corruption-idUSKBN0H01YM20140905> (Accessed March 2015)..

govern” (Stanley, 1996). The second group of key actors were those civilians uprising in opposition to them, who formed the left-wing guerrilla movement National Liberation Front Farabundo Marti (FMLN) in 1980 and fought them until the end of the war in 1992 until the Peace Agreements of Chapultepec (Spence and Hemisphere, 1997).

The civil war period was a difficult period not just for people, but for nature too. The Civil War of the 1980s worsened the already profound ecological crisis in many ways. First, the effects of the war directly contaminated the ecological system. Many areas of the country were bombed with white phosphorus polluting natural water sources and damaging the vegetation around it (Foy and Daly, 1989). Moreover, the sustainability of nature was put in great peril. By the end of 1989, El Salvador had the highest level of pesticide poisoning in Central America and almost 75% of its mammal species were endangered or extinct (Foy and Daly, 1989) . Nature was itself severely repressed. Moreover, the hunger for land at the time from agriculture and industrial practices started to carve and eat up forests and push ever more rural peasants onto “steep hill sides and rocky crags” to the point that by the mid-nineties well over half of all arable land suffered some degree of erosion (Murray and Barry, 1995). In sum, in this period, the governance of the environment and the provision of structures of clean water access disappeared off the scale of overall priorities.

In 1989, the political party founded by Roberto D’Abuisson, ARENA came into power, and there imported the neoliberal ideology from the academic scholars of the Chicago school into the structure of this party. This would have profound effects well into the next decade.

The period of the civil war came as definitive threshold moment in El Salvador’s history. This conflict had two main protagonists: the military-led government of El Salvador and backed up the United States and the economic elites of the country, and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). The FMLN was a coalition of five left-wing guerrilla groups that organised to challenge the governmental power structure prevailing in 1979(Montgomery, 1995). The conflict sparked when after a

coup d'état in October 15, 1979, the government in power massacred anti-coup protesters. The civil war lasted for more than 12 years and created a culture of violence at all scales of society. The crushing force of death squads on civilian population, the recruitment of child soldiers, and a long string of human rights violations led to a national collective trauma. The United Nations reports that most of the human rights violations were perpetrated by the military (Comision para la Verdad para El Salvador, 1993).

The conflict caused a heavy toll of civilian losses. Up to 75,000 lives were lost or disappeared in the course of the twelve years of war (Ardon et al., 1999). The consequences of this 'lost decade' affected every level of governance in the country, including the already fragile structures of water governance in place in the country. In terms of social power relations, this period is illustrative of what was going to come in subsequent years, a political division between those associated to the economic elites, mostly right wing political groups such as ARENA and those on the political left, such as the FMLN. Throughout the decade, the armed conflict gave rise to alliances that involved the American government injecting funds to political parties that were associated with the military and used their economic and military muscle to crush any political resistance.

For the government of El Salvador, in the 1980s the governance of water was not a priority, but political repression was one. Bodies massacred and tortured appeared in the streams of the rivers of the country. For instance, on the 7th of March in 1981, River Sumpul one of the major rivers in the country became a river of blood. At least 600 civilians were massacred (Harris and Espinosa, 1981). The country was torn apart and so were the normal functions of the state.

the lack of investment in water infrastructure reflected the State's glaring abandonment of its duties in this field. Instead of extending water coverage, the process was reversing due to the destruction of infrastructure and progressive deterioration of the environment.

One of the key moments in the governance of water in El Salvador came under the leadership of the Interamerican Development Bank. After the Peace Agreements of 1992, the IDB injected funds to The Salvadorean government through the PLANSABAR program, which was still being managed by the Ministry of Health. The funds aimed to boost the process of investment in expanding infrastructure to secure water supply for rural to rural areas. However, by 1996, the IDB financing stream dried up and the Ministry of Health cancelled PLANSABAR withdrawing its efforts to extend rural water coverage and leaving many Water Boards with almost no support. Many of the rural systems were transferred to ANDA as an executive agreement.

In 1991, the Government of El Salvador began a process of modernisation of the state. As part of this process, the government created in 1995 the Coordinating Committee for the Water Resources Sector Reform (COSERHI). This Committee was composed by the Presidential Commission for Modernisation (which was overseeing many other similar processes in other areas of governance in the country), the President of ANDA and the Minister of Agriculture. In practice, COSERHI would be responsible for planning, coordinating and supervising studies for a radical water sector reform in order to improve its organisation and performance. Under the wing of the COSERHI, the government created another entity: the Coordination Unit of Modernisation (UCM). This unit was located in ANDA's offices. These two entities in turn, created what was to be known as the "Modernisation Plan for the Water Resources Sector" authored by COSERHI-UCM. In essence, the COSERHI-UCM Modernisation Plan advocated for the creation of various institutions and laws in the governance of water, among them:

- The creation of a single governing body for the water sector of El Salvador
- The creation of a regulatory agency of the water and sanitation subsector (ANDA was just a water service provider, not a regulator)
- The creation of a dedicated institution for the conservation of natural resources and sustainability of water resources especially in rural areas
- The training of operators and managers in potable water and sanitation.

The COSERHI/UCM plan in the 1990s was a step forward into a real overhaul of the weak or non-existent institutions that governed water in El Salvador. Moreover, this plan served later as a template for IDB's water sector reform own blueprint plan.

Another offspring policy of the 1990s decade came as part of the 'neoliberal revolution' process, which ARENA led during its first years in power in the country. Under ARENA's guiding hand, the executive government developed policies destined to foster and insert the invisible hand of the markets in all possible areas of governance in the country. It was like this that with the support of the World Bank and the IMF with its Structural Adjustment Programmes, waves of privatisation processes started debunking and shrinking the Salvadorean state. In this way, by 1995 ARENA privatised the electricity distribution sector. Then in 1998, ARENA privatised the Telecommunications sector and the Pensions system. Many analysts now see the IDB modernisation fund as part of the same trend of privatisation waves. Under the overarching idea of "modernisation" an undercover privatisation was about to happen(Gornés Cardona, 2011).

As many analysts agree, all the signs were there. The strategy at the time was to begin by demonstrating in a systematic fashion that the state had failed dramatically in the governance of water. Once this had been demonstrated, the obvious solution manifested itself in the opportunities that privatisation represented for the state and for the 'consumers'. ANDA during the period of 1990-2002 was in fact an institution barely surviving on donations: 63 percent of its investments were financed through loans and international donations. In contrast only 21 percent of the investments came from ANDA's self-financing and only 16 percent came from governmental resource Gornés Cardona, (STP, 2011).

The Government of El Salvador intended to privatise the water sector and had open doors to do it. It had the back up of global financial institutions and political means to sustain radical reforms of the state. However, the radical water sector reform fostering privatisation never came during ARENA's two decades in power (1989-2009).

While the neoliberal locomotion machine was going on at full blown speed with many other sectors of the state privatised, in parallel many water conflicts started soaring across the country. The problems were varied, but the majority of them were characterised by acute problems in the water supply system that ranged from coverage, quantity, quality and regularity of the water flows in place. The main protagonists of these conflicts were ANDA versus various user groups in communities. The poor service provided by ANDA, and the lack of coverage were some of the persistent problems it presented.

In some places, these conflicts led to a transfer of responsibilities from ANDA to other suppliers. In the absence of the state, alternative supply systems proliferated in the country. Further evidence of ANDA's implosion into institutional crisis was the surfacing of the corruption scandal that involved the President of ANDA, Carlos Perla, his family and several senior management officials and their families too. They were all extracting funds from ANDA for their own personal benefit and were found guilty in subsequent legal proceedings.

In sum, ANDA was not only managing inefficiently the little available that it had still available, but also its officers were exploiting its loopholes and weak accountability processes to benefit from it. Inefficient bureaucracy, partisanship, lack of investment, poor service, they were all symptoms of a pervasive absence from the state.

Beyond the local and national turmoil of El Salvador's water governance, other processes were gestating changes in the global, broader picture of water governance. The International Financial Institutions (IFIs) played a big role in many of the changes that took place in the 1990s in the water governance sectors of Latin America.

The IFIs fostered, funded and led structural changes in the water governance of Latin American countries. The changes these entities promoted aimed at inserting the private sector in the lucrative business of water and sanitation reforms. Modernisation of the water sector represented an opportunity to start new privatisation friendly schemes. The International Conference on Water in Dublin (1992) influenced the winds

of institutional change that partly framed water as an economic good. The Dublin Conference helped to create a new 'blueprint' about how to view and how to govern water as an economic good that has an intrinsic economic value in all of its uses. In practice, this landmark event provided new normative frameworks that trickled down and influenced policy-making processes throughout the region. The community of IFIs working in Latin America such as the World Bank, the IMF and other regional banks were quick to adopt and 'tropicalize' the Dublin principles in their water funding schemes, meaning that many conditions to provide funding on the water sector had to do with advancing steps for a water privatisation processes. The World Bank is an exemplary case in this respect, as it conditioned more than 80% of its loans in the water sector to the promotion of different privatisation schemes in Latin America.

The IDB, was one of the key actors in El Salvador in this respect. IDB gave through the period of 1993-2005 provided funding subject to conditions that were clearly aimed to promote private participation schemes in the water sector. At least 66 per cent of IDB loans fostered incorporating private sector companies in the governance of water²².

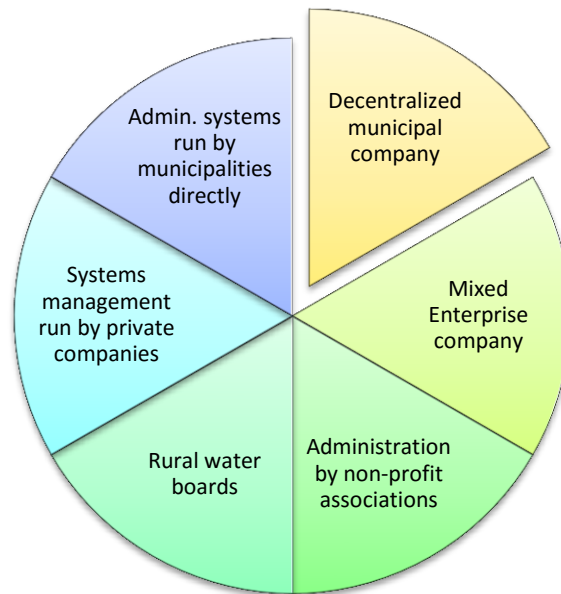
The IDB provided \$136,000 million in loans and grants to the governments and private corporations in 26 Latin American and Caribbean nations since it was found in 1959.

²² IDB investments are approved by its shareholders, the 22 nations contributing mem-bers funds. Collectively, the nations of Latin America and Caribbean (borrowers) have alrede-dor 50.02% of the voting power. The United States has 3 times more shares than the second largest shareholders are Argentina and Brazil. This makes the United States the most influential country and also gives you the right to veto the decisions of the IDB. Therefore, symbolically speaking, Washington is much more than its headquarters.

The rise and death of the IDB initiative: Promoting Privatisation schemes

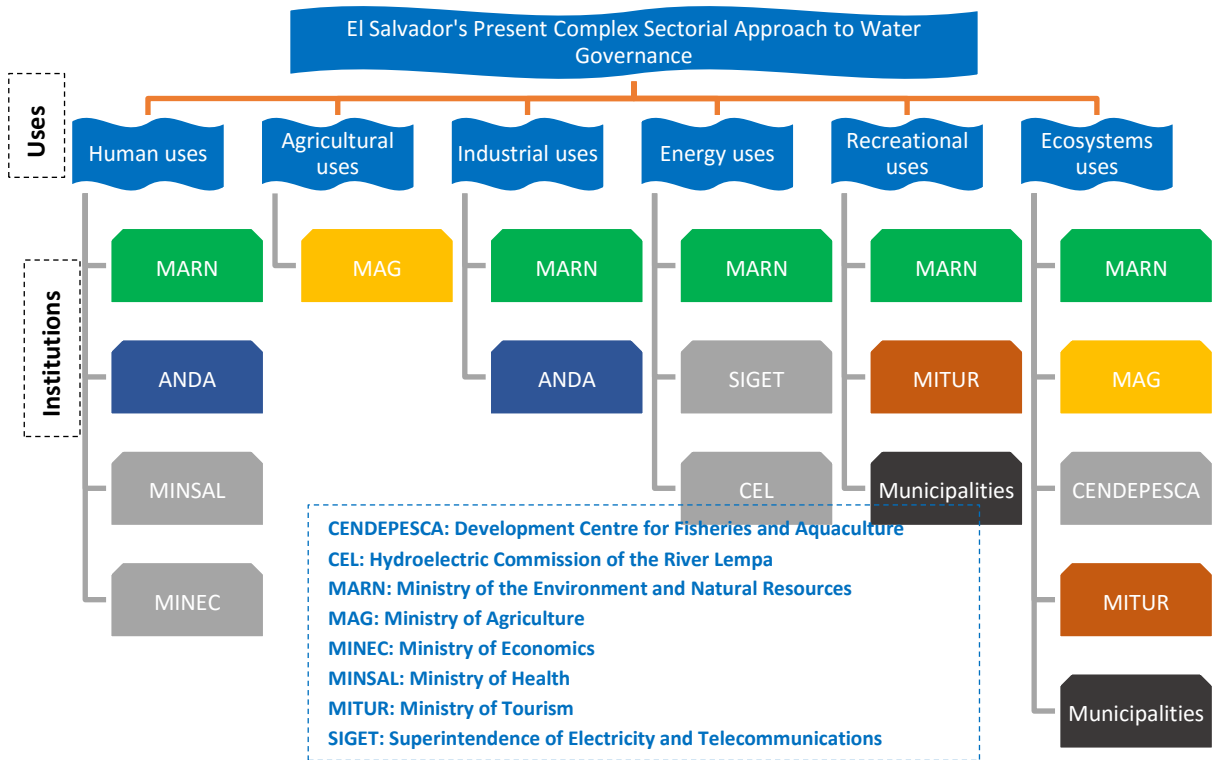
The mission and vision of Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) in the water governance field has been summarised in the goal of helping to close the water and sanitation coverage gap that exists in Latin America. According to IDB for 2007, 125 million people in Latin America had no water connection and 200 million people had no access to sanitation (IDB, 2010). However, in sharp contrast to this wholesome goal, the policy practice promoted by IDB has been overwhelmingly directed to nurturing privatisation processes in Latin America's water systems. The main criticism on this pro-privatisation schemes that IDB has played stems from the on growing evidence that corporations instead of making water more accessible for all have made reversals in this goal. Researchers indicate that many of the failures from private corporations to succeed in the provision of water in Latin America have been related to the labour and maintenance costs that these corporations were not accepting.

Due to the failures in water coverage by ANDA, by the late 1990s a large number of different service providers had already assumed the provision of services of water supply and sanitation in El Salvador. Nevertheless, the main supplier today is ANDA, which as a public company serves about 50 percent of the Salvadoran population in 178 of the 262 municipalities with access to services. Among the many other types of suppliers stand out the following:



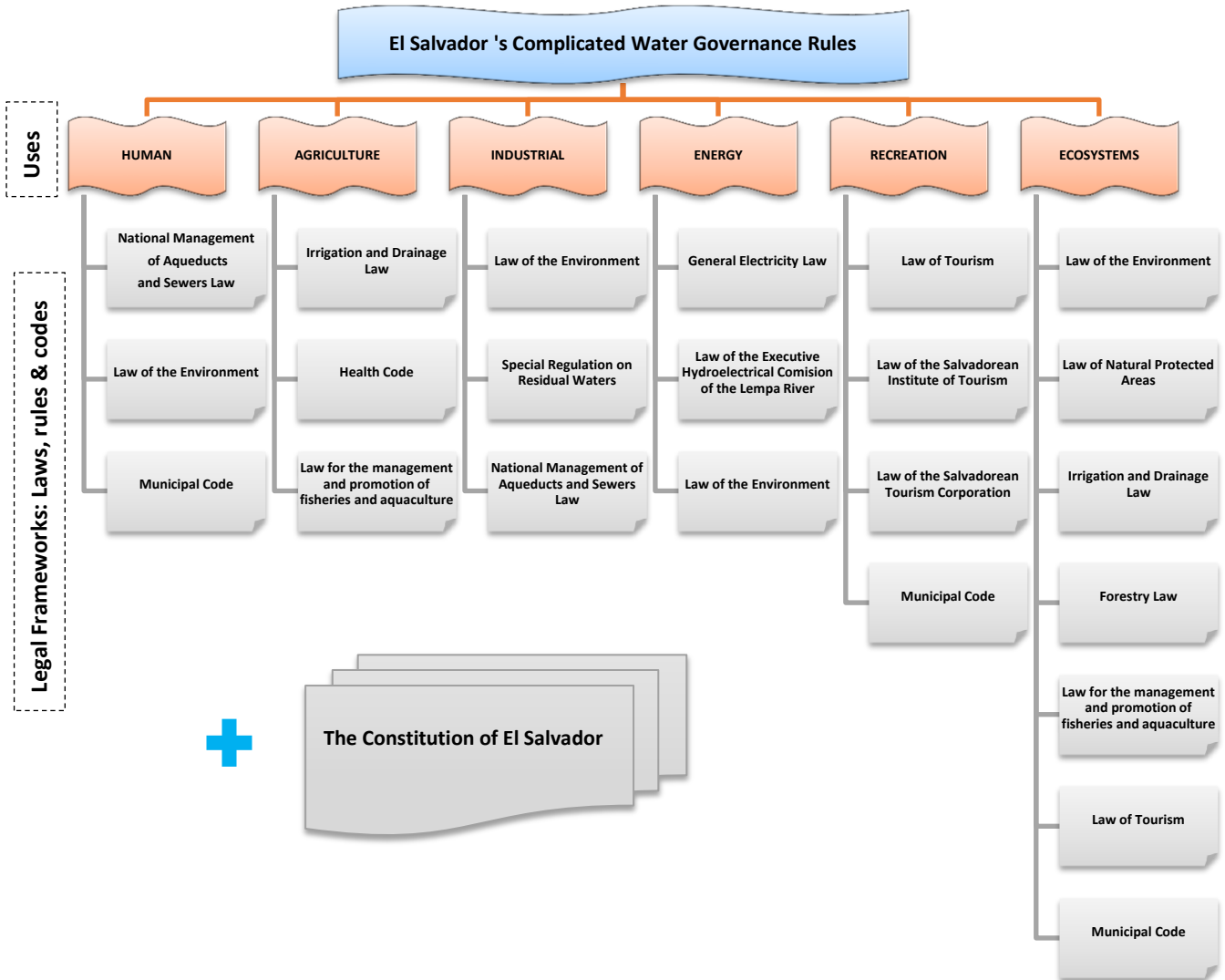
About 84 municipalities, mostly the smaller ones in the country, provide services directly. Thanks to the decentralization process, about 14 decentralized service providers signed managed services contracts. ANDA used these contracts to give them the right to provide this service on behalf of ANDA. From 2009, with Funes/FMLN rising to power, this process began to reverse and water systems have slowly been returning to ANDA so that it administers them, especially those that are not economically or technically viable. More than 100 housing projects developers have built their own autonomous systems of urban water supply. Some of them are still operating under the responsibility of the builder and others, mostly delegated the service to users or associations have returned the system to ANDA. In rural areas the water supply service is provided by more than 1,000 organizations, including Water Boards and Community Development Associations (ADESCOS). The Water Boards provide service to approximately 30 percent of the population with access to water services. In practice, the country has a variety of drinking water and sanitation providers which the state does not regulate. Thus, public institutions hardly support these providers in the planning, financing and maintenance of its operations.

Figure 24: How El Salvador Governs Water By Sectors: Who is Responsible for What?



Source: Adapted from (Romero, 2014)

Figure 25: El Salvador's Water Rules: Which Laws Govern What?



Source: Source: Own construction plus adaptations from (Romero, 2014)

Today, the National Water and Sewer Administration (ANDA) is still the main provider of water services in El Salvador. For instance, ANDA is the largest national service provider in urban areas. It provides water to 61% and sanitation service to 41% of the population, respectively (IDB, 2010).

ANDA performs the duties of operator, regulator, evaluator of groundwater resources, and collects the respective fees for withdrawal. ANDA suffers from chronic financial difficulties as a result of low levels of operational and commercial efficiency, and rates below the level of sustainability.

In 2009, ANDA's own revenue covered 71% of its operation and maintenance (O&M) costs. The water systems have high levels of leaks and high energy costs. Metering and billing of consumption are poor. Technical and management information systems are inadequate and obsolete, particularly the commercial system. The rate of unbilled water (UBW) is estimated to be 50%. In rural areas and small cities, the main W&S service providers are the municipalities and the Community Water and Sanitation Boards. It is estimated that there are more than 800 water boards in the country (IDB, 2010)..

The Social Investment Fund for Local Development (FISDL) has also played a role supporting and promoting the development of water and sanitation in rural areas, providing financing to improve access to services. However, the harsh reality still is that in rural areas, no national entity provides assistance and operational monitoring of water and sanitation services, placing the systems' sustainability at risk.

Nationally, the protection of natural resources, and water resources and watersheds in particular, is the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARN). It is responsible for issuing basic technical standards for the sustainable use of water resources, including wastewater quality requirements, management and preparation of water resource policy, and the evaluation of its execution.

In recent years, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has been supporting ANDA, FISDL, and MARN in their respective spheres of action, with rehabilitation programs for decentralized urban municipal water systems, building municipal institutional capacity for social investments, and with investments and institutional strengthening on sustainable solid waste management.

In 2005, it was estimated that the water and sanitation sector in El Salvador would require investments of US\$514 million in rehabilitation, construction, and expansion of services to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 (IDB, 2010).

Figure 26: A Chronology of Failed Attempts to Ratify a GWL



Source: Adapted from (Dimas, 2013)

Exporting Nature: The Way of the Oligarchy

It was during the 1960 and 70s that a new form of government arose in El Salvador: that of dictatorship. From then on, El Salvador became subject to successive waves of dictatorships in which power was concentrated in the hands of a few national elites. Scholars have framed it as an oligarchy that went hand in hand with the military.

In the 1970s, the country experienced waves of rights and freedoms and opposing waves of repression and exclusion in equal measure. In El Salvador, the 1970s were characterised by societal arrangements inspired by the gradual strengthening of the role of the State as a 'facilitator of growth'. This came hand in hand with the creation of institutions that would secure the production of the minimum aspects of 'labour' or the sustainable exploitation of human beings into the chains of production of the agro-export model. Likewise, this period erupted with struggles to place 'human rights' at the top of the policy-making agenda.

El Salvador had become an oligarchic agro-export society following its independence from Spain in 1821. However, this agro-export model broke up with the upcoming corporatist import substitution industrialization (ISI) or, developmentalist model that consolidated itself for the long term. From a global perspective, the seventies were times of a "crisis of developmental capitalism" and it was tightly linked to the consequences of this type of economic model (Robinson, 2008, p. 51).

The Industrialization by Substitution of Imports period

Water was considered in this period as the by-product of a society dominated by a handful of elites with a broad set of population that were all integrated into *the*

business of agriculture. This model also had implied a gradual disconnection with the original idea of nature and water as *common*. The 1970s were times in which industrialization offered a quick escape route towards development. Latin American countries adopted the ISI model of development affecting them in manifold ways. It was the typical path of the 'modernization stages' that Rostow (Rostow, 1960) and other scholars at the time advocated as the only route towards development.

The gradual industrialization, without abandoning agriculture, quickly came to be the mantra for the way in which Salvadorean society governed its economic and political spheres. The different stages in which the industrialization process occurred came to adopt the philosophy of the rapid industrialization and concentration on the export of a handful of products.

In this period, the expansion of crops such as such coffee and sugar was widespread. The scholars from the Dependency theory demonstrated that this scheme was flawed in the sense that it was a model designed to benefit the developed nations (the core or centre) at the expense of the developing nations at the periphery.

Industrialization started to impact upon nature as a whole, with processes of deforestation and the discharge of untreated chemicals polluting the rivers and other water bodies. The situation went largely unregulated or only occasionally regulated so as not to undermine the interests of other businesses.

The experiment of ISI failed to produce a sustainable model of development inclusive to everyone and only brought about a higher concentration of power to the few agrarian elites, who by this time had already made the decision to expand into industry.

1990s: The Rise of the Neoliberal Waters

After an exhausting war-torn 12 years and a death toll of 75,000, the civil war ended in 1992 following UN facilitated peace process and a new democratic era ensued. The former guerrilla left-wing movement, the FMLN became a political party and started participating in the country's democratic process through elections.

This period was El Salvador's *post-war neoliberal phase (1992-2009)*. Close to the end of the civil war in 1989, the right-wing political party, the National Republic Alliance (ARENA) came into power. From therein, ARENA went on to hold for twenty years the reigns of the government (five presidential administrations). In so doing, ARENA dominated the key decision-making processes in the country (Bello Suazo, 2008) and also the philosophy and content of its rules of governance (Robinson, 2003). Its legacy was complex. However, it had the common attribute that it was all encompassing. It promoted a comprehensive set of market-based approaches and practices to policy-making that rocked Salvadorean society's foundations (Segovia, 2002a).

Neoliberal practices spread out by the World Bank and IMF in structural adjustment programmes and followed suit by ARENA trickled down into all spaces of Salvadorean society and this included the neoliberalisation of nature . Many academics refer to this 20 year period as the era of 'neo-liberalism' in the country (Guido Béjar and Roggenbuck, 1995, Roggenbuck and Konrad Adenauer, 1996, Wisner, 2001). This period highlighted the existence of a relatively comprehensive and 'hegemonic' set of social actors that coupled with ARENA came to sustain the weaves of power. Research on El Salvador's key economic groups and elites has revealed the tight interlinkages between ARENA and the economic elite groups which came to imprint their own particular style of governance (Bull, 2012a, Bull and Kasahara, 2012, Segovia, 2005b, Paniagua, 2002).

With ARENA in power, the role, character and size of the State changed. The new political discourse was the rise of free market ideologies and the discourse of free market economics permeated all structures and institutions of society. The State

became a secretary of those in power embodied in the economic elite. Moreover, the few institutional bodies that remained intact remained so because they were effective in serving the needs of the elite.

It is at this stage that the neoliberal ideology and practice with the structural adjustment programmes made deep impacts in El Salvador's governance style. The achievements of the social welfare state were scrapped and deconstructed (Martínez Peñate, 2008) and the ideology of privatization and its embedded discourse spread out into the real governance of nature and water.

The neoliberalisation of Nature

The environment was seen as resource to be exploited for the number one priority number, the expansion of the markets. There was a counter-reaction to this destruction of the environment and this is where the ecologist movement rose up to the challenge and leapt into action.

At first the demands and protests were concentrated on a reaction to the destruction and degradation of the environment in various parts of the country and how the impacts of these policies and economic activities disproportionately affected the lives and wellbeing of the poor.

It is during the 1990s where the worst impacts on nature were felt. Just as the communists had been tagged in the decades before, those that opposed this environmental destruction were labelled terrorists. Two main events put this process into context: firstly, the repression of Suchitoto when local townsfolk in this small town marched through town protesting about the lack of clean water access. They were reprehended, jailed and branded as 'eco-terrorists' in the local newspapers at the time. The equation was clear: political ecology and rebel ideas such as the right to water were communist *and therefore* terrorist traits.

Secondly, the construction of huge shopping malls and other similar consumerist outlets were built resulting in irreversible processes of deforestation and soil erosion of the soil and damage to sensitive aquifers.

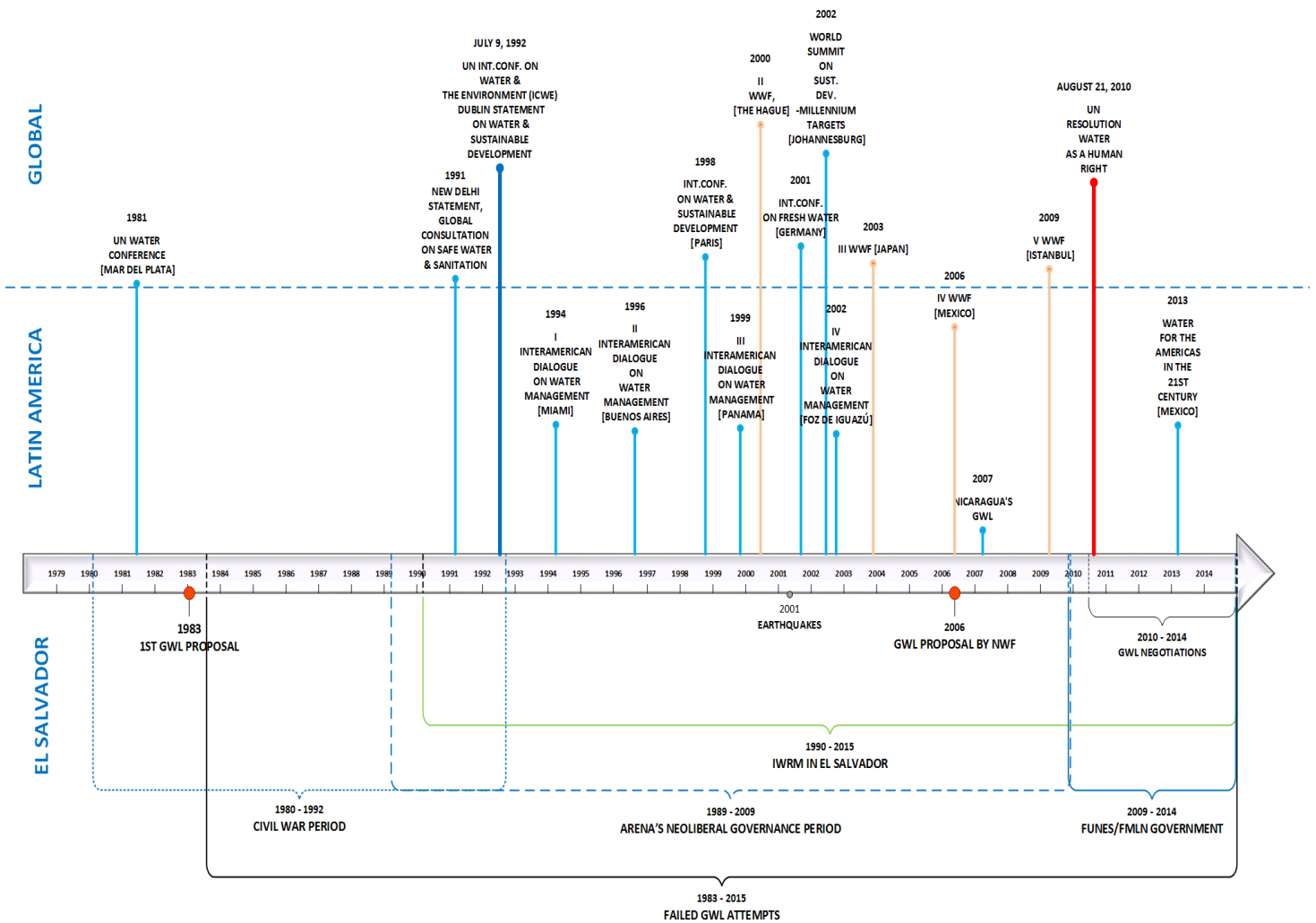
The neoliberalisation of water: water as an economic good

At this same time at the global level in 1992, a great reconfiguration of relating to the global governance of water was also on the agenda. The Dublin Principles (ICWE, 1992) became of symbol of that all-encompassing neoliberal governance era. These principles were laid out as the new global blueprint in which policies and governance structures towards water would be legitimised. This included the notion of water as an economic good (Solanes, 1998). The Dublin Principles argued that societies need water privatisation. The key point argued in these principles was that water should have “the right price” as the peril of water scarcity and its imminent global crisis needed urgent global responses. Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) was an offspring of the Dublin Principles. It was conglomerate of governance ‘best practices’ which applied those principles to water management on the ground and across scales (Varis et al., 2014, Louka, 2011, Solanes, 1998).

The Dublin-IWRM water governance revolution chimed with the wider macro-environment of the global neoliberal dominance (Nicol et al., 2012). It had profound effects in the multi-scalar governance as it used different levels and techniques of discourse, from the political to the philosophical and ecological. The problem with this period, is that the voices of the poor, those that were most affected were most excluded from any say in these affairs that mattered. El Salvador continued with a right wing government pursuing the same agenda well into the next decade.

2000-2014: The Rise of the Human Right to Water in Neoliberal Times

Figure 27: Timeline of Key Events Shaping El Salvador's Water Governance



Source: Own Construction

Goldman, see (Goldman, 2007), contrasts the fact that in the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, privatisation as a key neoliberal policy was marginal and ten years later, at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, it was the main event.

According to Goldman (Goldman, 2007) as recently as 1990, US and European water companies were uncommon in the global South (Africa, Asia and Latin America). However, in just the time lapse of a decade, in the 2000s, these companies were providing water to more than 400 million people in the global South. It is estimated that for the post-2015 era at least 1.2 billion people would be receiving water from these companies.

The United Nations Development Programme has recognised the human right to water and sanitation since 2010 and has sparked the debate on how water ought to be governed *in practice*. Again, this is another example of a now hegemonic water perspective, the internalisation of the term 'human right to water and sanitation' has already been incorporated into the language and knowledge of water providers. Not that this means that they are applying it or respecting it, but rather that there is now a recognition that this is a key component of water governance that can be 'managed'. From corporations like Coca Cola and Nestlé to the UNDP and Water Aid everyone is in apparent 'consensus' that yes, water is a human right.

Ideationally these hegemonic water networks have embraced what Goldman (Goldman, 2007) and others call 'green neoliberalism' and this has had a profound effect in how water is governed across local and global arenas.

When Water became a Human Right

Access to safe and clean drinking water was declared a legally binding right by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in October 2010 (UN-GA, 2010). Thus, it acknowledged that water security for all is a priority and an obligation for all States to defend, as all life depends on water. In this context, water acquired for the first time an official meaning of obligation, and of it being a common public good. Water was essential not only for life and for health, but also for leading a life in dignity, for sustaining livelihoods and other social, economic and cultural processes. As stated by Catarina de

Albuquerque, UN Special Rapporteur²³ on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation: *“The right to water and sanitation is a human right, equal to all other human rights, which implies that it is justiciable and enforceable”* (UN News Centre, 2010) . With the emergence of the human right to water as an internationally recognised legal framework, for the first time it was also legally recognised States’ own responsibility on the subject. Under this framework, States have the primary and direct responsibility of ensuring the full realization of this right as it is enshrined in existing human rights treaties (UNHRC, 2011). Among many things, this human right calls upon States to:

(i) assess and review whether “all existing legislative and policy framework is in line with the right to safe drinking water, and to repeal, amend or adapt it in order to meet human rights standards and principles”(UNHRC, 2011);

(ii) consider water for life (personal and domestic uses) that always precedes in priority other uses of water, including livelihoods;

(iii) Water should be primarily treated as a social and cultural good and “not primarily as an economic good” as it is sometimes portrayed; and

(iv) Water for life should meet certain requirements in availability, quality and accessibility²⁴ .

²³ See <http://www.righttowater.info/catarina-de-albuquerque/>

²⁴ The World Health Organization (WHO) defines as ‘basic access’ to drinking water the minimum provision of approximately 20 litres per capita per day on average and that it should be water that is within at least 1 km or a 30 minute walk round-trip. Anything below this threshold is defined as ‘no access’ to water. WHO 2011. Water scarcity. In: Organization, W.H. (ed.) *Fact File*. Website multimedia.

The voices of the Excluded in Water Access:

In parallel to that global context on water governance rule-making process, the precariousness of access to clean water resources by all people in El Salvador has manifested in at least two ways. Firstly, access to a safe and clean drinking water supply, as well as for sanitation, has remained low when compared to regional standards and is especially low in rural areas of the country. In 2004, 70% of people living in rural areas had 70 percent access to clean water resources and 39 percent of the population lives, where about 39 percent of the population lives (Dimas, 2007a, UNDP, 2006a). In 2004, access to safe water stood at 84 per cent and access to adequate sanitation at 62 per cent. Secondly, fresh water resources including their natural environment are being steadfastly polluted mainly due to the great amounts of wastewater that are being discharged into rivers without proper treatment and many times without any treatment at all.

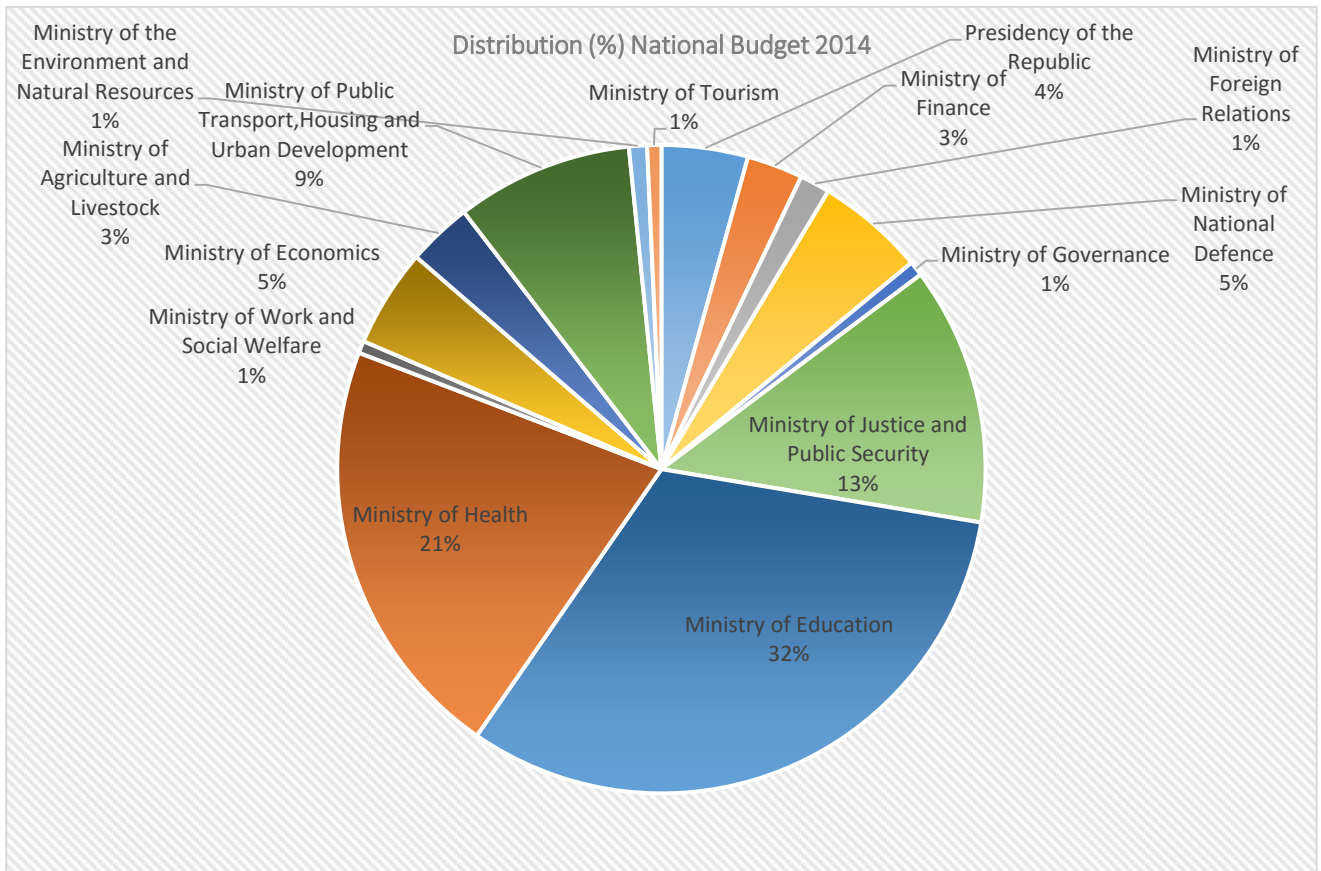
Institutionally, water governance in El Salvador has not evolved in big steps. The National Aqueducts & Sewage Association (ANDA) is the only national public institution that is both de facto in charge of setting sector policy in the water sector and of being the main service provider. Due to this incongruence, there have been many attempts to provide a legal framework capable of fixing this issue for good. However, this challenge was not successful for almost the whole decade of the nineties and the beginning of the new millennium (Morán, 2013).

Today, El Salvador has come to a point of inflexion in water governance. Neoliberalism became crippled in El Salvador because it failed to deliver what it had promised in terms of a better and more just society in the country as a whole, in the sub regions of the country and at the micro-level (Van der Borgh, 2000). Indeed, the whole of Latin America has reacted strongly to this model of governance and the many countries moved to the left such as Nicaragua, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela, through a domino effect (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012). FMLN rode this wave of reaction in El Salvador, which was still a very young democracy their newly appointed presidential

candidate led them to victory at the elections in 2009. On March 22nd 2009, Mauricio Funes was proclaimed the winner under the flag of FMLN. However, now the powerful economic elites are larger and transnational (Bull and Cuéllar, 2013, Bull and Kasahara, 2012). The main national business association ANEP has become the vehicle for corporations to advance their interests and the main right-wing political party ARENA to represent them (Martínez Penate, 1996).

For the first time in the history of the country, there was a transition towards a new set of policies dedicated at re-establishing the connection of the State with the poor and the vulnerable at various levels (Bull and Cuéllar, 2013). However different this may have been, on the downside the Ministry of the Environment remained an afterthought of the public expenditure budget (see fig.28). To date it is the ministry with the smallest budget out of all the ministries that constitute then the government. The balance is therefore still in the making, but already three key events triggered under this administration have shown a radical change in the scheme of water governance of the country.

Figure 28: Public Expenditure Distribution (%) National Budget 2014



Source: (UNDP, 2013)

The Long Water War: the Battle for a General Water Law

A proposal for the country's first General Water Law —a law that would regulate the management, governance and all uses of water as resource in the country— was drafted with the leadership of the State, social organizations and was sent to Congress (the Legislative Assembly) in 2006 to be formalised and voted for as a law(UNES-CARITAS, 2006).

This General Water Law has been a contentious issue for years in El Salvador. Its creation would generate a supra-institutional body that would govern water in all its uses (something not present in the country)(Palacios, 2012). Moreover, this law would enable the further expansion of other necessary legal frameworks such as the Drinking Water Law and would set the stage for the further application of the right to water in the country. In parallel to this legal framework civil society has also made efforts to create changes in the Constitutions to incorporate the right to water and to food in its principles and statutes(Tulio Sandoval and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Legal Office. Legislation Branch. Agrarian and Water Legislation Section., 1975). This historical initiative was made possible with the new configuration of power and alliances in the Legislative Assembly. A key success in this period related to water governance has been the creation in 2012 of Environmental Tribunals. For the first time in the country, corporations could be made accountable in legal tribunals if found violating environmental laws (Palacios, 2012, Morán, 2012)

In contrast, at the same time, at the global level the conferences and events have parsimoniously come to a wider consensus on IWRM(Louka, 2011). This social construction has created a rise of global discourses on water scarcity, on the need to evaluate water at the 'proper' price and the usage of public-private partnerships (PPPs) for better structures of water governance(Mehta et al.) . A recent example of this has been reflected in the contents of the World Water Forum 2012 in Marseille. It included IWRM 'water is an economic good' formulaic expressions, workshops and

discourse everywhere (Cessou, 2012, Provost, 2012, WWF, 2012). The already difficult scenario of governance is that many of the United Nations networks have become the cradle for the expansion of these discourses.

Free Trade Agreements and Public-Private Partnerships of Water

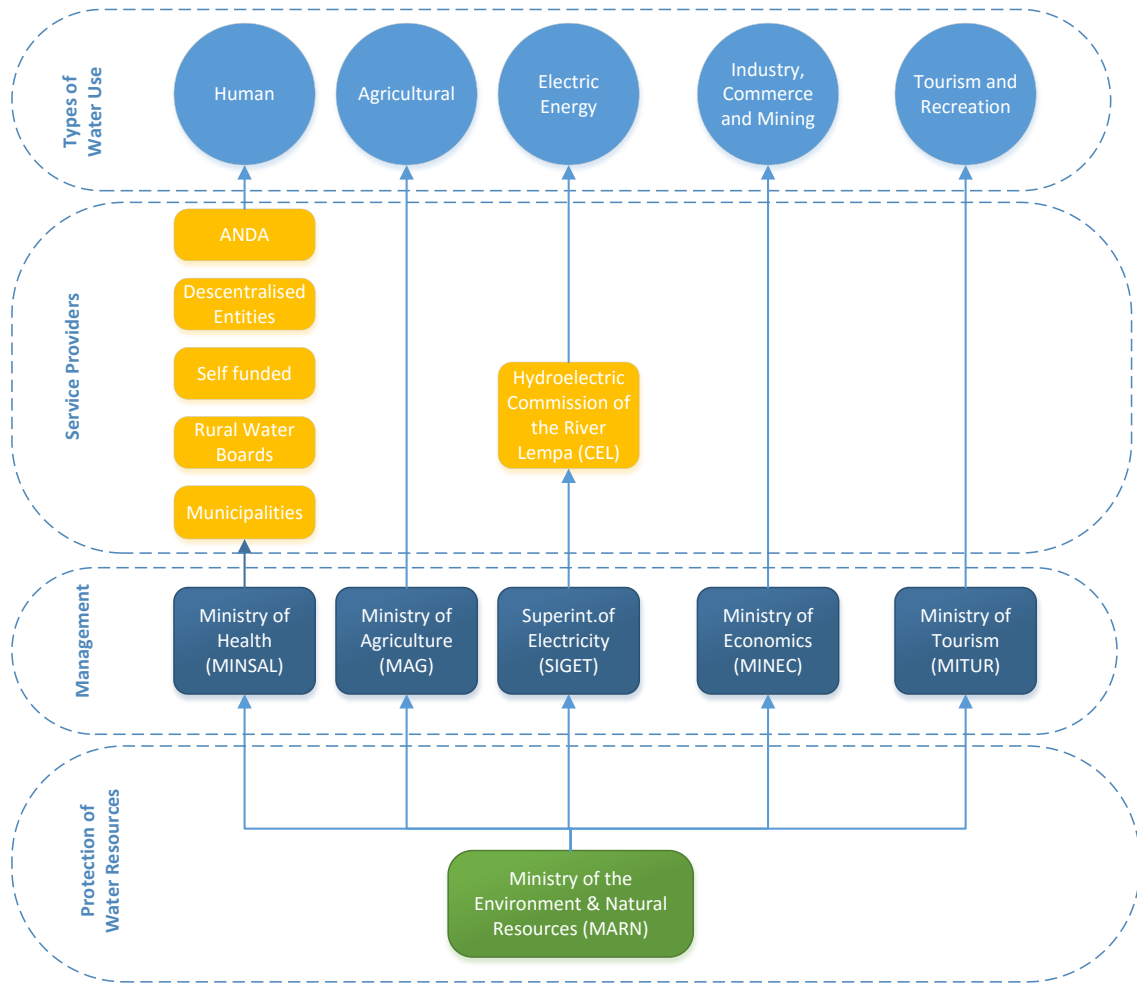
Free trade agreements (FTAs) in El Salvador have also come to be a notable example of 'integrated' frameworks that touch upon water governance. Often its content and rules touch upon ruling water investment possibilities and potential for privatization (CDC, 2008). Most of El Salvador's free trade agreements proliferated in the flurry of the neoliberal governance of ARENA during the 1990s and 2000s. The most iconic ones have been the ones signed by El Salvador (in joint venture with Central America) with the United States (CAFTA) (World Bank et al., 2005, Bush, 2005) and the European Union (AA-EU-CA) (Ludeña and Miguel). These FTAs brought a new dimension to the problems of ecologists in the country. Not only were they facing the local power elites, but also the neoliberal legal framework apparatus of FTAs. El Salvador entered these FTAs without proper ecological sustainability impact assessments (CDC, 2008).

The recent political shift to the left, Funes and FMLN's new government (2009-2014)

Finally, contemporary El Salvador has entered a unique *period of political change and transition (2009-2014)*. In this period, the key defining feature has been the political change in El Salvador's government. For the first time in post-civil war El Salvador, a democratically elected left-leaning candidate won a presidential election: Mauricio Funes, a former journalist. Backed politically by the left-wing party FMLN and other centre-left groups in Salvadorean civil society, this victory represented a pivotal moment in the country's history. It ended ARENA's twenty-year streak of being the political party in power. Moreover, it opened up the gates for the entry of new people with different ideological backgrounds into the ministerial bodies of the state.

Likewise, this change opened up opportunities to adjust the nature and direction of a variety of policy-making agendas and processes. This included changing the way environmental and water governance had been lead so far. Nevertheless, this change in government did not mean structural change in the elite's economic platform. According to some researchers like Bull and Cuéllar (2013), the tight knot between the elites and the state did loosen up, but it did not change the epicentre of power. It only shifted it to a certain extent. The existing transnational economic elites still had *hegemonic* control over the key economic sectors in El Salvador. They had control of the media (Rockwell and Janus, 2003, Rockwell and Janus, 2002). Moreover, they were backed up by the historical legacy of a number of legal frameworks and institutions they had created in the past two decades through ARENA's governance e.g. privatisation processes(Equipo Maíz, 2005, Selva Sutter, 2004), free trade agreements(Segovia, 2005a), financial deregulation (SAPRIN, 2000) , dollarization(Ibisate, 2001) among others.

Figure 29: Who does what? Key Water Governance Actors from El Salvador's State



Source:

San José Villanueva: Thirsty for Water Justice

To answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis the research engages with a case study of real life social practices in a set of seven communities. These seven semi-rural communities are geographically located in one of the small water catchment basins of Cordillera del Bálsamo, a mountain range located in the municipality of San José Villanueva, a small town located in the province of La Libertad, El Salvador. They are ‘multidimensionally poor’ as identified by indicators given in the national statistical reports and the United Nations Development Programme report in the country. The seven communities in focus are: Sosa, El Amate, Las Veraneras 1, Las Veraneras 2, Escalón Centro, Cementerio and Espíritu Santo.

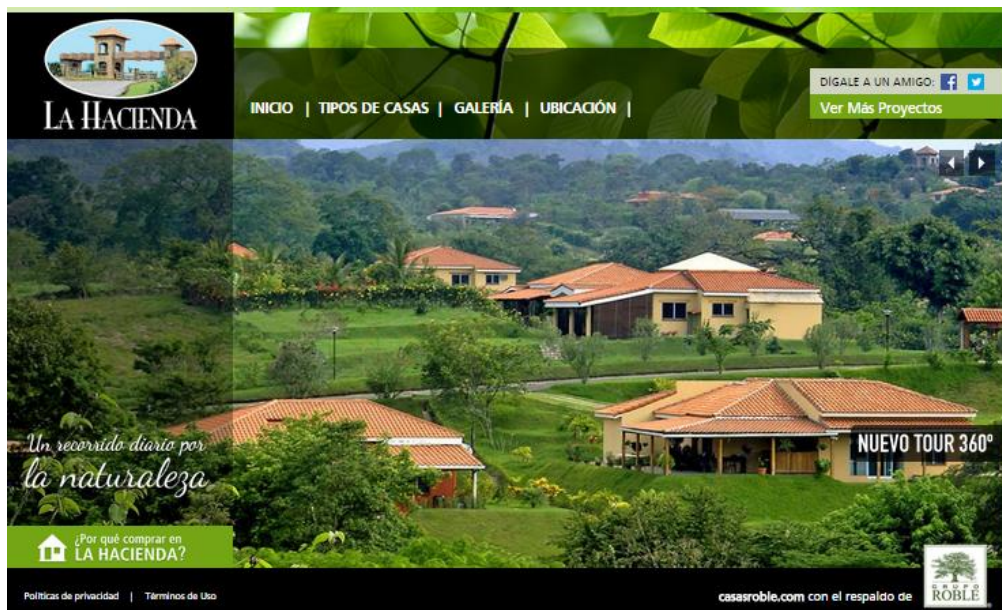
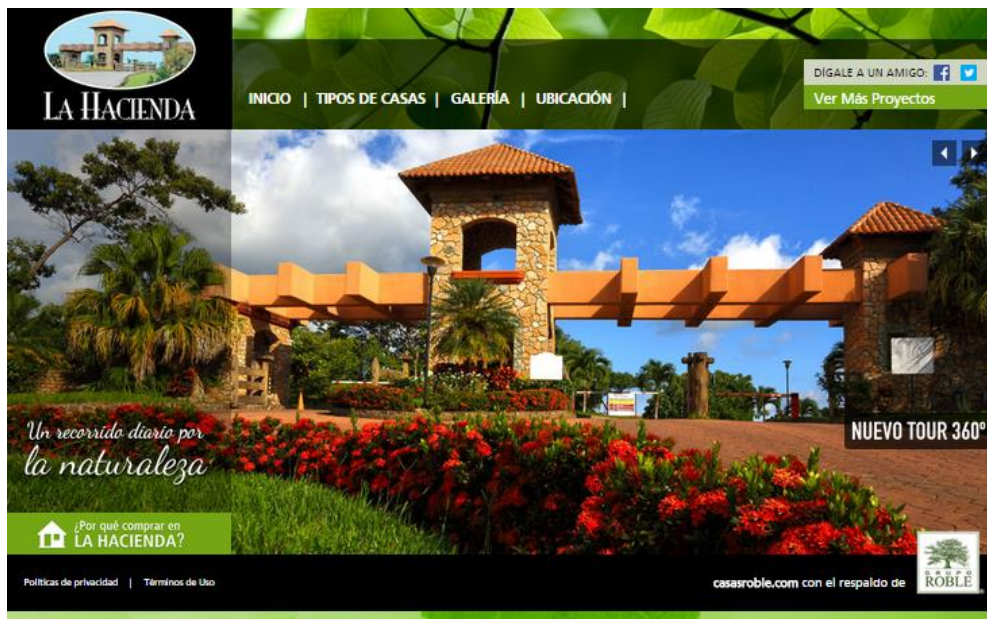
Figure 30: Case Study Map of San Jose Villanueva



Source: Own construction based on maps in (ACUA, 2008)

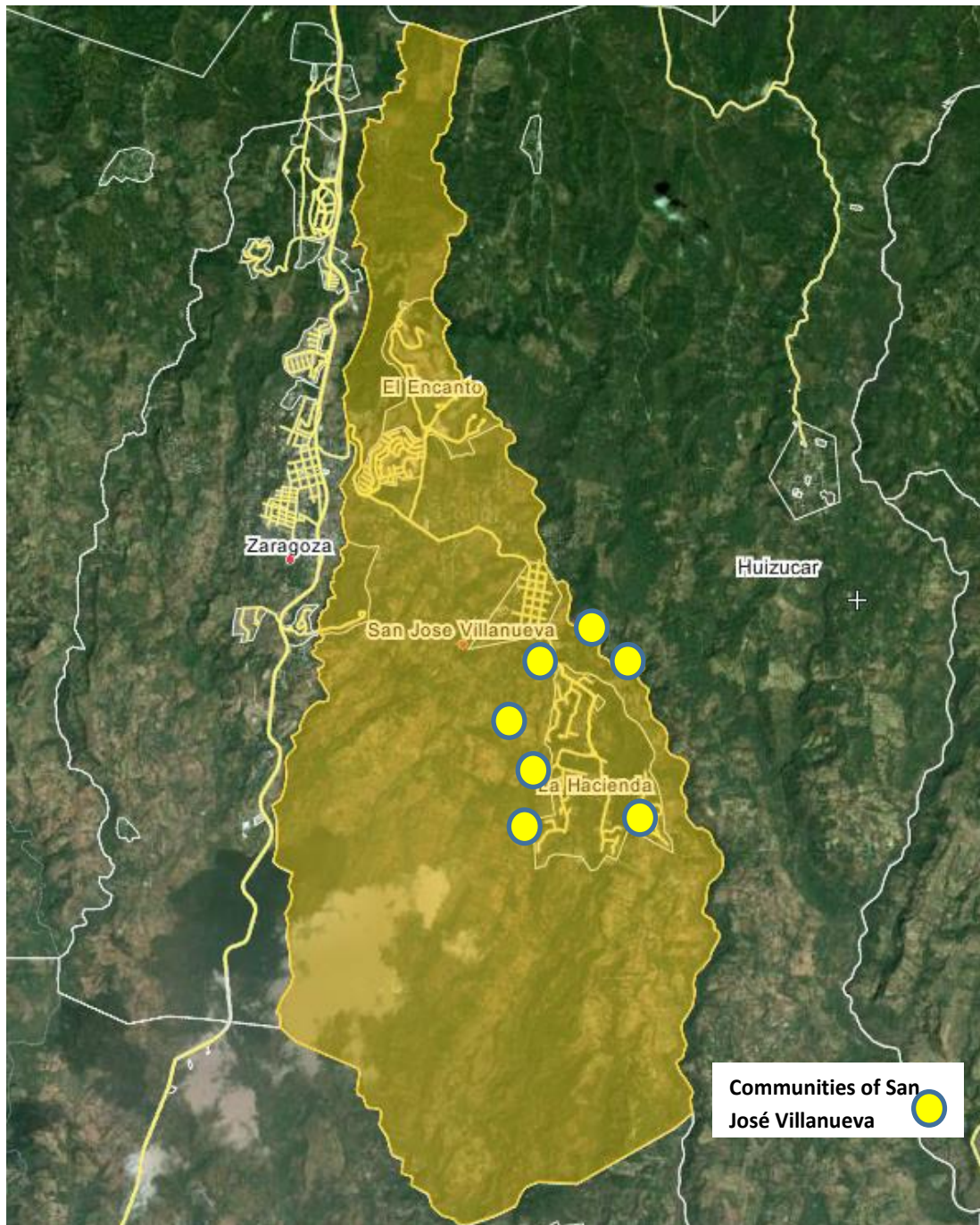
However, these seven communities which are classified as 'poor' by the UNDP in El Salvador —see (UNDP, 2013) — geographically coincide with a residential area that in contrast is classified as 'rich': the residential urbanisation of La Hacienda.

Figure 31: Photos of La Hacienda: a Luxury Residential Neighbourhood at the heart of SJV



The residential La Hacienda is an upper class American style residential area, which was built over approximately 600 acres of land right next to where the poor communities are located and was built in the beginning of the 2000s (ACUA, 2008). Although this research focuses primarily on the 'poor seven', this rich residential zone is used as a 'control' point in the analysis. Due to large differences in levels of income and background, the residential La Hacienda serves a good example to expose the differences in water access that the poor are experiencing. This research asks why not all these communities have access to the same levels of quantity, quality and regularity of clean water access. The case study exposes the extreme differences in treatment from local and national authorities towards their problem of water access.

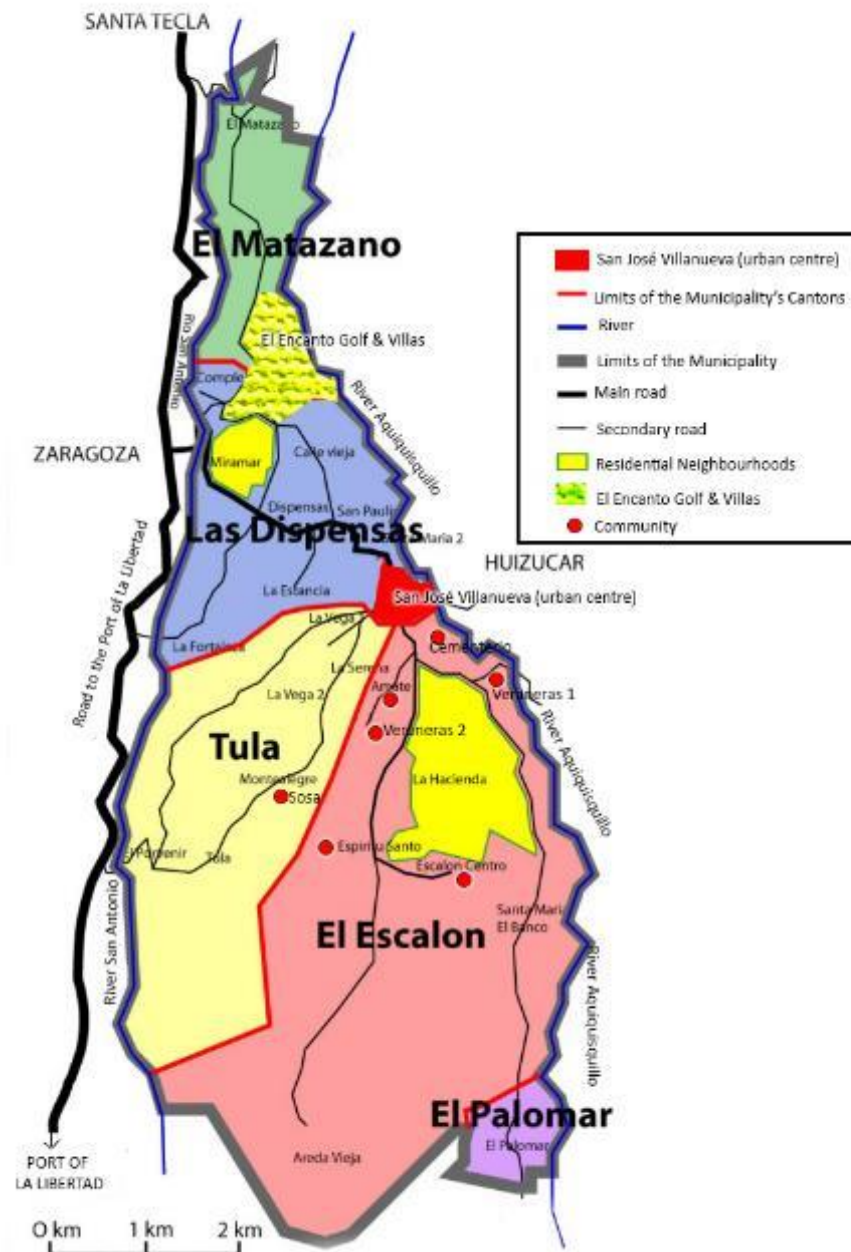
Figure 32: Communities of San José Villanueva, Approx. Location



Source: Own adaptation from Google Maps

Six of the seven communities have been established since the 1950s. The community of Sosa is more recent resulting from new migration patterns within the province of La Libertad as a consequence of the earthquakes that struck the country in 2001.

Figure 33: San José Villanueva local region, division and River Aquiquisquillo



Source: (ACUA, 2008)

Economic and environmental situation

The income levels for poor people in the area are below the national average of \$235 monthly(ACUA, 2008). This is because the main economic activities of the people in the region tend to be based on agricultural activities of self-subsistence (UNDP, 2013). Unemployment is dire and the way to survive and bring income to the family unit for people in these communities is by engaging with informal sector type of activities.

If water needs to be purchased it then constitutes a comparatively big 'chunk' of the expenses that the families in these communities assign to meet their daily living needs.

According to the poverty indicators of the country as supplied by the UNDP (UNDP, 2013), the situation of the seven communities is categorised as *multidimensionally poor*. This means that not only do people suffer from the lack of basic levels of income as in the traditional one-dimensional way of measuring poverty, but also they suffer from deprivation of many other basic functionings and capabilities 'to do' and 'to be' what they value essential for the flourishing of their lives. Poor people in the region, in other words, are characterised by deprivation in areas such as education, housing, health, etc.

According to the Ministry of the Environment of El Salvador (MARN), across the country, at least 95 per cent of the river or water body sources are contaminated and the majority of them cannot be cleaned or transformed back to potable water(MARN, 2011a). The environmental situation in which the seven communities live is summarised as 'precarious'. Among all the water bodies that the community has access to 99 per cent of them are contaminated and have declined in quantity(ACUA, 2008).

Environmentally this area of the country has experienced profound changes in the last few decades. This particular part of the country has been subject to large-scale urbanisation projects (Gornés Cardona, 2011, ACUA, 2008). These have expanded throughout the province not only radically changing the geographical landscape but

also the communities and their relationship with their surrounding environment. La Libertad has been at the epicentre of a massive urbanisation process (Benítez, 2013, ACUA, 2008). This has been due to a joint scheme in the region oriented to exploit private capital investment and elites in the country. The idea has been to expand profit making business opportunities offered by the touristic developments in the coastal areas of the country (Vargas, 2011, ACUA, 2008). This is attractive as the region is also close to San Salvador, the capital city of the country. The economic and business potential of this part of the country has since the 1990s already figured in the Plan of the Nation documents and has figured prominently in the FoMilenio Plans funded by the Government of the United States to El Salvador.

Lack of regulation, environmental taxes and lack of 'bite' from the Ministry of the Environment has exacerbated this situation.

Hydrographically, El Salvador has always received high levels of rainfall. Scarcity of water for human consumption is the result of a paradox. To this respect, key environmentalists in El Salvador like Angel Ibarra argue that water availability is not really the key issue, but rather how its society governs, maintains and distributes water:

"If you ask me about what the situation in the country is in terms of water availability I'd say it is abundant. However, if you ask me about the availability of clean water per person that can be used for personal needs, I'd say the situation is critical. At least 95% of the natural water sources of this country are contaminated" (Ibarra, 2007).

Hydrographically, the prospects of this area of the country have nevertheless looked grim and have been worsening throughout the last few decades. Specifically, the province of La Libertad is among the top three areas of the country that envisage levels of water scarcity that are categorised as those of 'water-stress'. This means that the level of cubic meters of water available per person per year has reached the point in which it is close or below the minimum level of 1,700 cubic meters per head per year. The seven communities have all suffered from different forms of water scarcity. As shown in these hydrographic maps water allocation and availability at present

unevenly distributed depending on which geographical part of the basin the population is located(ACUA, 2008).

Social situation

High illiteracy rates limit the impact of campaigns to ensure clean water access it makes it very difficult for the population to follow guidelines and take the necessary measures to treat water sources in order make them safe for personal needs(UNDP, 2013).

At least 90 per cent of the water bodies in the areas are contaminated, being river Aquiquisquillo its most iconic example as it is the main superficial water source for these communities (Collado, 2013, ACUA, 2008). For these reason diarrhoea vectors that have sprung in the last few years in the province of La Libertad. People are forced to resort to drinking dubious sources of water and due either to the lack of education or consciousness about the real extent of the problem (parasites such as amoebas and other contaminants appear invisible to the naked eye) they end up taking far fewer measures to ensure the potability and hygiene of the water available.

In addition to this, the province of La Libertad has been profoundly affected by patterns of violence. First as a legacy of the decade of the civil war in the 1980s, and second, as crime and violence in the form of gangs, and other petty crime is rife(Leroy et al., 2012) El Salvador has the fourth highest murder rate in the world and this region follows the average trend of homicides in the country (Cruz, 2011). This fact makes it particularly important in the case of water access where it is critical to access water in public places such as plazas or rivers or water springs that are far away, not well illuminated and whereby the most of the people having to fetch the water are women and children.

Political situation

The reigning power in San José Villanueva (SJV) at the time of the research is the right wing political party of PCN since 2011 whereby the local mayor, Pedro Durán has

assumed the leadership of governance for the area. Before that, the local mayor of SJV was the left wing political party of FMLN. According to many sources interviewed, political power was gained thanks to a clever political campaign that provided gifts to the population such as rice, beans and basic construction materials. Local development directive committees called ADESCOs lead the local representation on the communities. The leadership of these is highly variable.

The main political problems suffered in this region have been the lack of political weight given to the voices of poor people in important decision-making processes in the region. Water is at the same time a need but also a continuous battleground between those that have already made a blueprint of development growth that supply the needs of the transnational corporations working the construction sector in the area (e.g. Grupo Poma) and those that resist this neoliberal construction wave.

There has been movements of resistance, marches and political struggles in the news opposed to the way water has been badly allocated all along the geography of the province of La Libertad. There has been a socially constructed paradox of water allocation: the new residential zones such as Los Sueños, La Hacienda, Villas Tuscania among others have been provided with material means to access water in quality and daily quantities that are many times better than many of the poor communities, towns and villages that have been there since the beginning.

Public private projects such as FIHIDRO have been deployed as initiatives to provide water for the region using funding coming largely from the private enterprise, which has been mostly interested in making this happen to guarantee that water will be provided to its residential investment projects.

Historical situation

The history of the people of the seven communities or indeed of the province of La Libertad as a whole has figured marginally in the scholarship of water governance in

the country. What has prominent been in the historical narrative of the region and in the prevailing media is, nevertheless, the facts on how the Cordillera del Bálsamo has been rapidly been an easy victim of too quick, too deep and unregulated patterns of growth pushed forward by economic actors in the country. The face of growing waves of urbanisation have created severe social and environmental problems, which have dominated several of the ecological discussions in the country.

In the decade of the 1980s, the civil war made people react in different ways and emigration patterns were highly

One of the common expressions of the helplessness by the poor in resolving their looming clean water crisis is that they have faith that God will help, or God will provide. Politicians are less trustworthy and been known “not to do anything” to help them out of the clean water deprivation problems which they suffer. This interesting finding is examined in more detail in the material/ideational power axis. For now, what is important to note is that culturally the allocation of the power ‘of the divine’ ranks highly in the voices of the poor.

The situation of women in the communities is one of increased vulnerability in water access. The large majority of women interviewed in the case study were the ones ‘in charge’ of fetching the water needed for the household. The gender bias is notable in the labour of water access is notably strong according to the interviews and data from feminist organisations.

All trips to the rivers are dominated by a waterscape of women and children washing their clothes in the river, fetching the water or searching for it at all hours of the day. This was certainly true in all the communities in the region.

The problem is that even though women seem to be the direct victims of ‘the burden of water access’ they do not have an empowered voice in the governance structures to claim a differentiated treatment in the allocation of water or the politics of it in the micro-macro scale.

Following a detailed exploration of the historical context of El Salvador over the past 50 years and the outlining of the parameters of socio-economic and environmental conditions in San Jose Villanueva, which constitute the specific case study focus of this research that we move onto the next component part, the conceptual chapter

Conclusion: Colonising Water and People with Power

Latin America is ranked today as the most unequal region in the world (UNDP, 2011). Moreover according to the UNDP's latest multidimensional poverty index for 2010-2011, the poor in Latin America are not just income deprived, but are also deprived of multiple other conditions needed to secure a minimum quality of life, including access to clean water. For instance, in El Salvador the difference in water access between the richest 20 per cent and the poorest 20 per cent of the population is among the highest in the region *and* has consistently widened throughout the mid-1990s until the mid-2000s (UNDP, 2010).

In terms of opportunities to access water, there is still wide variation in water access and an absence /weak state based water institutions and laws. The causes of clean water scarcity in Latin American countries relate to inequality in power relations and lack of institutions and laws (Watkins, 2006).

The challenges of applying the 'water for all' logic in El Salvador

This chapter has explored the relevant political changes in the regulation or governance of clean water access that affected Salvadoreans throughout 1977 to 2014. It has looked at the main changes in institutional structures of clean water governance, key organizations and institutional frameworks that managed to alter the patterns of water access in El Salvador. The chapter has also researched the most important institutional frameworks affecting clean water access (institutions, laws, policies created and implemented), that have affected people's lives in that same period. The crucial challenge has been to answer how poor people have been included

or excluded from the decision-making processes that affect water access. As we have seen, the neoliberal transformations of the state in El Salvador and around the world coincide with the rise of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) policies and regulatory frameworks present in global treaties, summits and conferences that El Salvador signed as part of their development and governance policies. The UNDP's 'Decade for Water and Sanitation' is an example of this. The UNDP and Government reports and books in El Salvador's water governance in this period illustrate the high influence of the 'water as an economic good' in a IWRM rationale.

Water flows where the Powerful Go

Several findings are relevant and important as they contextualise the starting point at which the conceptual and empirical chapters (3-6) are shaped:

- *The power of the changing and mutating elites* and several waves of hegemonic societal structures shaping society and influencing water governance
- *The power of resistance* as a reaction and direct consequence of these power structures
- *The power of difference* those that have left the binaries of opposition and have engaged in different ways of governance of water, for example, beyond the opposing binary of market structures vs State run structures.

The politics of water and water without politics

The main challenge for the future is how to tackle the inequality of power in order to democratise water access. The tools of the 'right to human water' seem ineffective to translate into practice a re-distribution of water resources and the procurement of clean water for all from its natural state onwards.

According to the majority of people interviewed in El Salvador as part of this thesis, what reigns in El Salvador is a state of 'water anarchy'. There is no unified institutional and legal framework to oversee all the different uses and management of water and this leads to dispersion, confusion, lack of clear responsibilities as to who does what

and how in the long plight for securing water. What is the truth? Several facts appear in El Salvador's historical context, whereby the existence of transnationally connected and hegemonic social actors can at least lead to some insight into the power conflicts that are operating around the governance of water.

The first of these battles is the drive to settle the rules of the game. Who decides the way should water is governed in El Salvador? The different initiatives that have run their course to try to govern water in every instance have failed to translate into practice this.

Water is today a human right for all and if this is the goal, what are the steps that have been done in the past to accomplish this in the present?

The power of agency of the individuals and collectives against the power of social structure

“People make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.” (Karl Marx)

The power of agency of the individuals and communities to change situations should not be understated and is demonstrated throughout several periods of history, especially in the documented phases of resistance in the 1930s, 1980s and especially in the 1990s. It is clear that there has never been an effective achievement of water access for all at any point in history, but the poor, especially the rural poor (around 40% of the population today's population, but a much percentage higher throughout history) have repeatedly been left out of the hydrosocial cycle.

This is why this research centres on the poor through a more in-depth case study. However, from the context we already know that to make the case representative it should be from rural, peasant communities in what today is deemed as a high-risk zone: the coastal areas of El Salvador, which are bound to suffer from water stress in the years to come. This research examines with particular focus the latest attempts to

bring to fruition water politics in El Salvador and how this affects the people in the case study of San Jose Villanueva.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: POWER THE MISSING LINK



Introduction

When we make theories about the world, following Foucault (1982), we need to know the centre of gravity that sticks our ideas to the ground: “We have to know the historical conditions which motivate our conceptualization. We need a historical awareness of our present circumstance.” In the past historical chapter we focused on the special ‘circumstances’ that shaped Salvadorean society and its water governance the way it is today. Social power and water relations in El Salvador’s context mirrored patterns of social injustice. Wherever unequal power relations produced social injustice, water access inequalities emerged.

Using the backdrop of El Salvador’s historical and political context, this chapter now focuses on building a useful platform of ideas to help illuminate better how things work in people’s water and power relations. How can we best theorize and use social power as a conceptual tool to explain poor people’s lack of sustainable access to clean water? This chapter attempts addressing this question by first making a literature review to stand on the knowledge previous waves of researchers have gathered on the

subject. Then inspired on the legacy of these researchers, and the knowledge gaps still left uncovered in their academic efforts, the chapter then proceeds to build a novel conceptual theoretical synthesis about social power relations in water access. The aim is to make a useful framework best suited to explain the water access conundrum Salvadorean are living within the context of profound power inequalities.

Four steps lead the critical reflection stream running in the following pages. Firstly, if knowledge is power, then it should be included in the reflective process of analysing water politics. Secondly, to define the elementary concepts that outline what water access deprivation actually means and for whom. Here the research explores what 'access to clean water' is and why it matters, that it should be 'sustainable' and centred on 'poor and vulnerable people'. Thirdly, an analysis of the different theories currently used to explain the problem. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these theories? What concepts of power been used to explain the problem? Finally, drawing from a critical synthesis of these concepts, the research assimilates and synthesises a theoretical framework for the analytical purposes of this research.

The argument deployed in this chapter is that holistic power processes shape poor people's lack of sustainable access to clean water. The present conceptual framework looks at people's social practices and their power relations from the inter-relationship of three axes: (1) a local/global power axis; (2) a material/ideational power axis; and (3) a social structure/agency power axis. The key argument simply put, is that the simultaneous interactions along these axes produce a clearer picture of the power dynamics taking place over water access.

The best way to understand these axes is as different 'cameras' on a movie set. Narrating an action for a movie director becomes a matter of simultaneously capturing from different angles 'what is happening' at any given moment. Different cameras capture different 'bits' of information about the power interactions of people because of their different range of lenses, colour filters or sensor settings. Likewise, we can think of these actions occurring in a context —a particular time-space 'circumstance—

with people and their institutions becoming ‘actors’ in a ‘scenario’. The ‘scenario’ in explored here is the capitalist system and its globalising, neoliberalising and hegemonic characteristics. Such a setting as seen in chapter one, is the overarching context for the people of El Salvador

Starting point: People, Power & Water

In order to explain the politics behind water access using theories of power, it is necessary to apply critical analytical thinking right from the start. If theory works like a map, helping us get somewhere in understanding a particular phenomenon; then we ought to make sure that map is accurate, redrawing it and correcting it as we walk along.

Theory is just the means to get us to a higher level of understanding of the subject matter. Firstly, because using a ‘theory’, a *“supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something”* may be used as *an instrument of power*. Theory becomes the means to legitimize knowledge as supposedly, it is *“based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained”* (OED, 2011a). In the struggles over water access, theories are used all the time as instruments to legitimize how water should be governed. Is water an economic good? Is water a human right? Theories are there to emphasize and mould particular aspects of the answer, making sense of how things work and/or should be. Thus, theorising water access or ‘explaining how things work’ is also an exercise of power. As the social scientist Michel Foucault once stated *“Knowledge and power are integrated with one another (...) It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power”* (Foucault and Gordon, 1980, p. 52).

Secondly, the very existence of a theory on water access assumes *a priori objectification by someone*. In other words, *someone thought about this before* —and made sense of it— in its *own* analytical terms. Thus, in its truest sense, as argued by

Foucault, to take this for granted cannot be the basis for critical analytical work. The paradox lies in that critical analytical work *cannot proceed without* an ongoing conceptualization. Only constant checking with reality, contrasting explanatory models with what *really* is happening to social practices in water access may then legitimate further conceptualizations (Foucault, 1982, p. 778).

It follows then, that theorising people's water access using concepts of power requires the researcher *to doubt radically*. René Descartes famously argued that "*If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things*", cited in (Darling, 2004, p. 90). However, if we doubt *everything*, how may anyone really know what is real? According to the sociologist Earl Babbie (2007, p. 4) the answer is science. It is the safest bet to know anything with certitude. In science, evidence becomes the instrument to explain the reality we come to agree —agreement reality— and the one we experience —experiential reality—.

In view of that, water access theories should be given birth in the *alma mater* of science. However, even then, a researcher well positioned within the 'nest of science' and producing highly scientific knowledge can always be contested in its endeavour. Social science produces knowledge about society and its individuals, but its research is not really an objective activity carried out by 'detached neutral scientists'. Rather, as it is argued by Blaxter et al. (2001, p. 15) it is a social activity that is strongly influenced by the researcher's own motivations and values. They always interact within a broader social context. Hence, politics and power relations may also affect the way knowledge is produced by them, often framing: a) what research is undertaken; b) how it is carried out and; c) whether and how it is reported and acted upon (Ibid).

Moreover, the power of intellectuals goes beyond their institutional location. It lies in the way they create discourses, which constitute the "symbolic reality" of political argumentation. With the tools of knowledge, intellectuals help to frame and legitimize policies (Lawrence, 1996). There are examples everywhere of how knowledge becomes

power and an example of this is the framing of water as an 'economic good' (Swyngedouw, 2007, McDonald and Ruiters, 2005, Dumol, 2000, World Bank, 1999).

Anyone conceptualising the 'water access conundrum' should also be reflexively aware that *reality is a socially constructed process*. Nietzsche (1968) once said that power is the capacity to define reality. If you can define the real and the moral, you create conditions of legitimacy. This same thing happens in matters of water access (see for example, Boelens, 2008b). In sum, theorising water access using concepts of power has certain implications for the social researcher. There are five key points;

First, it is essential to address at all times the politics of knowledge in water access. Understanding the *power of knowledge* is a requirement for the *knowledge of power*. It is crucial to be aware of this when theorising the problem of water access: theories that explain water access are instruments of knowledge. These in turn, may be used as discourse to legitimize policies, behaviours and actions.

Second, to generate knowledge on the politics of water access it is a must for researchers to use scientific methods and procedures. Social theory predominates, not philosophy or belief; as we are primarily concerned with '*what is*' and not with '*what should be*'.

Third, knowledge of the historical circumstances that drive the researcher's water access conceptualisation is required for the construction of theory (Chapter 1).

Fourth, a researcher is also affected by the contextual circumstances of his/her time and space. My professional background, cultural references and personal experiences obviously influence my perception of the problem of water politics. A critical methodology should be used to *unpack* my possible biases throughout my research..

Finally, the ethical concerns of the research should also be explicit. Critical analysis is only possible from an awareness of this underlying goal. Ultimately, this research is concerned with the use of power and responsibility towards the poor and vulnerable. It aims to illuminate with scientific knowledge the reality of the oppressed, by finding

how power relations are causally responsible for their water poverty. In this sense, this research is 'people centred'. It makes the poor its guiding 'north' for the deeper understanding of power. This rationale is inspired in Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (Freire, 1970); the perspective of the "people centred approach" (see Korten and Klaus, 1984, Chambers, 2004, Chambers, 1995); and the "ethics of development" (Gasper, 2004, Goulet, 1995, Crocker, 2008). From this perspective, scientific knowledge can critically approach power asymmetries to liberate the oppressed from unjust power structures.

Defining 'Power'

Defining Basic Concepts

In line with the critical reflexivity of this research, this section defines the basic terms that are used throughout this study. Once having deconstructed their meanings and the ways they are currently used in the water politics discourse, we can then make 'proper use' of them to build a theoretical framework in the following section.

The origin of the word 'power' stems from variations of the Latin *posse* which means 'to be able' (OED, 2010) and from then on variations have been the rule.²⁵ Commonly though, power has been viewed as *force* (understood in a narrow sense as the control of the body rather than the person); as *persuasion*; as *authority*; as *coercion* and as *manipulation* (McLean and McMillan, 2003), and in its most popular conception as

²⁵ For example, power has been described as "the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way"; "the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events"; as "physical strength and force exerted by something or someone"; among other definitions (Ibid).

'*domination*' (Clegg and Haugaard, 2009, p. 3) although these do not exhaust its connotations.

The problem with 'power' is that it is a multifaceted and contested concept with no overall consensus or 'catch-all' definition agreed by social scientists (Clegg and Haugaard, 2009, 3-24, Lukes, 2005a). This is why social scientists have settled with the idea that "there is no single correct interpretation of power" and that 'power' "is not a single entity"(Clegg and Haugaard, 2009, p. 3). It is rather, a conceptual category that bundles together a range of concepts that are 'related' as in a family resemblance, but with overlapping characteristics (Wittgenstein, 1967).

Definitions of power have varied according to the question of interest —*What constitutes it? How is it produced? Where is it located? How is it distributed?*— and/or what constitutes its unit of analysis (e.g., institutions, groups, dyads, the individual). For example, some definitions focus on the actor (e.g., power as motive) or the actor's actions (e.g., power as dominance). Other definitions emphasize the target's response to the actor (e.g., power as influence). (Keltner et al., 2000, Haugaard, 2002)

Debates on power: different angles

In the literature on power two prominent 'branches' have sparked different traditions of power analysis: the solid and the liquid branches of power (Bauman and Haugaard, 2008, p. 111) and see also (Clegg, 1989, Clegg and Haugaard, 2009).

On the one hand there is a 'solid' branch of power that stems from the work of Robert Dahl (Dahl, 1961, Dahl, 1963, Dahl and Lerner, 1965) to that of Steven Lukes (Lukes, 2005a, Lukes, 1974) where the main focus of power lies on the causality and foundational notions of power. In this branch the discussions range over a dichotomous notion of power. It could be seen on the one hand as the product of actions of individuals prevailing over each other or what others would call "*power over*" and is seen as originating or caused by the interaction of agents situated in

bureaucratic edifices or *structures*. On the other hand, power is seen from the notion of '*power to*', that is, the agency or capacity of the individuals to change their fields of possibilities or structures through their own capabilities. This agency-structure concept of power centres on people's relations is why it has been called a '*solid*' *conception of power* (Bauman and Haugaard, 2008, p. 111).

In this solid branch three faces of power are explored: The '1st face of power' explored by Robert Dahl (1961) centred on analyzing power through observing the visible decision-making mechanisms of people and their perceived outcomes in behaviour (which is why this face is called 'a behaviourist' notion of power. The 2nd face of power: explored by *Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1970)* focused on power beyond the visible decision-making process. They argued that it also happens as a process of *non-decision making*, through the *mobilization of bias* of people, that is, through the manipulation of their political agenda by powerful groups where things are stopped from coming onto the agenda. And lastly, the 3rd face of power explored by Steven Lukes (1974), where power has a more invisible dimension: individuals achieve what they want by shaping the perceptions, cognitions and preferences of others in such way that they accept their role in the existing order of things and don't even question it.

In contrast, another more 'liquid' branch of the notion of power brings a different focus: this one originates on Michel Foucault's work on power (Foucault, 1990, Foucault, 1974, Foucault, 1978, Foucault, 1983) where he saw power as a systemic 'phenomenon'. For him power is '*all around us*' and embedded in the systems of knowledge that surround us. Hence, it flows in 'liquid dynamics' which are almost invisible, except in its effects. Power is not only something that individuals, groups, or classes exercise (as it was depicted in the first branch), but rather it is a phenomenon where 'discursive formations' become networks of power within which we are all immersed. Power is *everywhere and everything* because it is embedded in our social practices, in our knowledge. Here power is like energy; it is not destroyed only transformed: every instance of power brings an instance of resistance of power.

Going back to the conceptual need to understand how power affects poor people's access to water, it is possible to argue that in order to use a practical notion of power we need to: a) Use a diverse array of notions of power, as no single conception, or definition is able to encapsulate people's social practices in El Salvador; and b) Understand that people's social practices arise in a *context*. Depending on that particular setting we can use and select diverse notions of power to meet our conceptual needs. As we have seen from chapter one, the relevant contemporary context is the expansion in depth and breadth of a neoliberalising, globalising and hegemonic capitalist system as the dominant context. A conceptual notion of power that considers this should then be used for a framework.

Defining 'Water'

Water is unique in that it is a 'fugitive' liquid that varies in availability across time and space. As a result, it is a resource that is not easily controlled. Overall the world's population is said to have physically available a supply of about 9,000 cubic kilometres of freshwater per year (FAO, 2011). However, water across the globe is not evenly distributed for lots of reasons. Nature plays its part, but so do the particular social arrangements and practices of people across the world.

The importance of water not only arises from its material properties and uses, but also the ideational aspects assigned to it by people across the globe. The World Water Council declared "Water is affected by everything, and water affects everything and everyone" (World Water Council, 2000). At the same time, it is also local and global in the way it underscores and shapes particular patterns of people's lives. These patterns in turn influence the way society is organized in individual and structural arrangements and social relations, also shape the way water is used and mediated through institutions, social relations, property rights, identity and culture (Cleaver, 2000, Boelens et al., 2010, Mehta, 2003, Mosse, 2003).

Hence, water, seen from multiple angles, affects and is affected by people's social interactions. These interactions produce power relations that simultaneously occur at the discursive and material realms (Cleaver, 2000, Mehta, 2005, Meinzen Dick and Bruns, 1999) Water can be seen as a transcalar issue in its material and discursive manifestations. In its material side it has been said, that because water is so ubiquitous, our planet rather than being called planet Earth should be called *planet Water* (Ball and Stillinger, 1999). However, although water covers 75 per cent of the world's surface, 97.5 per cent of the earth's water is salt water. Of the remaining 2.5 per cent, the majority is locked away as groundwater or in glaciers, which leaves humanity with a meagre less than one-hundredth of 1 per cent of the world's water readily available for human use (FAO, 2011). This fact has powerful implications that will be explored in this thesis.

In addition to this, human beings have attempted to govern water uses at different levels in society. For instance, depending on how one views the problem of water access, it can be seen as a local, regional, national, international or global issue. Some argue, with reason, that water cannot be global, as it "tends to be highly localized and at best regional in scope "and that it is "rooted in and defined by its locality" (Mehta, 2003, p. 559). However, drawing on Herod (2006, 2009) it could be argued that water and the social practices that surround it, can be seen as *processes*, not *locations*. In this way, although water materially can always be fixed territorially at a local scale, but the way it is *socially governed and used* breaks patterns of locality.

On the ideational side, some scales could be used discursively to override others: the global policy making arena for instance. As we have seen in chapter 1, the global discourses on 'water as an economic good' have permeated structures of water governance in Central America across multiple scales and levels. Through expert networks that frame water management rationales these scales reach down to the individual (see Conca, 2005). Examples of these transcalar issues are the ways problems of water scarcity and climate change have been legitimized with local/global

discourses across the globe to, for instance, open the gates to water privatization processes (see Mehta, 2010).

From a material perspective, water is distinctive for many reasons. It is, first of all, *the stuff of life*. All life depends on water. Its received biological importance has made it known as the 'molecule of life', the 'matrix of life', 'life's natural habitat' and similar accounts (Finney, 2004). Globally, for example, it is reflected in the target of halving the proportion of population without access to clean water and sanitation by 2015 (Goal 7 of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals).

Likewise, water contamination from untreated sewage, pollution and other chemicals ranks as one of the top reasons of death. Diarrhoea, a water-borne disease, is the second leading cause of death among children under five globally. Every year about 1.5 million child deaths occur; that is, nearly *one in every five* children in the world die due to diarrhoea (WHO and UNICEF, 2009). Unsafe drinking water together with lack of sanitation and poor hygiene behaviour are at the root of this problem. Climate change exacerbates the impacts of all these water related phenomena at a global scale (Narain et al., 2011, Singh et al., 2011, Haines et al., 2006, McMichael et al., 2006, Patz et al., 2005).

There are around 1,400 million cubic kilometres on our planet circulating through the hydrological cycle. However, as it was said before, nearly all of this is salt water and most of the rest is frozen or underground. Humanity has to share with themselves and with other forms of life that one-hundredth of 1 per cent of the world's water that is available for human consumption. From this last fraction, people use water in three main ways: a) *for daily life*: municipal and domestic uses (drinking water and sewage treatment); b) *for industrial and agricultural use*: mostly for irrigation; and c) *for farming*: which accounts for the largest part, some 65 per cent globally in 1990 (FAO, 2011).

From an ideational perspective, water is embedded with a variety of meanings by people across the globe. These meanings originate from the everyday contexts in

which people live their lives. As such, water can be simultaneously perceived as a free, social, economic, cultural or a symbolic resource (Strang, 2004, Mehta, 2003). This makes it not easily classifiable as a commodity (like food).

Globally, people value water for both its non-economic and economic roles. However, official water management discourses —such as those recognised in the 1992 Dublin principles as explored in Chapter 1, (see ICWE, 1992)— tend to be fixated in the material economic values of water. Two opposing streams of thought arise from this position: those that view water as an economic good, that is, a commodity susceptible to being ‘marketised’ for a price (Frérot, 2011, Savenije, 2002); and those that view it as a basic human right (OHCHR, 2009, Bleisch, 2006) .

Narrowly viewing water as an economic good often excludes water’s other dimensions. And because these dimensions cut across the cultural, symbolic and spiritual fabrics of many cultures, water also becomes a source of contention (Boelens et al., 2010, Selby, 2003, Dolatyar and Gray, 2000, Donahue and Johnston, 1998)

Water is *to an extent* an impure public good (Mehta, 2003, Mehta, 2006,3-4, Anand, 2007, 9-10). Pure public goods are defined as those that provide benefits not confined to a single individual (a non-excludable good) and, that once provided, many can enjoy them for free (a non-rivalrous good) (Musgrave and Musgrave, 1984). Clean air and streetlights are good examples of this. However, water is not as easy to classify. Take for instance, the largest body of water on our planet, the sea. As Mehta (2006, 3-4) argues, the oceans provide benefits to all life related to it, usually for free. But the overuse and abuse of the ocean by one group can undermine this common benefit. A spill of toxic materials in an ocean in place X, will lead to the depletion of fish stocks and pollution in places Y, Z, etc., reducing people’s capacity to benefit from it. The result is that the ocean is rivalrous in consumption and the same logic is applicable to other water bodies such as rivers and waterways. They are rivalrous in consumption in that over-use or pollution will undermine their potential benefits for everyone. Water is then —using the conventional notion of public goods— an impure type of public

good. It ticks the box of being 'common to everyone' making it 'non-excludable' but it fails to be non-rivalrous in its use and consumption.

Overall, from its ideational angle, water has unleashed various contentious understandings of its meaning, governance and uses. A vast body of work has explored how people collectively create and practice institutional arrangements to manage water, often under conditions of water scarcity (Coward, 1985). However, as Mehta (2010) considers, all rely implicitly or explicitly on the notion of water as a common property resource, which as we have seen, is not always the case. Furthermore, even though some scholars have analysed various aspects of water management (e.g. collective action in irrigation systems or the conditions under which local institutions are employed to manage local water resources (Bromley and Cernea, 1989, Ostrom, 1990, Berkes, 1989), they exclude relations of power from the analysis. Collective action approaches to water have been criticized by a growing wave of scholars framed as 'post-institutionalists' e.g. (Cleaver, 2000, Movik and Mehta, 2010, Mehta, 2006, Mehta, 2005).

How we frame our understandings of 'what water is' and 'how it should be used and managed', is just a sample of broader or deeper relations of power (Zwarteveen, 2010). But so did the other social differences such as the deeper levels of water precarity in indigenous communities (Andolina et al., 2009, Peet et al., 2004, Boelens, 2008a), in the poor and vulnerable (Watkins, 2006), etc. Water is, in sum, a perfect breeding ground for politics (Wegerich and Warner, 2010, Mehta et al., 2007).

Defining 'Sustainability' and 'Access to Clean Water'

What does 'clean' water access mean? In short, it means having access to water that can sustain human life. 'Clean' or 'safe' water, 'drinking water' or 'potable water' are generally understood to refer to this idea. The World Health Organization defines this concept as water of sufficiently high quality that it can be consumed or used by human

beings without risk of immediate or long-term harm. It should contain no harmful concentrations of chemicals or pathogenic microorganisms. This definition and its minimum standards are developed in a set of guidelines for international reference (WHO, 2008). This research uses the terms 'safe', 'clean' or 'potable' water interchangeably to refer to the idea of water that can sustain human life.

On the issue of *access to water to secure life* certain requirements ought to be met, but these 'requirements' have always been contested. For example with the normative idea that water should have minimum levels of quality, quantity, regularity and to be sustainable over time. What these 'minimums' should be has been hotly debated (WHO, 2008, Water Quality, 2006). This includes the issue of sustainability of water (Alley and Leake, 2004, Alley et al., 1999, Gatto, 1995, Mehta et al., 2007, Sharma, 2009, Shearman, 1990). For the purposes of this research, the focus will be to seek diverse sources of knowledge —including the poor people themselves— to understand how they perceive these levels of requirements.

The ability to provide 'access to clean water' in a 'sustainable' manner is affected by a number of factors such as: shifting demographics, (lack of) technological innovation, (lack of) economic development, land use patterns, climate change, prevailing social values, variable institutional arrangements, poverty patterns, social exclusion, etcetera (Mehta et al., 2007, pp. 21-23). In other words, social practices and power relations are at the heart of the problem of water access (Watkins, 2006).

However, achieving water access should not merely be understood as gaining the material means that provide access, i.e. proper infrastructure. This is just a *means* to an end. One may have the entire physical infrastructure for water access secured, yet the myriad of factors mentioned above may prevent an individual from drinking clean water. In El Salvador, many urban populations have secured their material means for water access (e.g. via direct government investment, donor aid cooperation, private-public partnerships, etc.) such as the infrastructure necessary to be connected to a water repository. Yet regularity of access is often precarious, water quality may be

equally as bad and/or the prices may be so high and their incomes so low, that the service is simply beyond their means.

Amartya Sen referred to the idea of entitlements and capabilities as analysing the realisation of human flourishing (Sen, 1988, Sen, 1999, Sen, 1990). In this framework, the analytical idea is to go beyond the material fixation on the means (money, commodities, etc.) and rather focus on people's actual capabilities to achieve those aspects of life that they have reason to value, such as clean water access. This simple yet powerful idea directs our attention both to the removal of 'obstacles' or 'negative freedoms' that impede people's realization of their full potential and, to the idea of empowering people (promoting positive freedoms) so that they are able to do and to be what they have reason to value through their own use of personal agency. As we shall see in later sections of this chapter the attainment of the simple act of drinking clean water can be seen as a 'process' where several variables of power interactions affect the final outcome.

Defining 'the poor' and 'the vulnerable' and their relation to water

Another relevant issue when addressing water access problems is how we define the 'poor' and the 'vulnerable'. Definitions matter because they lock-up meanings while also giving us structure.

Water and the 'Poor'

Lack of access to clean water is a central part of what defines 'poverty'. Much has been written about what poverty is, but too much of it has dwelled on very narrow meanings and has often excluded access to clean water from its core analysis. Whether poverty is defined including water access or not depends, paraphrasing Robert Chambers, on "who asks the question, how it is understood, and who

responds”(Chambers, 2006). From this perspective using Chamber’s five clusters of meaning in which poverty has usually been framed, we can summarize how and where water has been included or excluded:

The first is *income-poverty* or its proxy: *consumption-poverty*. From this angle, poverty is simply a case of asking the people in question: how much money do you have? Or how much have you spent on what you consume? Here access to water is not relevant at all.

The second cluster of meanings is *material lack or want*. Apart from income this gives space for a little bit more, the good policy maker now asks for further information: what other assets do the people have or lack? This includes for example asking them about shelter, clothing, furniture, personal means of transport, TVs, mobile phones and so on. It may even include questions on access to services like water.

The third cluster of meanings is radically open ended. It is concerned with *what we can or cannot do, what we can or cannot be* which is derived from Amartya Sen’s concept of ‘*capability deprivation*’. Here attention shifts from the one-dimensional space of material lack to the immaterial, multidimensional space of ‘human capabilities’. From this viewpoint, what matters is the notion of freedoms; that is, the opportunities people have to do or to be to live life to their full potential. In this case, water access would be included: Do people have opportunities to access clean water? What are the obstacles (negative freedoms) that stop them from having clean water? What can be done to empower them (positive freedoms) to be able to access their water? Freedoms range from; skills, physical abilities to notions of self-respect in society. Here the good policy-maker would need multiple sources of data, meanings, etc.

A fourth cluster of meanings asks people if they enjoy good social relations, freedom of choice and action, security, physical wellbeing and enough for a good life. It asks questions from another angle: a) *poverty’s disadvantages* in: social relations, material poverties (including water access), physical ill being, insecurities, place of the poor, seasonal dimensions, poverty of time, institutions and access, lack of

education/capabilities, lack of political clout, ascribed and legal inferiority and b) *development as a notion of good change*: shifting from ill-being to wellbeing with equity.

Finally, the fifth cluster of meanings brings in the *notion of power relations*. Here, we become aware that all of the above notions of poverty are socially constructed. They are elaborated by “us” development professionals, policy-makers. Instead of the good policy-maker attaching their own preconceived ideas of what it means to be poor, the people themselves define what their experience of poverty means. As Chambers summarizes:

“They [the poverty definitions] are expressions of “our” education, training, mind-sets, experiences and reflections. They reflect our power, as non-poor people, to make definitions according to our perceptions. (...) These dimensions are all abstractions, to varying degrees reductionist, based on our analysis and views. They tend to overlook and ignore the analysis and views of the objects of the definition and description — “the poor” that is people who are in a bad condition variously described as poor, marginalised, vulnerable, excluded or deprived” (Chambers, 2006, pp. 3-4).

Conceptually then, it becomes clear that the nexus between water and poverty is at its core multidimensional, context-specific, open-ended and is best described as an irregular grid of interrelated deprivations. Moreover, reflexivity of power relations on the conceptual definition of poverty has to come from listening to the voices of those excluded. Questions of power become analytical pillars from which to define how water poverty is part of a broader set of elements of poverty as lack of power. Oxfam refers to this as leaping from ‘poverty to power’ (Green, 2008).

Water and the ‘Vulnerable’

Unpacking what it means to be poor while being reflective about power relations leads us to the notion of vulnerability. Succinctly defined, someone who is vulnerable is someone who is “exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either

physically or emotionally” (OED, 2011b). In many academic disciplines and knowledge-practice communities’ ‘vulnerability’ is also understood to be “a condition or situation in which people or human communities and/or their assets and livelihoods are susceptible to injury, loss, or disruption” (Wisner, 2009).

When examining the case of water access, researchers have found persistent evidence that women are more vulnerable to suffer deeper deprivations (such as sickness, longer hours of work and violence) from the lack of water access (Zwarteveen, 2010). In El Salvador, women that live in deprived urban areas are more prone to be the victims of street gang violence. A simple walk to the nearest well makes her more vulnerable to harm. Power relations that generate harm or exclusion due to gender, class, caste, body features, ethnic origin, geographical or religious background or other types of difference, exacerbate the their vulnerability. Vulnerability tends to be hidden in aggregate statistics. The need to be specific about the context of power relations accounting for power inequalities at more refined scales like the household is key (Arora-Jonsson, 2011).

Synthesis

The notions of ‘*power*’, the ‘*poor and vulnerable people*’ and their ‘*sustainable access to clean water*’ have been explored with particular emphasis on its shifting meanings. There are two key concepts that this thesis builds upon to create the conceptual framework for this research 1) a *multidimensional use of capability deprivation or freedoms*; and 2) a *multidimensional axis of power relations*. These two concepts provide an analytical toolset with which to explore and understand people’s water access struggles

Power relations explain differences in water access in society. The poor and vulnerable are placed at the centre of this analysis. Their reflections on the *causality of the problem* are a therefore an important part of holistic analyses of power. The following

section now explores the *causal explanations* for water deprivation given in the academic literature.

Explaining Water Deprivation from a Power Perspective

So how do current theories in social science explain a lack of access to sustainable and clean water in certain sectors of society? What, if any, notions of power are used in such explanations? Not all disciplines have cared to explore this question, but many disciplines have certainly explored different aspects of water access. Here the aim is to explore a range of the most important viewpoints and/or theories populating the dominant discourses on water access. These have been arranged them in two clusters of theories: a) *materialist centred theories*, where the primary explanation is anchored in material notions of reality; and b) *politics centred theories*, where the basis is more ideational, discursive or uses more interdisciplinary accounts of the field.

Materialist centred viewpoints

Here, the lack of water access is best explained by the absence (or superabundance) of material means that in turn affect outcomes in access to water. These can range from the lack of technology, monetary investments; overabundance of population, absence of market solutions; absence of or badly designed institutions of governance or the way the economic modes of production shape society. The chapter briefly examine the most predominant ones:

The Technocratic-Engineering approach

From this perspective, people's lack of clean water access is explained by the absence of technology. The argument is that technologies play key roles in addressing water and sanitation problems. Promoters of this approach evoke an imagery of

‘technological optimism’. They promote narratives of progress with an overwhelming faith in human innovations and know-how in the water domain. In this trend, the ‘fetishism of technology’ is infectious. It asserts that technological solutions can be the saviours of all water scarcity problems. An example of this is the so-called ‘blue revolution’ (Calder, 2005, Barnett, 2011). What’s more, because technology is seen as ‘neutral’ and ‘apolitical’ its promotion is ‘ideal’.

The Neo-Malthusian viewpoint

From a neo-Malthusian perspective, the explanation is centred on the impact population growth has on the overuse and exploitation of water resources. Here the drive is on how to solve and provide better population patterns in geographical spaces for the optimum provision of water resources (LeRoy, 1995, Falkenmark, 1990, Falkenmark, 1989).

The Neoclassical/neoliberal theories:

From a neoclassical perspective, water resources are scarce due to institutional bad management. The answer here is the commoditization of water to make it susceptible of being sold for a price in markets. This would assign in rigour the ‘true cost’ of the commodity, plus make water assignation more efficient allocating it to the best fluctuations of ‘demand’ and ‘supply’. Private corporations may then trade this economic good so that they can compete in the offer of services and hence, provide water for those that need it. The logic here focuses on the freedom of the markets rather than the freedom of people having access to water.

The New Institutional Economics approach:

Here the lack of access to clean water is the outcome of poorly designed and/or poorly managed institutions of ‘good water governance’. This type of approach is commonly present in El Salvador’s water governance as the previous chapter showed. Reports on

water governance from the government to the UNDP have argued the centrality played by weak or absent water governance institutions in El Salvador. From this point of view, the fix then comes from the redesigning process of institutions, making them more efficient, better targeted on the provision of water using economics based notions of optimums. However, power relations seem to be excluded in the language of 'institutional economics'.

Marxist theory

Here water scarcity is interpreted as a logical consequence of the evolving structural forces of the capitalist mode of production. From the Marxist viewpoints water deprivation is the outcome of the processes of exclusion that pervade the capitalist system whereby labour is subsumed to the spiral of capitalist accumulation processes. People then are just part of the nuts and bolts of an economic machine designed to privilege those that own the means of production. Human labour exploitation comes from using water as a commodity and embedding it the production process. Examples of this type of approach are present in anti-neoliberal, anti-capitalist forms of resistance and social activism present in key forums in El Salvador and across the world (see the example of the Alternative Water Forums that have emerged in opposition in the last decade).

Critique: materialist explanations on water access exclude too much

The arguments for materialist explanations on people's lack of water access have several flaws, and the academic literature has outlined following points:

Firstly, it has already been shown that technologies and techniques are deeply political as they can be used to promote particular interests (e.g. privatization of water resources, the 'sell out' of big dam projects, etc.) Examples of these technological fixes can be seen in...

Second, the 'fixation' on material economic means sees water poverty as material circumstances: water access is a matter of techno, economic, institutional cleavages that have not worked to allocate water in its ideal way.

Development studies legacy viewpoints

Viewpoints of water in Basic Needs framework

Here water is viewed as a 'basic need'. As this is just a viewpoint, no solutions are implied. There is no conceptual explanation as to why some people lack of water. However, the view of water as a 'basic need' has contributed to a discourse which has procedural consequences for its management. The fact is that many policy-makers in governments and positions of power have used this viewpoint to avoid or skew the idea that they may have a responsibility in providing access to water to people. Viewing water as a basic need is not the same as viewing it as an obligatory 'right' that has to be enforced by laws. Hence, this discourse can be a complice of 'basic needs' could become an instrument of those in power to maintain a situation of 'water access anarchy' and escape the burden of either solving it or enforcing it. Water access is then causally linked to the use of this discourse.

Viewpoints of water Rights Based Approach framework

In a rights-based approach, water is viewed as a human right and using this framework water has been viewed as an obligation or duty (of the state?). Here, lack of water access is explained by reasoning that without 'proper laws' to enforce water as a human right, there is always scope for exclusion of certain sectors of a society for a variety of reasons and this results in 'water poverty'. There are many examples of legislation decreed in national constitutions or international laws frameworks, which categorize water as a human right: e.g. South Africa, Nicaragua, Bolivia and the United Nations have all defined water as a human right in their frameworks. However, although instrumental for the promotion of water for all, it is not sufficient as it excludes all the other levels of obstacles (economic, political, social, cultural, etc.) that

limit people's water access even in the presence of laws that frame water as a human right.

Viewpoints of water in the Capability Approach framework

Similarly, the capability approach framework does not explain poor people's lack of water access. However, it has been used predominantly in development literature to frame the understanding that multiple factors affect people's processes of human flourishing. Water access is a basic capability necessarily included in this framework. Authors explain the lack of access to clean water having viewed water deprivation as a subdomain of freedoms and capabilities in accordance with a multidimensional concept of poverty e.g. Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals. The argument follows that water access should be resolved by addressing multiple dimensions of human flourishing with more policies. Thus, water is not seen just in its 'flat' materiality as the means for life, but is also valued in multiple and diverse ways by human beings. Here the problem of the lack of access to clean water is seen from the domains of 'opportunities' and 'capabilities'. This allows for broad thinking and broad solutions in this 'theoretical space'. This pushes the policy-maker to think about obstacles that limit or affect people's final capability to access clean water both at socio-structural levels (institutions performances, cognitive issues, etc.) and at agency levels (how the individual is empowered to use its own agency to achieve this water access).

The procedural framework of 'capabilities spaces' as freedom has been criticised for not giving enough attention to power relations and social justice. It has resulted in the application of policies which are open to 'freedoms' but blind to issues of power causality, e.g. the diagnosis of the problem of water access in goal 7 of the MDGs framework and the whole MDGs list. They politely glide over the real issues of power operating and have been heavily criticized as a bundle (Antrobus, 2003, Vandemoortele, 2008, Vandemoortele, 2005, Saith, 2006).

Politics centred viewpoints

In a politics centred view, people's clean water deprivations derives from notions of power and politics.

Political Economy:

Ranging from neo-Marxist to more politically based authors, the problem of people's water poverty is viewed from a critical combination of the political and economic systems in which people live. In this case, it is the capitalist system but significant attention is given to the way politics shapes society's arrangements. This dual focus allows for critical analysis of how water access is located at the core of political-economic relations. Clean water deprivation is an outcome of the unfair economic and political relations in which people are placed due to the structural arrangements of society. Here however, other aspects of people's relations are excluded, such as their ideational and discursive relations, their spiritual and cultural conceptions of water.

Political Ecology theories:

Political ecology is based on people's relations with the environment from a politically based starting point.

Global Environmental Politics: In this domain, one of the main camps is distinguished as 'the Green Approach'.

Water Politics subdomain: Liquid Dynamics framework. In the actual water subdomain, a new wave of scholars has touched directly upon a '*water politics perspective*'. The centre point is a coherent framework of analysis in which multidisciplinary issues provide an explanation of people's water access. The most evident is the 'Liquid Dynamics' perspective developed by the STEPS Centre, IDS. (See (Mehta, Lyla; Allouche, Jeremy; Transboundary water wars; London Water Group; Swyngedouw, Erik; Bakker, Karen; Latin American Water Politics; Escobar, Esteban)

Feminist water ecologies: Here the emphasis is on the streamlining of 'engendered' relations that cross through the water domain.

In the field of water politics researchers have explored the conceptual bridges that connect water to power and vice versa.

The efforts to make operational paths between the literature on social power and water governance literature have not been formulaic nor superficial. Consistent efforts from researchers have flourished in exploring the way water/social power academic fields can enter a useful dialogue beneficial to illuminate political ecology issues.

For instance, Michael Ekers and Alex Loftus have led the way in this collective effort. They have demonstrated how at the roots of liberal, capitalist social formations power relations over water control can be enriched by using the conceptual lenses present in key ideas about power explored by Gramsci and Foucault (Ekers and Loftus, 2008). Ekers and Loftus hinge their arguments on the idea that the political ecology of water cannot avoid wider societal concerns on how water feeds power and how power feeds water control in present day neoliberal capitalist societies. Using Gramscian and Foucauldian concepts, political ecology water theorists can better understand for instance, how the very survival of 'liberal capitalist formations' depends on the capabilities of economic elites standing in the apex of society, to use their power accumulation strategies to advance and maintain their interests and their 'hegemonic' position.

Time and time again researchers around the world have made efforts to break away from conceptual barriers that limit their full understanding about 'what really is going on' behind the scenes of water governance in particular contexts. The water scarcity of some put against the water abundance of others frequently sparks debates about more structural matters such as the causes of social inequality and injustice. Indeed, explaining more holistically what causes the failures to provide water access is a challenge that still defies researchers to provide better answers not just for the water issues, but for broader inter-relational views about how people influence others.

Indeed, the water politics challenge is that for researchers water and social power are not easily cooperating topics. It is difficult to explain them simultaneously. It seems that it all depends on the theoretical 'entry point' of the researcher to the problem water scarcity. What theoretical framework does the political ecologist researcher choose to explain water injustice issues? For instance, the community of political ecologists that produced the 2006 Human Development report (UNDP, 2006b) exploring the politics behind water scarcity mostly agreed on a common platform. Power relations lie at the heart of water injustice and what matters is to insert power into the debate about who gets water and how. In this sense, the consensus in political ecology theorists now defies flat explanations about what causes water scarcity and go beyond technocratic and Malthusian approaches.

Loftus himself has explored elsewhere the political ecology of water using highly unequal societies such as the case of Durban in South Africa. By mobilising Gramscian, Marxist and feminist analyses, Loftus shows that it is possible to look at a society from a historical and geographical perspective and capture the essence of its 'socio-natural' arrangements. In his words, "By collecting water, paying a bill or struggling to have a household reconnected to its water supply, world-views are formed that articulate with prior conceptions." (Ekers and Loftus, 2008, p. 963) These 'prior conceptions are almost always a product of a slow, more longer term processes where what matters is to understand how the consolidation of certain norms within society allow conditions of injustice in water access to co-exist, be accepted and normalised.

Gramsci's perspective on the philosophy of praxis, or the construction of hegemony, and even its understanding of the role played by 'organic intellectuals' may indeed give tools for political ecologists to understand what makes social change possible (or not) in societies where the normalisation of difference (inequalities that run through race, class and gender) can transform a post-apartheid society into a waterscape of other inequalities.

This critical position on how the normalisation of ideas, concepts, and discourses in the politics of water has had echo in many other political ecologists. For instance, the work reflected by Jessica Budds and Jamie Linton (Linton and Budds, 2014b) discusses the way in which socio-natural processes water and society “make and remake each other over space and time” (Linton and Budds, 2014b, p. 170). They call this co-constitution of water and society relations a “hydrosocial cycle”. In other words, by adopting a historical geographical perspective, they argue that political ecologies of water can be informed by more critical and constructive ideas about how water is produced, transformed and defined in a given society.

The political ecology framework anchors its focus on the dialectical dimensions that give shape to what we understand today as water governance. In this way, water governance would be not a neutral managerial exercise hygienically detached from its historical, geographical, cultural, social and economic surroundings, but rather it would be enmeshed, intertwined and shaped by it in profound ways. This is why for instance, water development interventions can often carry the seeds of wider social structural inequalities which prevail in societies around the world.

In the Salvadorean case it may be that machismo cultural patterns and socio-natural structures that normalise oppressive gender exclusion practices could be carried forward in time and applied in water governance practices (e.g. by ignoring the triple role women play and their practical gender needs, see (Moser, 1993)). In fact, it would require a critical political ecology conceptual toolkit to reveal and strip down, so to speak, this type of inequality as a power relation. The work of Zwarteveen and Meizen-Dick (2001) in the critical examination of water rights from a gender equity perspective shows how important it can be to incorporate the critical perspective of power into participation processes in development.

In other words, arguably any socio-natural process could be synthesised from a critical political ecology perspective as a product of simultaneous processes that occur in society as well as in its symbiotic relationship with nature. For instance, urbanisation

processes could be seen in the words of Erik Swyngedouw (see his work on the history of the urbanisation of water in Guayaquil, Ecuador (Swyngedouw, 1997) as “a simultaneously political-economic *and* ecological process” (Swyngedouw, 1997, p. 311, italics in the original source). This idea of *simultaneity* in multiple dimensions of power and its co-constitutive relationship with nature has emerged as a strong feature that appears in the work of political ecologist researchers.

Several branches of political ecology stem from the idea that water and power are in effect, hybrid, they not only ‘stick’ to each other at all times in the course of human lives and their relationship to water and nature, but also entail the fact that explanations about water access need to include these relations. Water flows can be political inasmuch human relations of power sculpt the way in which some groups obtain privileged access to water in detriment of others, as well as shaping the conditions that lock-in and normalise water injustice (Boelens et al., 2011, Swyngedouw, 2009, Swyngedouw, 2004b, Loftus, 2009, Budds, 2004).

Influential examples in the political ecology of water field include Meehan’s work showing how the Mexican state has normalised an apparent contradiction: it tolerates and uses water theft as a strategy from which to control and discipline groups that have not been covered in its water provision service (Meehan, 2013). The way the State *chooses to* pardon or punish those that illegally connect to the water infrastructure is a political decision that best serves to maintain the current order of things and form a distinctive waterscape. Equally, Birkenholtz (2013) has shown that apparent politically ‘neutral’ schemes such as the dissemination of technologies in water management have their own political sidekicks: they can aggravate patterns of inequality in water access.

In sum, the theoretical heights reached by the political ecology literature until now has already been significant. The talent of these researchers has been in making efforts to analyse the particular configurations of social power and water in society. They have been strongly adept in expanding more organic, hybrid views on how to look at water

and social power relations in a more unified, yet holistic framework of thought. But is it possible to argue that they have left out any gaps at all in this field of water politics?

This research makes the case that as in all conceptions of power, social power can be seen as a family of concepts which have parts of same 'DNA' but differentiate themselves in nuanced ways (Clegg and Haugaard, 2009). Depending on which one the researcher chooses, 'social power' as a conceptual tool can illuminate particular aspects about how human beings deploy, influence and achieve outcomes and shape water outcomes.

Social power happens in people's relations with *and through* water (Budds and Sultana, 2013, p. 275). However, the theoretical gaps that begin to emerge from a thorough scan of the literature is that researchers of social power/water relations need operational methods that systematically merge issues of scale (Kohl and Warner, 2004, Norman et al., 2012, Swyngedouw, 1992, Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003), with issues of material/ideational power relations (from Marxist and Gramscian approaches to Foucauldian approaches of power) (Ekers and Loftus, 2008, Loftus, 2009), to those that assign importance to aspects of agency/social structure for example in politics of gender/agency aspects (Moser, 1993, Zwarteveen, 2010, O'Reilly et al., 2009) or in neoliberal socio-natural arrangements (Budds, 2004).

Explaining water poverty: The need for better theories

The above viewpoints and theories are still not adequate enough to deal with the effects of power relations and structures on water access. They do illuminate diverse aspects of the issues at stake in water access but are restrictive enough to exclude the role that power relations play in the way water is governed at several scales and angles of analysis.

As seen in chapter 1, these frameworks may not be as effective to explain 'the full dynamic picture' of what is happening in the terrain of El Salvador's water poverty. For

instance, a Marxist approach may exclude certain social and cultural dynamics that preclude people's water access. Even the more ad hoc political ecology theories like the Liquid Dynamics perspective leave out 'power dynamics' from the centre point of the explanation. They embed power relations as operating in three separated although somewhat overlapping fields: 'social dynamics', 'technological dynamics' and 'environmental processes'. However, power is not made the main explanatory category of analysis.

What's left to know? This research argues that water access as an outcome of power relations has still not been properly explained from a power perspective.

Table 3: Explaining Water Access Deprivation water: Different Viewpoints

Theoretical standpoint or perspective	What causes water deprivation?	Solutions given	Knowledge gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materialist centred viewpoints • The Technocratic-Engineering viewpoints • The Neo-Malthusian viewpoints • The Neoclassical/neoliberal theories • The New Institutional Economics approach • Marxist theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On material means: • Lack of technology; • Population growth; • Lack of Markets; • Lack of Institutions; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve technology allocation • Control population patterns • Commoditize/privatize water • Improve good governance institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of cultural aspects • The role of power • The role of social aspects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development studies viewpoints • From within the Basic Needs framework • Viewpoints of water Rights Based Approach framework • Viewpoints of water in the Capability Approach framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On opportunities, capabilities • On the disadvantages of poverty and notions of illness and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional changes, eg. New laws to make water as a human right compulsory • Improve conditions to enable capabilities to access water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The central role of social power relations as a determinant of social changes and water access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics centred viewpoints • Political Economy • Political Ecology theories • Global Environmental Politics • Water Politics subdomain • Feminist water ecologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an outcome of power relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inserting the ‘political’ into the understandings of what governs water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing more holistic, liquid ways to view water access from local/global scales combined at the same time with material/ideational angles and agency/social structure angles.

We can conclude that the role of power in shaping overall water policy processes and outcomes (formulation, decision-making, implementation, evaluation) still leaves a broad scope for critical analysis placing power at the centre of the framework. This would go beyond just demanding knowledge of the freedoms and rights that are operating in the water access domain for the poorest and most vulnerable. It would instead ask the reverse, for the *causality* of power in the manifestations of clean water exclusion. Furthermore, power would be the explanatory variable of multiple outcomes. This would require the use of a conceptual framework and methodology that examines this problem from a critical holism.

The next section is an attempt to build a theoretical framework of power relations, which are pertinent to explaining El Salvador's water poverty context

Starting premises

The main ideas of this conceptual framework comprise five basic components:

[1] First, people's *social practices* permanently produce and reproduce *power relations*

[2] Second, when these social practices occur in a particular context, they acquire specific properties of that context. In this case, in El Salvador people are living in a globalised *capitalist system* that is increasingly *globalising neoliberalising* and becoming *hegemonic*. These properties within a particular context affect people's social practices and create in turn new kinds of power relations. It is these modified or new types of power relations that shape to a large extent poor people's social practices of water access.

[3] Third, that *poor and vulnerable people, especially women*, are affected the most by these new kinds of power relations. In particular, this means exploring how these are determining their range of possibilities to *sustainably access clean water*.

[4] Fourth, to study how these new power relations affect the way poor people access their clean water, there is a need to be critically holistic and interdisciplinary. This implies

examining not just the power strategies that arise from actors directly linked to the water governance and management sector, but also includes exploring other spaces, actors, rationales 'outside the water box' that are indirectly related . Hence I propose a way to operationalize this by examining three axes or angles in which to 'map' and locate all power strategies (1) the local/global power axis (2) the material/ideational power axis and (3) the social structure/agency power axis

[5] Finally, these new power relations are best seen as the simultaneous cumulative interaction of these three axes of power. People's water access is a social practice dependent on these holistic power relations:

Explaining Power along Three inter-related Axes

To understand this conceptual framework there is a need to briefly explore the general concepts that it uses and the rationale that it follows. This framework uses a general conception of power

Power broadly refers to *what triggers social change*. Here I define 'power' as:

The way social relations shape the fields of action of entities to bring about change or maintain a situation unchanged. These 'entities' include people, their institutions, their social arrangements and other factors used to determine change (or lack of change).

This brief definition is inspired by the idea that when power is exercised "certain options to act are opened up or closed to the actions involved" (Göhler, 2009, p. 36) and Foucault's idea that that when power is exercised humans become 'subjects' and that power 'is all around us' (Foucault, 1982). Thus, it is a conception that uses an understanding of 'power' as a holistic set of mechanisms and strategies —called hereafter 'power strategies'— that arise from social practices which in themselves shape action or inaction in multiple ways. In

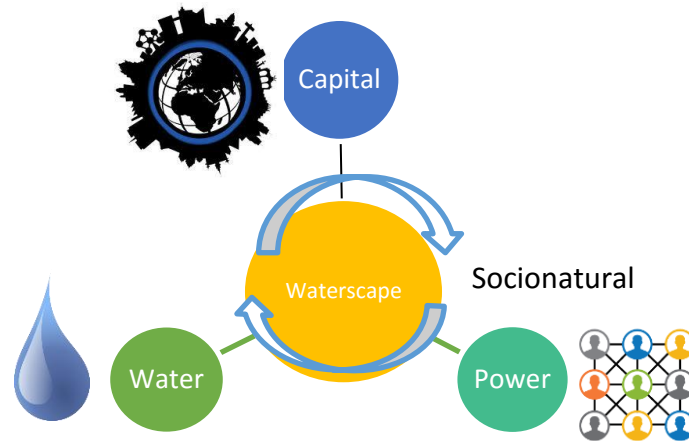
other words, 'power' is used as the total sum of a 'cluster of power strategies' of different natures, forms and sizes that arise from people's social practices and relations. The reason for this diverse array of interpretations is that 'power' is contextual. It localises specific social relations of people in their own time, space and historical circumstances.

The argument put forward in this framework is that these power strategies can be coherently distilled into three axes of power that, capture these irregular and multiple dimensions of power. Social practices —and the corresponding power relations around water access— can then be located and captured in a holistic manner in this procedural space. Finally, it is argued here that because 'power' is contextual— it is constituted by a different set of power strategies in tune with particular time, space and historical circumstances of the social context in which people live— it makes sense to specify that under the aegis of today's globalising, neoliberalising and hegemonic capitalist system *specific set of power relations are affected by this context.*

This view of power merges with human interactions in water governance. In the field of water politics it is compatible with at least two significant concepts:

Waterscapes

Figure 34: Waterscapes

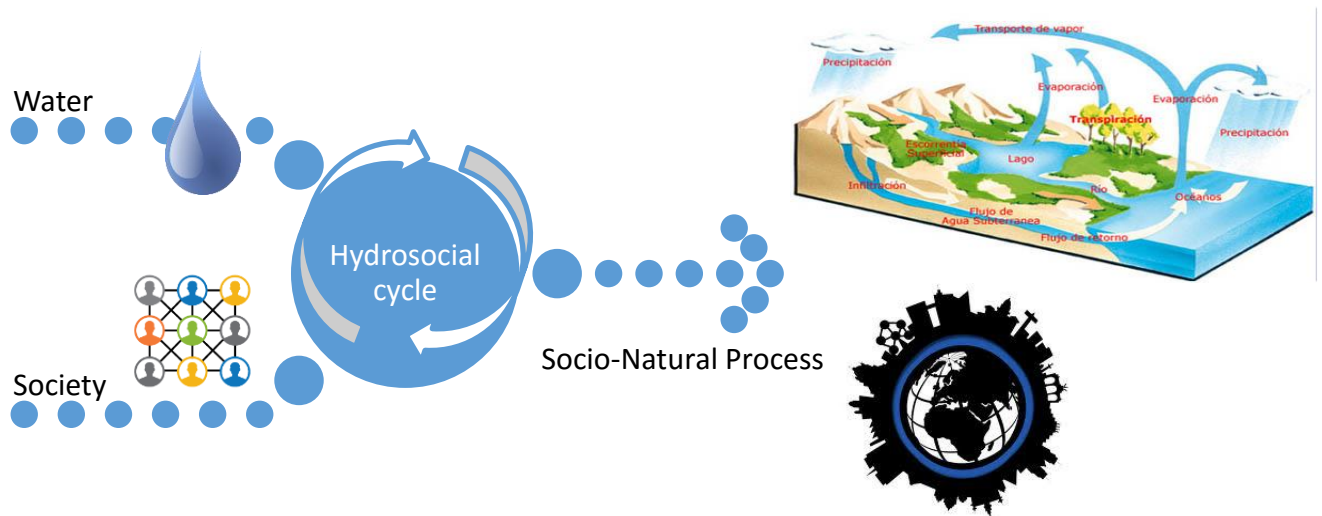


Source: Own construction interpreting (Budds and Hinojosa, 2012, p. 124).

Water politics researchers have so far used the concept of ‘*waterscape*’ to describe a socio-natural unit of “socioecological arrangements” which results from merging flows of “water, power and capital” in a given space and time. Thus, a waterscape is a produced situation in which water’s material and ideational flows shape and are shaped by flows of power relations (Budds and Hinojosa, 2012, p. 124)

In addition, another key concept used by researchers in the water politics arena is that of a ‘*hydro-social cycle*’. This concept stems from the idea that water and society blend in a dynamic and continuous cycle in which each keeps shaping and reshaping the other. In other words, a hydro-social cycle is a co-constitutive “socio-natural process” that evolves and changes “over space and time” (Linton and Budds, 2014a, p. 175). The hydrosocial cycle supersedes the narrow material perspective that derives from the concept of the hydrologic cycle, which fixes itself on a material perspective of water and removes the influence of society from its narrative. The hydrosocial cycle in contrast hinges its meaning on the dialectical premise that society and water are in fact organically connected and changing each other.

Figure 35: Hydrosocial cycle



Source: Own construction interpreting (Linton and Budds, 2014a, p. 175).

To develop these ideas further, outline three axes of power allow us to analyse the dynamics of power in relation to water access.

The Local/Global Power Axis

The first 'axis' or lens looks at power conceptually through the spatial and contextual conditions in which it happens. It argues that human social relations generate relations of 'power' by *inter-acting* to shape the fields of action of others. People practice social relations every day in different contexts, spaces and through time actions and behaviours exercised in relation to others. These practices include following certain socially established conventions or rules within which people have some degree of individual freedom or opportunities for unique behaviour, e.g. business meetings, religious services, birthday parties, ways of talking at conferences or in the family, etc. (Bloor and Bloor, 2007). More specifically, a single instance of a social practice is defined here as a '*social event*' and the people performing it as '*actors*'.

People exercise power relations, through social practices within a particular context. As we have seen from chapter one, the dominant context of El Salvador is subject to the forces and consequences of a neoliberalising, globalising and hegemonic capitalist system. Power interactions occur across different levels because social practices operate at different levels; individual, family, community, country, regional or global scales.

In relation to this, my argument follows the idea that power is a special bundle of power strategies modified deeply by the context in which it sits.

Deconstructing the context of power relations in a globalising, neoliberalising and hegemonic capitalist system means analysing, 1) what globalisation is and what it globalises; 2) what is neoliberalism in a capitalist system; and 3) how and why this globalising and neoliberalising capitalist system is becoming hegemonic.

Power and globalisation

Starting with (1) *'globalisation'* or *"the spread of trans-planetary and progressively supraterritorial connections between people in the world-system"* (Scholte, 2005) we can succinctly say that this is a phenomenon essential to understanding how power shapes the field of possibilities of action for people in the world in systemic ways.

Following Giddens (2002, 2000, 1990, 1984), we are living in a world-system structure that by growing 'inter-connections' and defining new ways of inter-action between people (in intensity and breadth) around the world, is a phenomenon that is *both shaping us as we shape it*. Power here may best be seen as embedded in relations of globality: power relations that occur in trans-scalar or multi-scalar levels that are *transplanetary and supraterritorial*.

As Scholte (Scholte, 2000) clarifies, social phenomena in globalisation can be explained in terms of a world-system dynamic triggered causally by certain aspects of capitalist

production, bureaucratic governance, identity politics, and rationalist knowledge all happening at the same time and which in turn, expands globality. Moreover, this view implies that power is, to use a Foucauldian perspective, 'all around us' happening across all kind of scales that simultaneously occur from the local to the global and vice versa. It is a world not fixed to 'locations', but 'processes' and a world where the 'local' is now only a "geographical point of entry into a world of global flows encircling the planet" (Herod, 2009, p. 101). This pushes us to think 'topologically' about today's social practices and power relations as "individuals, groups and organizations may exercise *power at-a-distance* through a cross-cutting mix of distanced and proximate actions" (Italics emphasised here Narayan et al., 2009, p. 158). Such *globalising* world-system is argued by Scholte to be reconfiguring power relations *spatially* in a dynamic and constantly changing reconfiguration of the geography, economy, polity, identity and the knowledge of people (Scholte, 2005).

This inter-spatiality of the connections and relations between people coexist with older forms and notions of capital, the state, the nation and modern rationality. They still have partial explanatory force to describe aspects that control and affect individuals in society. However, they are rapidly becoming secondary to describe the larger phenomenon of globalisation and power relations in society. This concept has implications for the way we conceive power dynamics in the world: people's relations are affected by new spatial relations of globality and *acquire new powers* to shape the fields of possibility of others by inter-acting in novel manners. Normatively, it implies at least two core consequences for our analysis of power:

Firstly, to explore power in the contemporary world, one has to necessarily explore *the interrelations of human beings across spaces* that go beyond the territorial in 'topological ways'. A conception of power that does not touch upon this contemporary phenomenon of inter-spatiality and inter-territoriality with multi-scalar analyses of globalisation is doomed

to lose explanatory muscle itself. Analysing power relations in water access in El Salvador needs to take this into account.

Secondly, that the nature of these inter-relationships in the systemic-world structure is multidimensional, multicultural and multi-scale. Hence researchers should necessarily be interdisciplinary and with a focus on the inter-linkages of scale of social practices from macro to micro and vice versa. —See for example (Giddens, 2002, Lechner and Boli, 2004, Robertson, 2007).

Power in a globalising, neoliberal & hegemonic capitalist system

Here we analyse (2) what kind of system is predominantly being globalised (the capitalist system) and what particular type or model of capitalism is being globalised (neoliberalism). The argument here is that the neoliberal capitalist system is arguably the dominant trend in the contemporary world and this has profound implications for power relations today.

Capitalism at its core may be defined quite simply as a system in which people organize their economic and social practices based on privately owned means of production creating commodities (goods or services) for profit in markets. Note though, that capitalism as an analytical category, just as power, is also a contested concept (Grassby, 1999, p. 1). However, there is little resistance to the notion that it implies an explanation of a system that has at least a: (a) private ownership of the means of production; (b) a market, that is, the voluntary purchase of goods, services and factors of production such as land, labour and capital through the mechanism of prices and wages; and (c) it has to have the profit motive as its driving force (Tormey, 2004, p. 10, Bowles, 2006, p. 9)

According to many theorists of capitalism that range from Karl Marx with his work “Capital: Criticism of Political Economy” (1867-1894) to David Harvey (Harvey and Marx, 2010, Harvey, 2010, Harvey, 2006a, Harvey, 2006c), the central driving force of capitalism is found in the exploitation and alienation of labour in relation to capital. This means that human beings become the means of production and not the ends themselves: the priority is only

towards the accumulation of capital of those who own it. This systemic process converts itself into a never-ending spiral of accumulation which in turn produces at its base an uneven geographical development of power: it produces winners (the rich, the powerful) and losers (the poor, the excluded, and the less powerful) structurally.

In other words, the nature of this world-system is that it produces and reproduces a social structure of accumulation through society that goes far beyond the limits of the economy; see for example, (Nitzan and Bichler, 2009, Peet, 1991, Stiglitz and Channel, 2005). The nature of our contemporary globalisation is partly explained or caused by this drive for capital. This includes the way we view reality across scales of analysis that makes us see the unit of an individual linked with its totality: the world-society.

The endless thirst for capital, has produced three key elements relevant for our analysis of power: 1) novel relations of power and inequality in global society, 2) a rise of a transnational capitalist class as the hegemonic class worldwide and ; 3) the rise of transnational states apparatus that become vehicles or means to realize their interests (Robinson, 2008, Robinson, 2004).

In addition, capitalism as a system is not static, it changes over time (Bowles, 2006). As such, the contemporary and hegemonic version of the capitalist system today is defined as 'neoliberal' in nature (Bourdieu, 1998, Harvey, 2005a, Treanor, 2006). This in short means that we have a version of capitalism — neoliberal capitalism — that is more 'muscular' and 'aggressive' in its approach to the accumulation of capital. It is a kind of capitalism that essentially promotes the expansion of a market-based approach to all possible spaces of society. It does so by hyper-liberalising markets and the opening up new spaces that could yield higher possibilities for the maximization of capital in favour of those who own 'capital': the transnational capitalist class.

Power and Hegemony

In terms of policy-making arenas, neoliberalism is relevant for the study of power within contemporary capitalism because this type of capitalism has become hegemonic in the world. The reason is that this mode of capitalism thrives to promote a transfer of control of the economy from public to the private sector. Furthermore, it can be seen as a hegemonic project itself, see (Peet, 2003, Harvey, 2006b, Peet, 2002).

Inspired by the work of scholars such as Hayek(1944) and Milton Friedman (1980), historically the rise of neoliberalism has been astonishing. In Latin America and the rest of the world, it has come to be a powerful all-encompassing ideological and political-economic program designed to stream line capitalism into more 'efficient' forms of capital accumulation (Robinson, 2008). This has been quite different from other types of capitalism that relied more heavily on the public sector: e.g. the welfare state capitalisms (Roy and Steger, 2010, Gamble, 2006, Harvey, 2005a). The belief was that this could produce more efficient 'good governance' and improve the economic health of the nation.

The neoliberal core 'recipe' came from John Williamson's "Washington Consensus"(Roy and Steger, 2010) which was a list of policy proposals of new ways of liberalization of more spaces for the markets. It was called a 'consensus' as it gained rapid approval among the Washington-based international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Williamson's list included ten processes that would enhance liberalization: 1) Fiscal policy; 2) Public spending; 3) Tax reform; 4) Interest rates; 5) Trade liberalization; 6) Liberalization of the 'capital account'; 7) Privatization of state enterprises; 8) Deregulation of market and financial institutions; 9) Legal securities for property rights and 10) New ways of financing capital

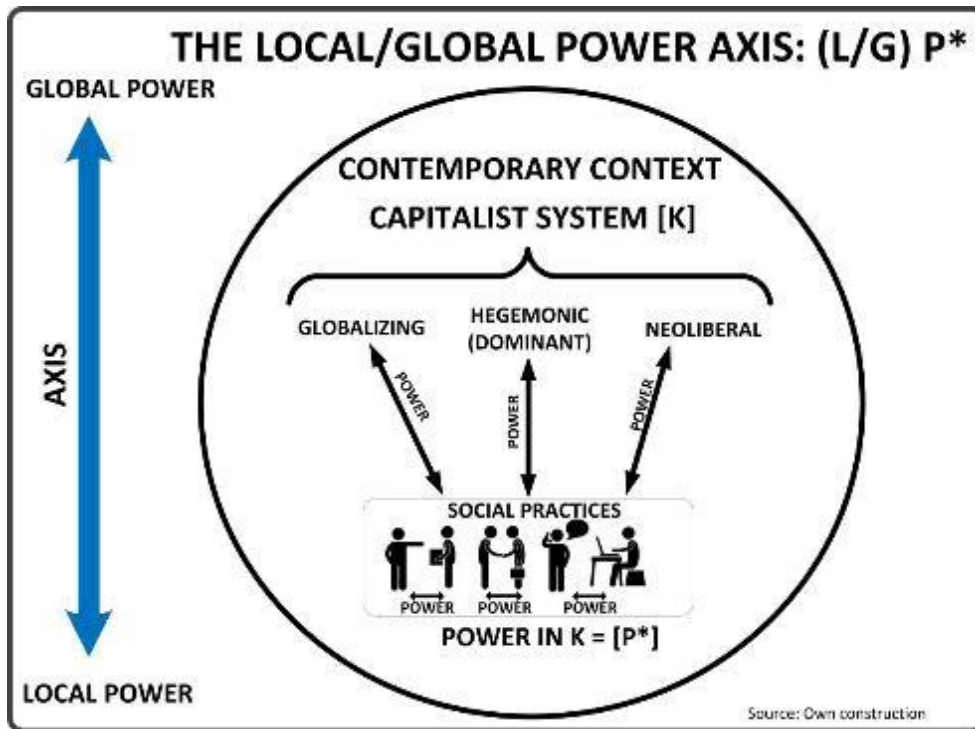
Furthermore, neoliberalism being a mode of capitalism, as Roy and Steger (2010) illustrate, has adapted itself not just to the particularities of the global level, but across scales to the local level. In other words, it also has not been monolithic; it has been adapted, tropicalized,

re-cooked and flavoured to suit specific “environments, problems and opportunities” (p.9). This is why it has been so successful as an ideology, discourse and way of reorganising social practices. This means that it is best to talk at local levels of particular kinds of *neoliberalism*, in plural and when encapsulating them all of neoliberalism in singular.

New power relations

In conclusion: power in local/global spaces is constituted structurally by a configuration of a *globalising hegemonic neoliberal capitalist system*. This system is as Scholte (2005) calls it a kind of ‘*hypercapitalism*’ and outlines the structural *possibilities and constraints of power* across scales in a local/global dimension. This means that the nature of this world-system as structure is both enabling (empowering) and limiting (disempowering) people’s possibilities for action. It has become hegemonic as the way society is being ordered because it has progressively colonized almost all modes of governance and ‘the rules of the game’ of the world. These are, in other words, *the way things work* and we ought to give a structural and meaningful conception of power that draws on this in order to be capable of explaining today’s social practices.

Figure 36: The Local/Global Power Axis

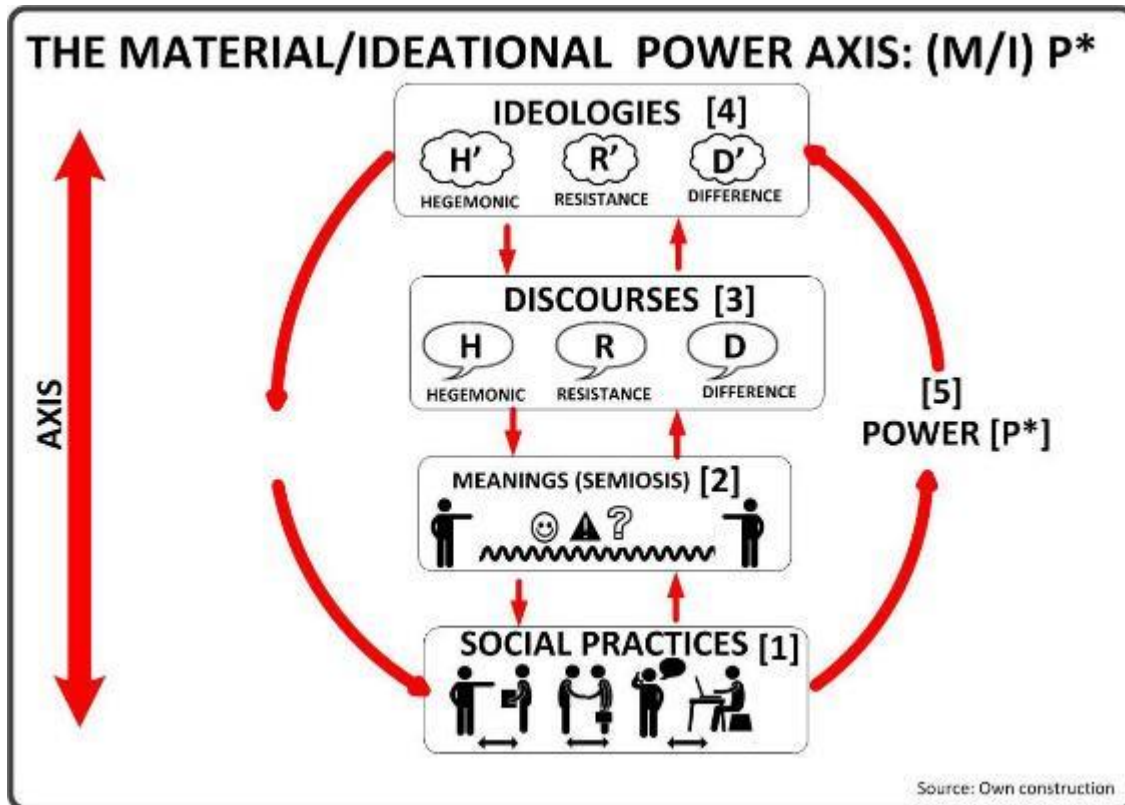


The Material/Ideational Power Axis

The second 'axis' of new power relations in this examines the relations of power that arise from the materiality of social practices and its ideational manifestations. This section will argue that one can analyse in-depth case studies capturing the dynamics of power along its material and ideational levels, inspired by the perspective of materialist based perspectives based on *Neomarxist* (Harvey, 2006b, Glassman, 2006, Harvey, 2001, Nitzan and Bichler, 2009, Robinson, 2008, Robinson, 2004, Swyngedouw, 1996, Wallerstein, 2004) and *NeoGramscian approaches* (Peet, 2002, Peet et al., 2004, Gramsci, 1971, Mouffe, 1979) that bridge the gap with the ideational side of social practices together with *Critical Discourse*

Analysis for its ideational analysis of social practices (Bloor and Bloor, 2007, Fairclough, 1995, Jäger, 2001, Meyer, 2001, Wodak and Meyer, 2001).

Figure 37: The Material/Ideational Power Axis



In this material/ideational power axis the underlying rationale is based on a circular and holistic view of power. Here we analyse how social relations engender particular material social practices that not only distil material power relations but also have also simultaneously embedded in them discursive and ideational power 'flows'. In this process, social relations *shape the fields of action of entities to bring about change or maintain a situation unchanged.*

Following this rationale, four conceptual elements are brought into the axis and deployed in a circular and dialectic process of 'power mutations' that convert material power into ideational power and vice versa (see fig. 37):

[1] Social practices

The starting point is the idea of social practices. As has already discussed, social practices are human actions and behaviours exercised in relation to others. They are the ways in which people interact in society. These practices include following certain socially established conventions or rules within which people have some degree of individual freedom or opportunities for unique behaviour, e.g. business meetings, religious services, birthday parties, ways of talking at conferences or in the family, etc. (Bloor and Bloor, 2007). Now, it is also true that most social practices involve knowledge of linguistic and discourse conventions in whole, or in part. For example, some people may practice water ceremonies in drought stricken areas which involve specific ways of behaviour and language (prayers or dancing for example). Such knowledge and skills required to participate in social practices are part of a 'socially shared knowledge'. The origin of it may be fixed in experience or contact with other people, or through specific instructions, educational processes or training. Social practices are often persistent within a particular culture over time, but they are constantly evolving.

A single instance of a social practice is defined as a '*social event*' and the people performing it are defined as '*actors*'. Furthermore, when it is solely done through verbal interaction or language-based interaction with others (e.g. a committee meeting) this is known as a '*speech event*' (Bloor and Bloor, 2007).

[2] Semiosis

These activities, by their own intrinsic nature are always semiotic, that is, they always in some way or another produce *meaning* through symbols, visual images, body language, as well as language (Fairclough, 2001, p. 123).

[3] Discourse

Furthermore, these 'meaning-making' (semiotic) manifestations arise from social practices encapsulated in forms of image, text and speech through time constituting *systems of meaning* or what is called discourse. (Fairclough, 1991, Dijk, 1997, Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 2005).

There are different types of discourse and ideology. We can categorize them as:

- ☑ Discourses that are dominant or hegemonic which feed on dominant ideologies
- ☑ *Discourses that counteract or as 'resist'* to the dominant ones (counter-hegemonic) and which feed on ideologies of resistance
- ☑ *Discourses of difference*, i.e. that instead of being antagonistic to the hegemonic ones, they provide a 'third option' with x, y or z alternatives (feeding on ideologies of difference)

The levels of discourse are continuously interacting and changing through different *genres* (editorials, e-mails, etc.) and *styles* (rhetorical, religious, etc.) that are aimed at influencing behaviour by spreading *social imaginaries* and normative knowledge to a society.

[4] Ideology

Many ideologies intersect and feed these discourses An ideology is at its core, a hub of ideas that constructs a meaningful 'totalitarian' understanding of reality by providing a persuasive explanation of *how it all works, how things should be, how it all came to be like this, and where we are going*. Thus, an ideology provides a guide for action and for distinguishing truth from falsehood, valid arguments from invalid, and more often than not, "some overriding belief, whether that be God, Providence, or History, to which adherents may make a final appeal when challenged." (McLean and McMillan, 2003) This is why social

groups always try to nourish discourses with ideologies, because their normative features help them further their interests.

[5] Power

The notion of power in the context of El Salvador is omnipresent in this framework, insofar as discourses influence behaviour by building and disseminating an external structure that frames the thoughts and actions of individual or collective actors (Foucault, 1974, 1978). These frames or 'discursive formations' are manifestations of power preceding and enabling the agency of individuals as they stamp "actions and objects with meaning" and bestow them "with morally charged identities" (Rossi, 2004, quoting Foucault 1991:94). In other words, by means of this cycle of:

Social practices > semiosis > discourses > ideologies > discourses > semiosis > social practices;

Social relations shape the fields of action of entities to bring about change or maintain a situation unchanged. These 'entities' include people, their institutions, their social arrangements and other factors used to determine change (or lack of change).

From ideational to material power: ideologies and discourses

Taking into account these last five elements and their circular and dialectical cycle in social relations, we can begin to understand how power works at the material and ideational levels simultaneously. By deploying and observing these elements in an axis, we can understand the process that shapes the 'fields of possibility' for action of people. Both material and ideational mechanisms are an outcome of dialectical processes of these

elements. Hence the conceptual need here is to ‘deconstruct’ the way ideologies —loaded with their own discourses— shape people’s behaviours to serve particular interests.

Discourses *mean* power. Starting from the ideational side of the axis, according to Derrida (1976, 1978) what is relevant when studying power, is to explore the *philosophy of meaning* constructed by human beings through their social practices. In order to understand this philosophy of meaning we need to look at how discourses disseminated in texts, speeches and other media of communication become ideologies. Hence, ideational power dynamics can be detected through the critical examination of people’s discursive practices.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a conceptual framework that best meets enables ‘deconstruction’ of discourses and detection how they enforce ideologies (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). In line with a postmodern Foucauldian thinking, CDA understands that systems of meaning arise from social practices and thus make humans subject to a superstructure of power that is operating ‘*all around us*’ (Foucault et al., 1979, Foucault, 1978, Foucault, 1974).

Discourse can be used as a ‘*weapon of mass construction*’ or ‘*destruction*’ to attack or defend particular patterns of behaviour. As any weapon, their effectiveness depends on who ‘shoots’ and at what target (see for example, Fairclough, 2001). Discourses can have different meanings depending on which ideology is more predominant in a particular context (see Fischer (2003, p. 77). For example, discourses framing water as an economic good are marginally understood in places where access has been governed by other traditions and societal rules, e.g. indigenous water rights (Boelens, 2008b).

People and their organizations also have differential capabilities to generate discourse. Thus they have differential effectiveness in their ideational power. The question is, as Fischer (2003, p. 80) asks “How do different discourses *position or subjugate* participants in a communicative exchange? Does it matter where it comes from, e.g., experts or citizens, politicians or businessmen? If there is inequality in the *discursive capabilities* of people —

determined by access to knowledge or other contextual aspects e.g. freedom of speech—, there will also be differential access to certain kinds of discourses. The unequal distribution of *discursive capabilities* across a society at the ideational level reproduces simultaneously unequal relations of power at the material level of social practices (Hajer, 1995, Kothari, 2005) Fischer (2003, p. 80). What matters is to draw evidence on how some discourses are included or excluded through the varying degrees of democratic spaces in society. This is crucial for understanding how discourses become the *means* for power.

Ideologies that indicate which knowledge is the most legitimate or relevant for a certain context are the most effective means for power: e.g. some discourses or knowledge are predominantly accepted as valid compared to others when debating whether or not to privatize water services. Discursive practices that draw on dominant ideologies are more effective as devices of power in social practices (Fischer, 2003, p. 83). For example, a discourse can become hegemonic if it is 'in tune' with a dominant ideology. One example is how discourses legitimising water privatization can become hegemonic by drawing on a hegemonic ideology such as *neoliberalism*. Hence winning the battle of ideas against discourses and ideologies of resistance or of difference is also a matter of how best to disseminate discourses through persuasive means in the social practices of a particular society. Hegemonic ideologies and discourse can always be contested, despite their dominance. Competing for dominance gives rise to 'orders of discourse' and ideology.

Discourses are effective thanks to their use of 'storylines'. They transform complex ideas into simple stories of collective wisdom (Fischer, 2003, p. 86). Storylines transfer in a digestible and easy-to-understand unity "social constructions of particular events". In so doing, they either reframe or retell particular aspects of the event in question, or marginalize and hide certain actors, tensions, problems or paradoxes inherent to the story (Fischer, 2003, pp. 86-87). This way, discourses spread more easily and have greater probabilities of becoming hegemonic when mainstreamed as *legitimising common sense*, sustaining relations of domination (Fairclough, 1992; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

Accordingly, a discourse becomes *hegemonic* when clustered with certain ideologies that successfully dominate the discursive fields of a society. Such discourses then become the *prevailing common sense* formed in culture, diffused by civic institutions, actively shaping values, customs, and spiritual ideas and inducing “spontaneous” consent to the status quo” (Peet, 2002, p. 56). Following Gramsci (1971), the concept of hegemony means that “one social class exerts power over others beyond that accounted by coercion or law” (McLean and McMillan, 2003) If this happens, hegemony could be seen as a special kind of ‘*violence symbolique*’ (Bourdieu, 1998) that elites of a dominant class direct towards others, as it refers to a colonization of ideas in invisible ‘battlefields’ of consciousness (Cox, 1983, Peet, 2002, 2003).

Another angle of hegemony is its use of *rhetoric* or "the art of effective expression and the persuasive use of language" (Nordquist, 2006). This element is fundamental in order to make discourses spread and reach hegemony. Like so, one of the most commonly used structures of argumentation in rhetorical language is arguably the *enthymeme*²⁶ (Heracleous, 2006)

From material to ideational power: AIM complexes & hegemony

²⁶ Essentially, an enthymeme is a deductive argument structured in three parts (a characteristic known as a syllogism) which has an unstated assumption that must be true for the premises to lead to the conclusion. In an enthymeme, part of the argument is missing because it is assumed.

A *hegemonic Academic-Institutional Media (AIM) complex* is basically a network of 'centres of persuasion' (prestigious institutions, public personalities, the media, etc.) that united by a dominant overarching ideology coherently enact and disseminate discourses to lock-in their own privileged interests in a certain status quo. (Peet, 2002)

These centres of persuasion or '*factories of discourse*' represent the voices of the elite in its many forms (academic, economic, institutional, cultural) as an orchestrated 'chorus' or *composite structure*²⁷ A classic example of an AIM complex is precisely the network of academic institutions, public personalities and media resources that helped to make *neo-liberalism* today's global hegemonic ideology.

A vast array of scholars have shown how this ideological hegemony was achieved by centres of persuasion generating and disseminating discourses loaded with narrative storylines, rhetorical uses of language, and semiotic inseminations of 'scientific' and prescriptive knowledge²⁸.

These included the back-up of:

²⁷ Originating from Gramsci Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers., the notion of 'complex' acknowledges the heterogeneity of discourses and social actors fighting for the same ideology with different angles and approaches.

²⁸ For example see Harvey Harvey, D. (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, Harvey, D. (2006b) 'Neo-liberalism as creative destruction', *Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography*, 88 B (2), pp. 145-158., Peet Peet, R. (2002) 'Ideology, Discourse, and the Geography of Hegemony: From Socialist to Neoliberal Development in Postapartheid South Africa', *Antipode*, 34(1), pp. 54-84, Peet, R. (2003) *Unholy trinity : the IMF, World Bank and WTO*. London: Zed Books., Chomsky Chomsky, N. (2004) 'Hegemony or survival : America's quest for global dominance', *Penguin books*. London: Penguin Books, Herman, E. S. and Chomsky, N. (2002) 'Manufacturing consent : the political economy of the mass media'. New York, N.Y. : Pantheon Books, Chomsky, N. (1997) *Democracy in a neoliberal order : doctrines and reality*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

a) *Prestigious academic communities* like Friederich Hayek's Austrian School of Economics in Vienna; Milton Friedman's Chicago "Boys" of Chicago University or the London School of Economics;

b) *Powerful institutions* like the American Heritage Foundation, Hoover Institute, American Enterprise Institute;

c) *Public personalities*: the US president, Ronald Reagan, the UK prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, and d) *dominant media networks* like the main newspapers, TV and radio stations.

AIM COMPLEX AS A COMPOSITE SET OF FACTORIES OF DISCOURSE

<p>[A]: Academic activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“Scientific” Knowledge discourse</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ scholars from elite institutions, (Knowledge elite) ▪ ie. leading universities with great capital resources ▪ Academic papers, books, reports, articles ▪ speeches, conferences, ▪ expert interviews, policy prescriptions, ▪ academic blogs and websites
<p>[I]: Institutional, Economic practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Business discourse</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ economic agents and institutions of business and financial elites (Economic elite) ▪ i.e. business federations, chambers of commerce, etc. ▪ Dominant media networks ▪ entrepreneurial language, ▪ narratives of business sections in newspapers, ▪ interviews, commentary shows, etc.
<p>[M]: Communications practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Cultural discourse</i> 	<p>(Media elite)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ie. dominant networks of newspapers, radio, television, internet, ▪ written, visual or multimedia language communications, ▪ editorials, interviews, articles, music, pictures, etc.

Source: Own construction on the basis of Peet (2002: 58)

Figure 38 : AIM complex as a composite of factories of discourse

The AIM complex determine with their discourses the deliberative struggles that arise when advocating, designing, or implementing a certain policy. (Fischer, 1995, 2003)

In this way, with their discursive power at work, they filter, foster and mould particular sets of policies or, alternatively marginalize and stop others in the development agenda. For example, water governance in free trade agreements may illustrate an example of an AIM complex at work, shaping the policy-making process, at every one of its different *discursive phases* of technical-analytical, contextual, systemic, and ideological nature.

Table 4: Discursive phases that arise in the construction of a policy

DISCURSIVE PHASES THAT ARISE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A POLICY			
Levels	Discursive Phases	Content	Organizing Question
First Order Evaluation	1. Technical-analytical discourse	Program Verification [Outcomes]	Does the program objective empirically fulfil its stated objective (s)?
	2. Contextual Discourse	Situational validation [Objectives]	Is the program objective (s) relevant to the problem in question?
Second Order Evaluation	3. Systems discourse	Societal vindication [Goals]	Does the policy goal have instrumental or contributive value for the society as a whole?
	4. Ideological discourse	Social choice [Values]	Do the fundamental ideals or ideology(s) that organize the accepted social order provide a basis for a legitimate resolution of conflicting judgments?

Source: Own construction on the basis of (Fischer 1995: 18)

The Social Structure/Agency Power Axis

“If man is shaped by his environment, his environment must be made human” (Marx and Engels, 1956)

Finally, we explore the third axis of power: the social structure/agency (S/A) relations in social practices.

Here we deploy a conception of power that arises from looking at individuals in society either as individual entities that use their agency to advance their interests and shaping their own possibilities of action, or as the causality of a social structure coming from institutional arrangements.

Explaining power from social structures to agency

Giddens's structuration theory (Giddens, 1979, Giddens, 1981) states that social structures start from the idea that social practices, in their inter-actions and inter-relations, produce frames or 'structures' of social arrangements that act as a 'medium' of action. These structures are and remain virtual as much of what constitutes the idea of 'structure' exists as a set of capabilities "ready to be drawn on by agents engaged in particular activities" (Stones, 2009, p. 91). In this sense, the production of norms, rules, facts and other social arrangements become a space in the memory or minds of the actors that internalize patterns of behaviour. In Giddens's words:

"Structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution" (Giddens, 1979, p. 5).

In this sense, in the exercise of power from social structures, the capabilities of the individuals 'to do' or 'to be' are limited by their own circular influence to the structure. The structure shapes us as we shape it. An extreme view on the role of social structure, but one that exemplifies what kind of power it exerts, is given by Karl Marx:

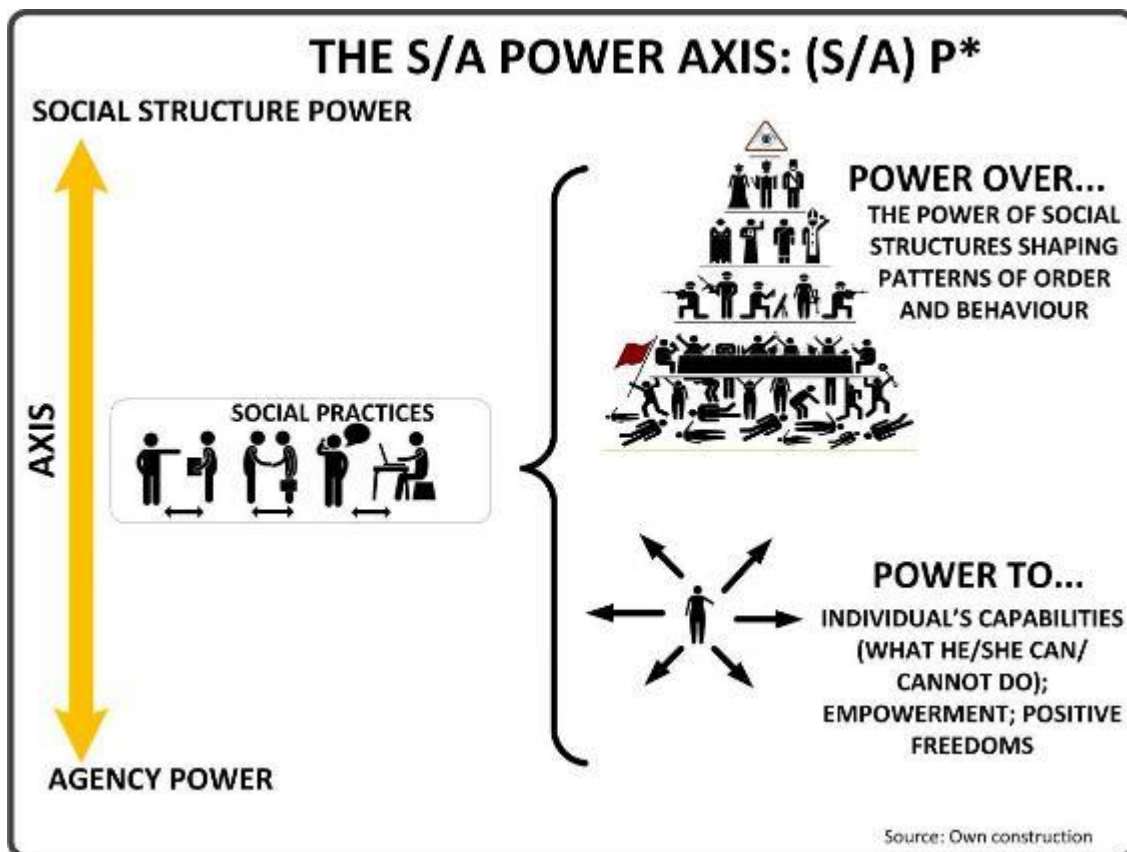
"[M]en make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1978 [1859], p. 595).

However, this Marxist view of social structure overrides the power of the agents themselves to shape their own destiny. This thesis argues instead that starting from the view of social structure, a social structural power in does exist, but in combination with notions of agency. Taking into account the nature of the social practices occurring in a neoliberalising, hegemonic and globalising capitalist system what is true is that this social structure does not hold *everything nor determine everything*. There are spaces that react differently or independently from the dominant social structure (e.g. cultural norms in the informal

sectors of society; solidarity based relations; religious fundamentalisms, etc.) (see for example, (Olesen, 2005, Montoya et al., 2005).

One useful way to look at the social structure/agency power relations is to associate notions of 'power over' others in the way we conceive social structure and as 'power to' when we consider the agency of individuals (see fig.39)

Figure 39: The S/A Power Axis



Explaining power from agency to social structures

However attractive it may be to rest the case on how social structures shape the fields of possibility of others, the conception is incomplete without a notion of agency. Here it is

useful to think of the link with the previous idea of social structure by using the word 'capabilities' —inspired in Sen's capability approach (Sen, 1990, Sen, 1999) and its link to notions of positive freedoms and the idea of power as 'empowerment'.

To explain a person's capability to access water we can use a power perspective. From a perspective of structural power relations, we would certainly assume that the 'context' matters to shape the individual's way in which he/she succeeds in attaining water of sufficient quality, quantity and regularity to secure life. From the point in which water is a natural resource to the point that the individual drinks clean water a myriad of factors affect and influence this simple, yet basic outcome.

Power does not only happen by means of a totalitarian social structure shaping the outcomes of the individual, but also simultaneously, the individual uses his/her agency (and the bundle of capabilities that he/she may have) to secure water for life. This means that both S/A power interactions happen at the same time.

However, how do we detect how power in social structure and agency arises in social practices? How do we engage and study it? This conceptual framework argues that we should focus in this axis on procedural power-freedoms that both social structure and agency provide. Consider for example the advocates of neoliberal policies in El Salvador. By breaking down the state into a minimalist body of governance, privatising it and excluding its responsibility in provisioning clean water access for all its citizens, a social structure arises that excludes the poor from having enough capabilities to access *clean* water.

Berlin defined *negative freedom* as a '*freedom from interference*', a state of absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints so that one is "not being prevented from choosing" (Berlin, 1958, p. 7). *Positive freedom*, on the other hand, would be, so he argued, the kind of freedom that arises when one is capable *to be* and *to do*²⁹ what one chooses in one's own life, having *control* over one's own decisions or actions and therefore realising one's fundamental purpose.

Interestingly, from a power perspective these two definitions can be used to refer to the idea of power. Freedom from interference (the dominant neoliberal conception) is giving rise to new structural powers to transnational corporations that seek to govern water resources for their own benefit without interference from the state, citizens, social norms, etc. Structurally this can be seen in El Salvador. Now, from an agency perspective, to have the freedom of self-realization or self-determination, the positive freedom to act to achieve one's own goals brings us to the idea of capabilities. A power perspective would necessarily take into account the multiple dimensions of capabilities that individuals have to go from 1-7 of the procedural steps to access water in a given context.

In conclusion, in this axis, the centrality of power lies in the idea of joining social structure and agency in the interplay and construction of capabilities, freedoms and power for action. A *broader* political-economic-cultural action should be taken when considering just the load of materialist concepts of social structures. Is there anybody to blame when impersonal economic or social forces affect water access? The question would be how the entities responsible for providing equality of capability to access clean water surpass the common

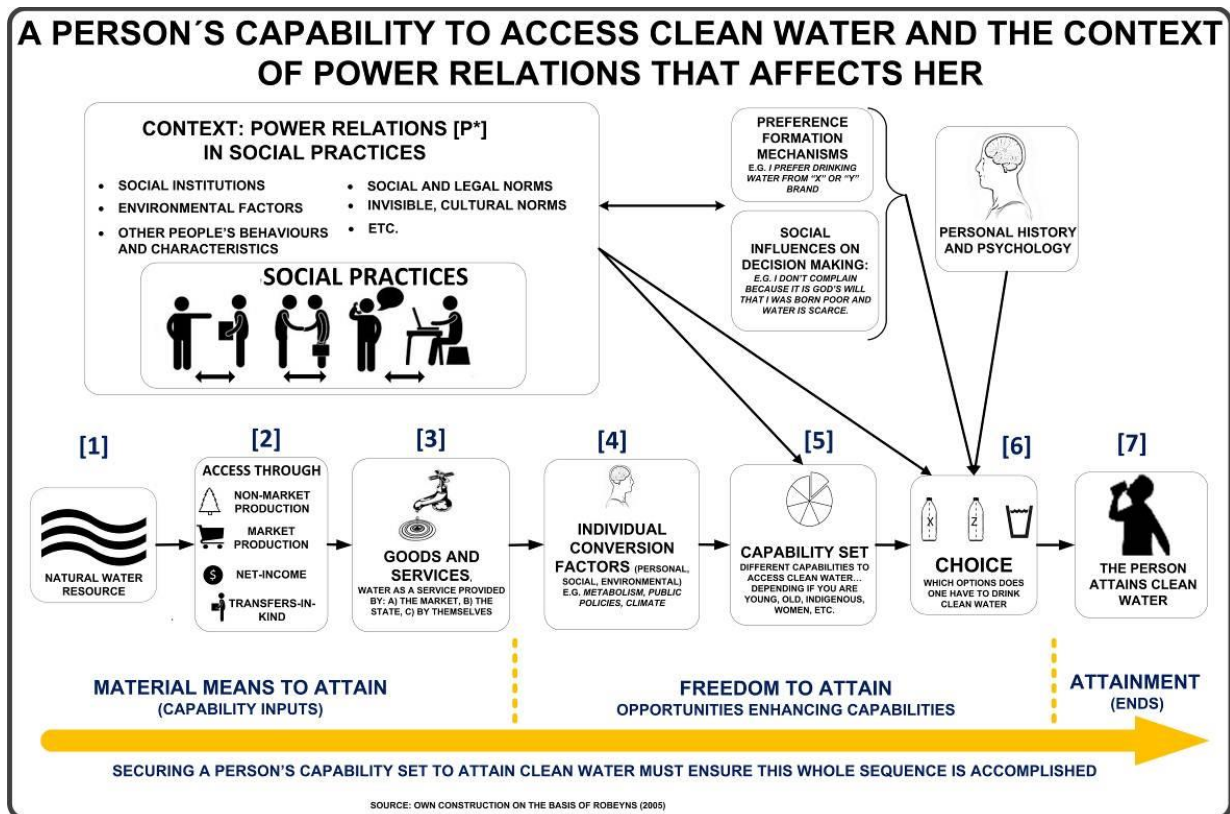
²⁹ Sen, A. K. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. 2001 edn. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

negative freedom limitations of neo-liberal views. The idea would be to bring justice and equality of capabilities in such way that it would surpass common neo-liberal views. (DeMartino, 2000, Sen, 1992, Nussbaum, 2006)

Taking into account development ethics advocating for more egalitarian or morally responsible types of freedoms (Gasper, 2004, Gasper and van Staveren, 2003), and CDA's positioning on the 'feet of the poor and disadvantaged' (Fairclough, 2001), this research understands 'real freedoms' to be those basic capabilities 'to do' and 'to be' that are experienced and that people find important for their lives through democratic deliberation processes. (Sen, 1999) The concern with the *wider positive freedoms* that the negativists of freedom (i.e. neoliberal-utilitarian types) leave out.

To understanding the context of people living in El Salvador in terms of real freedoms is to examine a general picture not just of their structural 'negative freedoms' (e.g. the absence of obstacles, like less income taxes) which are *means* for achieving well-being but of those that enhance their capabilities to lead the life people democratically cherish in values that go beyond the notion of freedom (i.e. solidarity, justice) that were expanded or contracted by their development processes (positive sense of freedom) and the different dimensions within them (Sen, 1999, Alkire, 2002).

Figure 40: A Person's Capability to Access Clean Water in a Power Context



Integrating the Axes of Power

If we now see these three axes of power as three cameras directed to different aspects of a social practice, that is, poor people's clean water access, we can succinctly say:

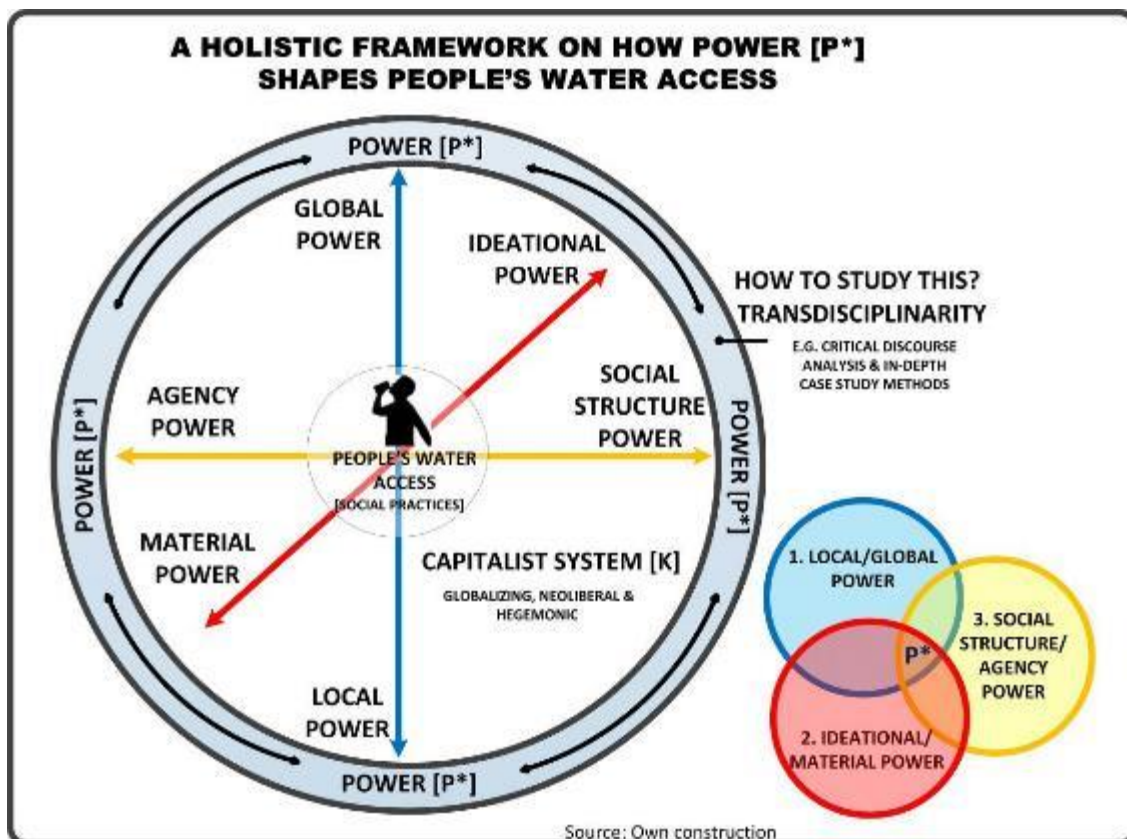
- That as seen in Figure 41 (below), a holistic framework of power, that is, in the context of should be taken into account for power analyses in water access.
- That these axes of power all capture different bits of information from the same actions in social practice.

Thus, its integration is coherent and helps to refine a broader, three dimensional and more colourful picture of what is happening at the level of power relations in a given context of social relations.

The thread that unites these three axes is an in-depth case study of social practices, together with a thorough use of Critical Discourse Analysis and a focus on capabilities to consider social structure and agency together with the other dimensions.

In sum, Sustainable Clean Water access is a function (a dependent variable) of Power interactions shaped in a very large part by the globalising, neoliberal and hegemonic capitalist system.

Figure 41: A Holistic Framework of Power



Conclusion

The present chapter has tried to revise and synthesize two necessary theoretical pillars of this thesis.

This thesis built its first pillar by analysing the current academic literature exploring the water/social power nexus. Through this endeavour, the chapter explored the key shortcomings that such literature shows in trying to understand how people's social power and water interrelate and shape each other.

The academic literature section discovered that on the one hand, most of the current dominant epistemic communities in water governance around the world make only marginal use of social power to explain the fate of poor people's water access.

On the other hand, however, an emerging and growing academic community of political ecology researchers are now developing tighter theoretical frameworks between social power and water.

Nevertheless, current frameworks emerging from the latter scholarly community have yet to approach the problem from some key angles. For example, academic literature exploring realities like that of El Salvador are still in need of exploring the interrelated systemic features of neoliberal capitalism and water control. In particular, the chapter argues that the problem of how to best approach the water/social power nexus in a system that has local/global, material/ideational, agency/social structure ramifications has not yet been explored in a single tight, yet holistic analysis. This thesis makes the case that without a holistic view of those systemic ramifications of neoliberal capitalism and its globalised influence on human affairs, and therefore, on all power relations affecting water governance; many strategies, tactics and actions that people use to influence each other to gain water control may go on undetected.

The second pillar explored in this chapter discusses and proposes how to construct a conceptual framework that addresses and effectively overcomes the gaps and shortcomings of the present literature. Such framework would have to, firstly, grasp how human relations weave power relations through dialectical relations with water. Secondly, it would have to illuminate how social power does in fact grow or diminish depending on the strategies and tactics people use against others in every day social practices related to water. Thirdly, the framework would have to consider how all social practices occur within a specific context that is globalised and where neoliberalism is hegemonic. For that, it is imperative to account that El Salvador today is a society completely immersed in the social practices of a capitalist system reflecting three key properties: it is subject to globalisation currents, it is ideationally neoliberal, and such ideological realm has become hegemonic. In this context, people's power relations acquire new properties of power.

In other words, this chapter constructs a conceptual framework where social power relations are holistically modified and modifying social practices through three axes of social power. The axes of social power proposed here are: (a) a local/global axis of power, (b) a an ideational/material axis of power, and (c) an agency/social structure axis of power. The framework proposed here entails examining people's power/water relations through social practices that occur simultaneously along these three axes or dimensions of social power. To see how to do this, the next three chapters will explore the case of people's power/water relations in El Salvador along these three axes.

4. MARGINAL COLLECTIVES: STRATEGIES OF RESILIENCE



Introduction: Poor people's Power to Access Water

"In El Salvador we are not equal in the political sense: we [Salvadoreans] do not believe that all citizens are valid interlocutors when seeking national agreements (...) the country needs an agreement to transform, because the direction in which this country is going is not in the direction of human development" Carolina Rovira, Director of the UNDP's Human Development Report in El Salvador (Rovira, 2013)

The last two chapters laid out the historical and conceptual landscape in which this thesis stands. Chapter 3 showed how Salvadoreans have suffered throughout their history major social traumas and extreme social inequalities. People thirsty for change and social justice have sparked passionate protests, civil disobedience and even guerrilla movements (Almeida, 2011). In the name of social justice, people have fought and died. A cruel civil war

ended in 1992 with more than 75,000 deaths leaving visible scars in Salvadorean society (United Nations, 1993). However, now more than two decades later social exclusion remains hitting the most vulnerable. At least 43.3% of Salvadoreans living in rural areas are still submerged in poverty (UNDP, 2013). In contrast, El Salvador's rich top tier have enjoyed throughout the post-war era after 1992 not only an expansion of their privileged freedoms and rights, thanks to ARENA's twenty years of neoliberal policy-making practices, but have managed to normalise their disproportionate influence in El Salvador's key decision-making spaces. Salvadorean elites from the past have evolved and expanded throughout Central America and have become today's larger, faster and stronger transnational economic elites (Bull et al., 2014).

This empirical chapter is the first of three aimed at discovering how social power relations affect poor people's access to clean water in El Salvador. These empirical chapters dissect an in-depth case study of poor, vulnerable people struggling to overcome their clean water scarcity. Like differently positioned cameras, each of these three analytical chapters look at how social groups play different positions of power in water governance: positions of hegemony, resistance and marginality.

As seen in chapter 2's historical context, each of the three mentioned social groups has significant presence in El Salvador and performs distinct views and social practices in relation to water. Hegemonic water actors believe water is an economic good. They frame water as a commodity best consumed and regulated under market principles. For them, 'price' guarantees the efficient use and sustainability of water.

In contrast, counter-hegemonic water actors believe water is for everyone. Water for them ought to flow to the hands of people as a common public good and a basic human right. They believe letting market principles rule water governance negatively affects poor people's water access and sustainability.

Finally, marginal collective groups of people see water as life, that is, their basic means for survival. Thus, their approach to water may be more pragmatic. Being poor could push them to care more about securing their daily access to clean water than the philosophy or mechanisms behind them.

This chapter begins with those at the margins of society. It uses the case study as its backdrop for the analysis and applies an 'axes of power' approach (see Ch.3) to scan and detect how power relations shape poor people's water access. The chapter divides into three parts. First, the analysis looks into the key social actors' profile in the communities of San José Villanueva. It describes how these marginal collectives organise themselves, who their key leaders are and what are their core aims and roles. Second, the analysis investigates what these communities do to access water and how they do it using power relations strategies. Third, the analysis looks at what they have achieved and how power relations explain these findings. Finally, the chapter concludes and critically reviews the findings under the light of the thesis' overarching question.

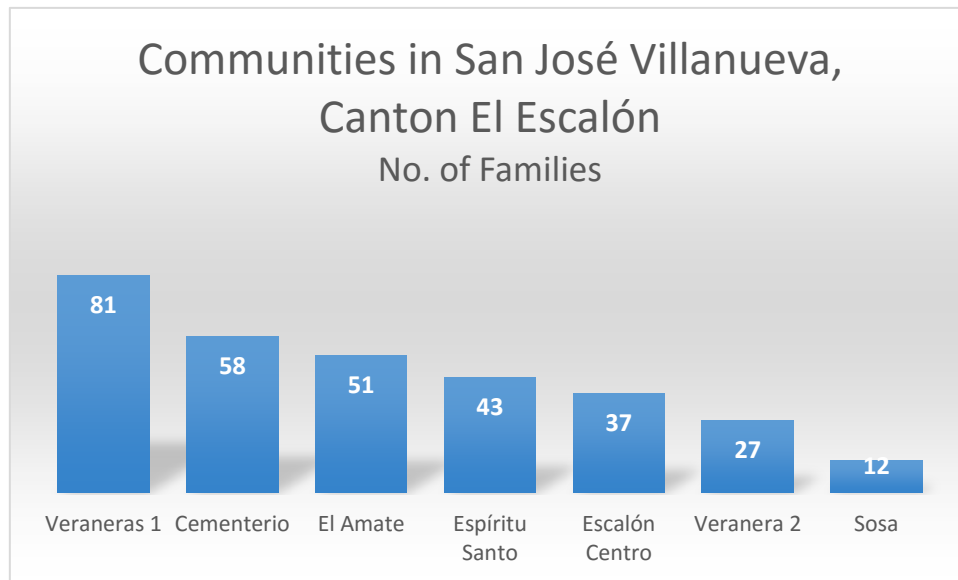
Who is who? A Profile of Marginal Collectives

Chapter 3's Historical Context introduced the key events that have shaped El Salvador's present context of social inequality. These historical events in turn, have also moulded the case study's socio-environmental context. This section now introduces a profile of the people, key organisations and institutions that make up San José Villanueva's micro-society of communities and connect them to the rest of Salvadorean society and beyond.

Small groups of families constitute the social fabric of the seven communities of San José Villanueva, Las Veraneras 1, Las Veraneras 2, Sosa, El Cementerio, Escalón Centro, Espíritu Santo and El Amate. All of these seven communities share the common characteristic that they are geographically located in the periphery of San José Villanueva's municipal urban centre. Thus, their characteristics are more rural than urban and fail to appear illustrated in the current urban poverty map published by El Salvador's UNDP in 2012 (see,

San José Villanueva is located at the heart of the geographical region of the Cordillera del Bálamo. Twenty-three hydrographic basins mould the contours of this mountainous region. The basin that shapes and surrounds San José Villanueva is called Estero San Diego.

Figure 42: Communities of San José Villanueva



Source: (ACUA, 2008, Gómez, 2011)

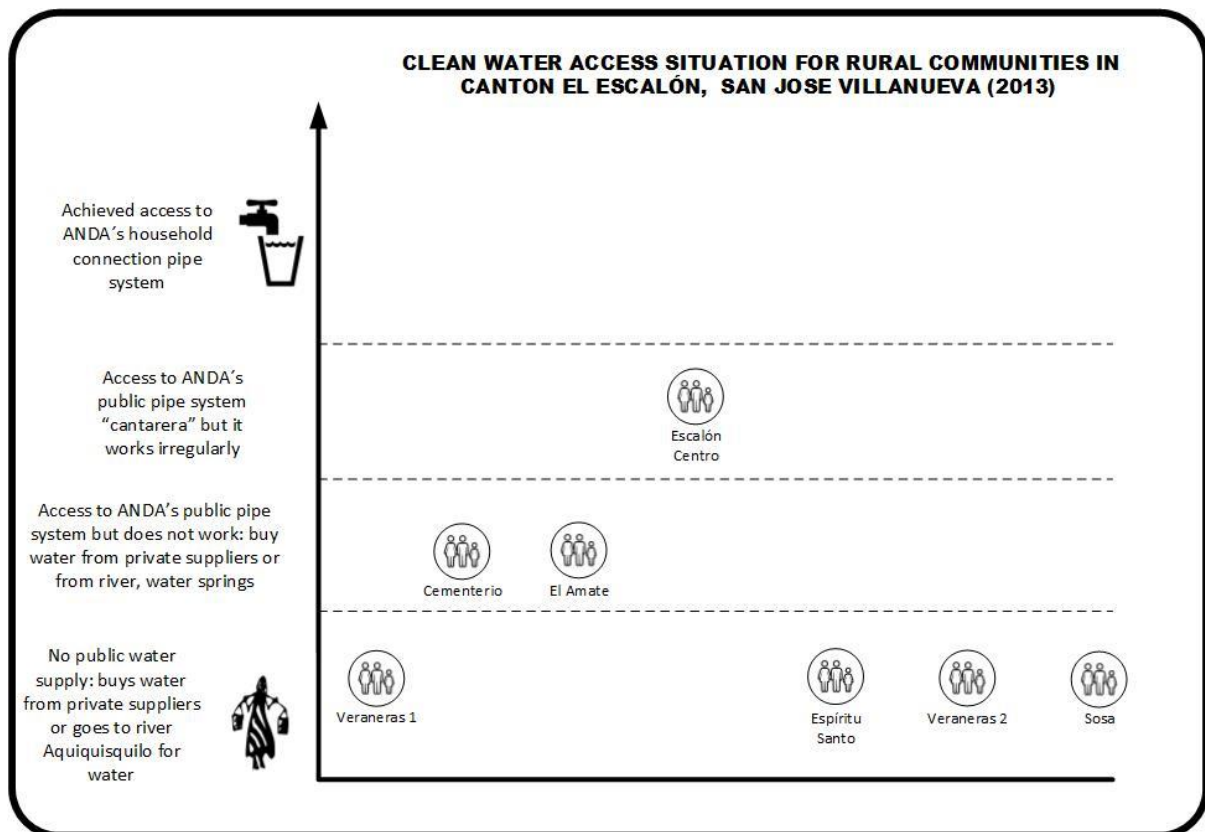
To get a general picture of the kind of communities addressed in the study the following account offers two examples of community profiles. These may be seen in the following descriptions.

The community of Las Veraneras 2:

The community of Las Veraneras 2 is a young and small community founded in 2001 in San José Villanueva. It is a small community of people with only 24 families, which adds to 119 people. This community is a symbolic example of communities of people hit by natural and social disasters. These people came as displaced families' product of the 2001 earthquakes that caused dramatic impacts in El Salvador's population. The government at the time reallocated these earthquake victims and they formed the community of Las Veraneras 2 in its totality. Because this was not a planned reallocation, the community arrived to San José

Villanueva with no organisation structure whatsoever. Hence, the difficulties this community experiences in relation to others are deeper in every sense. They have no water system in place for water access and in terms of sanitation; they do not have a system for wastewater, except for latrines(ACUA, 2008) .

Figure 43: Clean Water Access Situation-Communities SJV



Source: Own construction

The community has an ADESCO so its organisation runs through this small governance body. The community has no electricity. People dedicate themselves to agricultural activities like the harvesting of crops like corn, beans and others. They have no economic means to buy land as they are still paying their own household land which is why they and have no ownership of their homes and only rent. Most common illnesses in this community stem from water-borne diseases manifested in diarrhoeas.

In terms of sanitation, the community has one health promoter. The clinic is approximately 30 minutes away. They sometimes throw bleach or oil burned to the latrine to kill the smell. Most burn trash and some just bury it.

The Las Veraneras 2 community enjoy access to water from a public pipe shared with the community of El Cementerio which is a community located beside the municipal cemetery. If that does not work for limitations in the regularity of the supply, they proceed to search for water in a nearby water spring. The community also buys water from private providers. Some catch water from rain, and they are aware of the need to purify it. To wash clothes they go to river Aquiquisquillo.

The time it takes them to walk to a water source takes an average of 15 minutes. Families in this community use around 8 buckets of water per day. Each person consumes around 33 litres of water per day (Tejada, 2013, Beltrán, 2013).

The community of El Amate

This community has a population of 69 families, which amount to 385 people. The first settlers founded this community in 1987. Around 20% of the members of this community are people who originally lived in the place. Before this period, the houses that existed were part of the community of El Cementerio. They have a rudimentary water system in place. Despite that, they do not have a wastewater system, except for latrines.

Organisationally speaking, the community has a known record of passivity regarding community organisation. ISF reported that the community “presents no interest in forming a community board to create an ADESCO”. According to ISF’s report, the only time in which they did mobilise themselves has been in the form of a support committee. Such types of committees are usually a pre-requisite to achieve access to funds for a water project. However, when the project finished, the committee disappeared too. This lack of

organisation made the community lose an offer for the construction of housing from FMLN. The minimum requirement was that they should have their own organisation, but they did not comply.

In this community, 50% of the families generate their main source of income from work in industrial activities as many of them work in San José Villanueva in the production of candles. The other half works in sowing crops.

The community has access to basic services like electricity and around 10% of them have a fixed landline. The community has a health promotor, which has had the role of promoting the use of the purifying bleach for water called locally as 'Puriagua'.

In terms of water access, this community draws its water from community public pipes. However, in the summer, this water system does not work. At least three private wells exist in the community and they supply water for just five families. In rainy season, more families make use of these wells. For washing up the clothes, the population goes to river Aquiquisquillo or to water springs and gorges, which fill up with water from the rain. In theory, they could have had access to San José Villanueva's private company provider SEM but the company has denied them connection to pipes as it has no more capacity to increase the supply (Gómez, 2011, González, 2011, ACUA, 2008).

Table 5: Summary Water Access Status SJV Communities

Communities	Water Access Situation
Veraneras 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% of families have a household water supply. • They are connected to a water supply thanks to their sharing of another water system from other communities (Santa María, El Banco) • Alternatively, they search for water in river Aquiquisquillo or from water springs.
Cementerio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have access to a system of public pipes (“cantareras”) from the public service provider ANDA but it does not work. • With no water available, they have to buy water.
El Amate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a water provision system of ‘cantareras’ from ANDA but it does not work. • Hence, they buy water.
Espíritu Santo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No water supply system is available. • ANDA carries water in lorries with water pipe systems to provide them the liquid periodically, but it is an irregular service.
Escalón Centro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have access to water from a public pipe from ANDA. • When it does not work they usually collect it from river Aquiquisquillo
Veraneras 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have no water system, wells drilled but no water.
Sosa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have no water system. They buy water, search for it in river Aquiquisquillo or improvised wells. The community has no water system in place due to political and social problems within the community.

The communities’ clean water access situation is relevant for clarifying who is who in San José Villanueva as organisational forms in this micro-region have often come hand-in-hand with their essential services deprivations. San José Villanueva’s key social actors map implies referring to their basic forms of organisation. The Associations of Communitarian and Social Development (ADESCOs) constitute the most important expressions of the community’s organisation — interview (Flores, 2013b).

Poor people living in rural areas of El Salvador marginalised from water access make up this chapter's protagonists. The key identifying feature of these *marginal collectives* is their common experience of struggle. Poor people not only suffer daily clean water scarcity but Salvadorean society denies them many freedoms and rights. For instance, the rural poor may not only have less possibilities to access clean water, but they also may be less educated, less healthy, less financially secure and less knowledgeable about their rights and how to defend them. The communities of San José Villanueva selected for this case study reflect a fragment of this situation.

Although these are people that experience hardships to achieve their daily clean water access, it is also true they do not suffer complete or absolute lack of water access, otherwise they could not have survived and continue to do so. They manage to access to water *somehow*. The question is how do they do that? What sort of strategies in power relations do they use to achieve and secure their own water access? This objective characterises the key concerns of this chapter.

Not all Salvadoreans necessarily jump into one of the two main ideological trenches embedded in Salvadorean water politics: either those that see water as a commodity, which people can privatise and use for profit, or those that see water as a public common good and a human right. Some Salvadoreans just do not see or do not care about this dividing line. It is often too blurry or even conceptually abstract for them. However, this does not mean they do not have installed their own frames of thinking about water. People living in poverty in El Salvador, and specifically in San José Villanueva, are marginal collectives of men and women of all ages, with particular backgrounds and belief systems, which illustrate different degrees of vulnerability in society (Tejada, 2013, Erazo, 2011). They relate to water not from theoretical perspectives but from their own very empirical daily quests for survival. To them securing enough clean water for themselves and their families on a day-to-day basis forms the urgent challenge.

Peasants are the most important sector population in the communities of San José Villanueva (ACUA, 2008). The majority sow crops for self-sustainability of the family, like beans, maize and other means. For this reason, these community peasants realise that water is a substantial part of their own mode of production. They use several strategies to get access to enjoy access to clean water in conditions where it is difficult to find it clean and sufficiently accessible for use. The following is an account of the forms of strategies of power relations that the communities of San José Villanueva commonly use to get hold of clean water.

Strategies of solidarity

The first strategy found in the communities of San José Villanueva refers to the strategies of connecting to each other in order to help each other. People within the communities use forms of cooperation oriented to achieve support and information about how and where to access clean water at an affordable cost/price. For this strategy to work out in practice, the people in these communities first build streams of *informal talk and gossip* to make information about water access flow across the communities.

San José Villanueva's men and women regularly find information about water allocation by talking to each other. If particular families have found better means to access water, the community knows about it quickly thanks to informal talks and then cooperation trying to access the new source. For example, getting access to a water pipe service might mean paying in bulk. In this sense, solidarity makes sense economically and logistically. However, a division of labour stands in place. Most men in the communities do not engage directly in the collection of water or the management of its different uses across the household (Anonymous Interview B, 2014, Anonymous Interview D, 2013, Anonymous Interview G, 2013, Anonymous Interview I, 2013).

What San José Villanueva's men do engage on, is rather the provision of goods to get income that will benefit the family's ability to get access to precious things just like water.

At the same time, another responsibility described by San José Villanueva's men themselves is to provide the means of protection to their family group when conflicts arise for the competition to get access to water. For instance, decision-making processes to make cooperation work in a community run through male operated leadership processes even at the level of inter-family relations. If a neighbour is in dispute with another for water access, being male counts as an effective means of persuasion. The people solve their problems cooperating and connecting to each other based on persuasion processes constructed in informal talks and the joint use of leadership to get a collective initiative going. Persuasion to cooperate often works because of mutual respect, or a relative balance of power in male-dominated decision-making processes.

Power relations across the communities of San José Villanueva work thanks to patterns of cooperation that are unbalanced in particular ways. For instance, some communitarian depictions about water access often categorize children as 'helpless'. However, they play a fundamental role in the provision of water in all the communities of San José Villanueva. They become in practice, allies of women in the sense that they help alleviate the burden of practical access to water commonly left to women (Anonymous Interview B, 2014, Anonymous Interview D, 2013, Anonymous Interview E, 2013). They carry water from great distances and obey the adults to make the possibility of access to water a reality. Some children come and go from the river Aquiquisquillo (the local river) to school and from the school to the river just to get the water. Some children do not even go to school and spend a lot of their relative free time carrying water back and forth to their family homes with their mothers. This is the case of many girls in the community of SJV(Anonymous Interview B, 2014).

Another vulnerable but important sector of the social power relations present in the communities of San José Villanueva are the elderly. Older people in these communities are dependent in basic issues such as water access to the family at large as they are often not able to carry all the loads of water from one place to another. In addition, they may not be

able to walk the hilly distances others in the community are able to do. In many ways, they often play a balancing act role in the families' cooperation and dialogue processes, collaborating in the internal politics of the family to resolve conflicts for water within the family. Their powers are also word-of-mouth based. For instance, an elderly woman interviewed (Anonymous Interview D, 2013) narrated how she plays a vital role in the clean water access chores of the household. She helps in the family's water burden distribution by ensuring she disinfects water regularly with chloride. Moreover, when discussions arise due to water access problems, she engages in support of the women's role in the family politics. The role the elderly play in the communities changes from family to family and it is hard to characterise.

Charismatic churches are also key social actors influencing water access patterns of collaboration in the communities of San José Villanueva. They influence ideationally and materially the politics of the mind and soul of villagers by promoting their own world and moral view influencing how the communities view water and its governance. In so doing, local churches filter and shape ideas from local/global sources to their receptors. In this way, in El Salvador churches play a muscular force for control across social scales.

In the case of San José Villanueva's rural communities, the Protestant and Catholic branches monopolise the terrain (Tejada, 2013, Gómez, 2011). Their sub-branches on a local level display a variety of approaches towards water access issues. For instance, some sub-branches in the Catholic Church are more or less charismatic, more conservative or less liberal. Nevertheless, in all of these churches the leadership of the priest in place plays a vital role. In the case of San José Villanueva, the role of the local Catholic priest is very important. He plays a most definitive role in providing legitimacy to actions related to views about water that he associates with faith dogmas or Bible teachings. Both Protestant and Catholic Church groups in San José Villanueva play an active role in the normalisation of activities and interpretation of events. This is why leaders of both religious congregations

are often in very close proximity with the local authorities like Pedro Durán, mayor of San José Villanueva (Durán, 2013).

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also participate in the regional governance and lives of the communities directly and indirectly. Most NGOs form part of an aid cooperation chain that works from the national to transnational scales in the region. Examples on the local NGOs working or collaborating with the communities are ACUA (Beltrán, 2013), UNES (Flores, 2013a) and CDC (Medrano, 2011). Examples of those donor transnational NGOs helping these NGOs and communities do their actions are ISF (Collado, 2013, San Juan, 2013, ACUA, 2008), Oxfam (Green, 2008) and others. The latter organisations promote not just material provision of ways in which to alleviate the problems of water access in the communities, but put emphasis and efforts on issues like community participation, empowerment, gender awareness, among others (Beltrán, 2013).

Common Goals: Clean Water Access Now

The communities of San José Villanueva form part of marginal collectives of people in El Salvador struggling to secure clean water access for themselves and for their families on a daily basis. The seven communities of San José Villanueva are essentially 350 families living in rural areas sprinkled around the periphery of the urban centre of the municipality of San José Villanueva. Three large urban areas squeeze the surroundings of these communities. The first one is the rich residential neighbourhood of American and European style houses called *La Hacienda*. The second is the middle to upper class urbanisation of *Miramar*. The third is the ongoing construction of a massive urban project of a golf course called *El Encanto Villas & Golf* with luxury villas built around it. The golf club is the largest 18-hole golf club course in Central America and its construction is expected to be finalised around the first half of 2015 (Castellanos, 2013a, Castellanos, 2013b).

The seven communities of San José Villanueva stand out as marginal groups compared to these rich urban developments in one respect: not only are the communities

disproportionately poorer compared to their neighbours, but they also experience much poorer conditions of water access. The reason lies in the means these communities have available to secure their water service provision compared to the rich urban developments around them. ANDA was as of 2010-2013 mostly absent from the provision of water in these communities (Benítez, 2013). Their water access alternatives have been reduced to those that can afford to buy water from alternative local providers, often informal (Tejada, 2013, Beltrán, 2013). The alternative left for those people without sufficient funds to buy clean drinking water is nature. They may have to resort to the natural water sources available in their local area such as the few water springs and river Aquiquisquillo.

The seven communities of San José Villanueva organise themselves for a common goal in water access. They organise in committees called Associations of Communal Development (ADESCOs). These are their primary organisational bodies. For each ADESCO, the communities select their leaders and representatives by voting.

The Municipal Code in article 18 describes a very holistic notion of the functions of an ADESCO:

“The inhabitants of communities in neighbourhoods, counties and municipalities may organise themselves in community associations to participate in the study and analysis of social reality and the problems and needs of the community, as well as the development and promotion of solutions and projects of benefit to the community. These associations may participate in the social, economic, cultural, religious, civic, educational and social field in any other initiative legal and beneficial to the community” (Legislative Assembly of the Republic of El Salvador, 1986)

According to the Municipal Code, each ADESCO in order to be legally recognised must have no less than 25 members of the community. The mayor of the municipality recognises these ADESCOs with a solemn act provided they have met all the legal requirements for its creation and therein they interact with the Municipal Council for all matters of local governance. In this respect, the interaction between ADESCOs and the Mayor’s Municipal Council acquires supreme importance. The communities’ ADESCOs and the Mayor’s

Municipal Council as between are the two institutional bodies in charge of addressing most local development issues including environmental and water governance.

In the municipality of San José Villanueva, the elected mayor for the period of 2010-2014 has been Pedro Durán. Pedro Durán forms part of the right-wing leaning National Conciliation party (CN) (Durán, 2013). Together with his municipal team, the mayor of San José Villanueva has the duty of elaborating, approving and executing the local development plans.

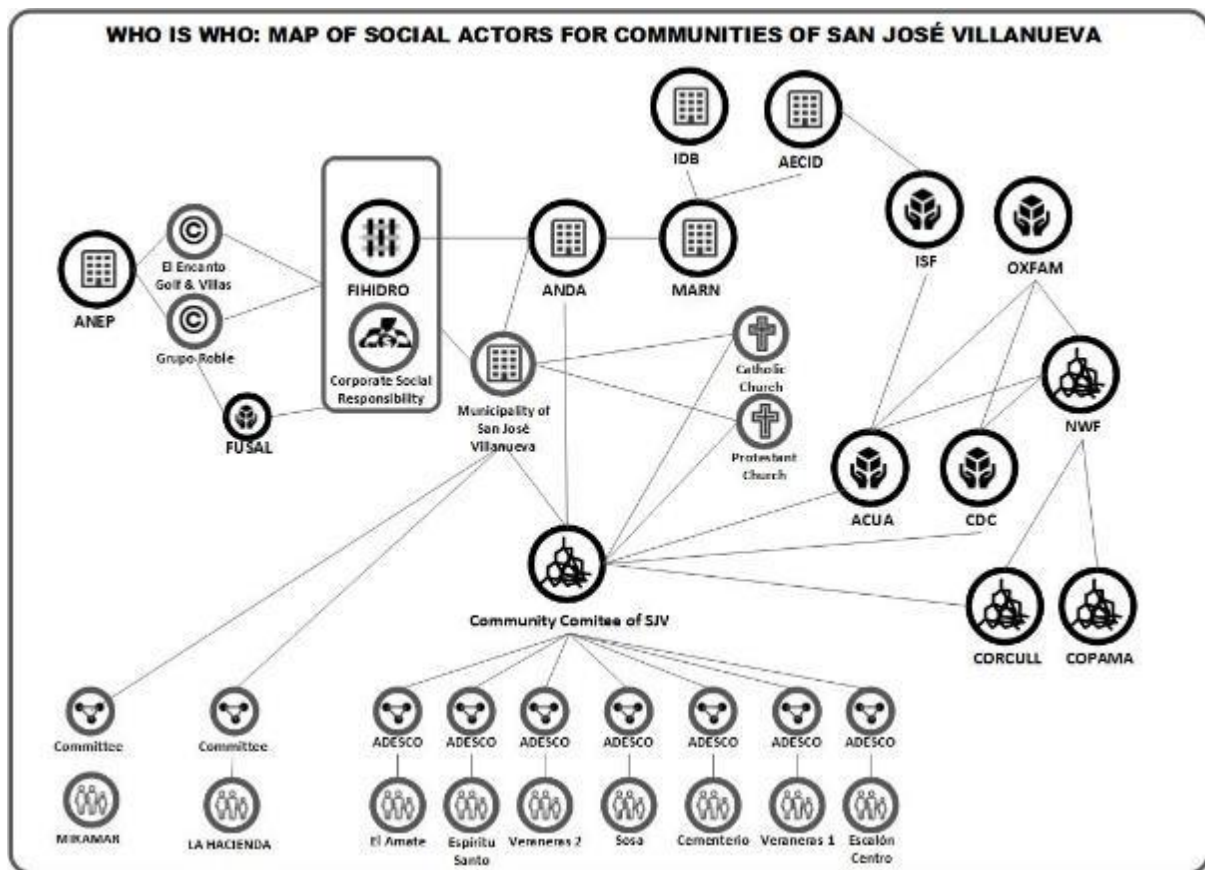
According to article 4 of the municipal code, the municipality is responsible for developing actions related to environmental and water governance in at least the three areas highlighted below:

1. “The regulation and development of plans and programmes destined for *the preservation, restoration and rational exploitation and improvement of natural resources* according to the law.”
2. “The promotion and development of health programmes, like environmental sanitation and preventing and combatting illnesses”
3. “Promoting internal and external tourism and regulating the of touristic and sports exploitation of lakes, rivers, islands, bays, beaches and other spaces particular of the municipality” (Translated by the author Legislative Assembly of the Republic of El Salvador, 1986).

The communities of San José Villanueva are so marginalised that they only care about securing access to clean water in any way possible (Tejada, 2013). Regarding the issue of water access, they prefer to take a pragmatic approach: they tend to favour any means that will allow them to secure clean water for all the purposes they have. The general approach of marginal collectives regarding water access is survival. For these reasons, some communities seem to be ‘passive’, lacking a clear goal or weak in ideologies, solutions and policy-guidelines to follow. However, it is quite the contrary. The main characteristic for

these marginal collectives of people is that their water politics is pragmatic and adapted for survival. Their approach emerges in strategies to secure water for survival. Unlike other groups deemed as counter-hegemonic, the large part of the communities themselves (with the exception of some of their leaders) do not engage in direct confrontational politics.

Figure 44: Map of Social Actors in San José Villanueva



Source: Own construction

Social Practices: The Daily Search for Water

Clean water scarcity has shaped the daily social practices around water exhibited by the communities of San José Villanueva. River Aquiquisquillo's contaminated waters offer limited relief to their daily water access. However this water source is highly unhealthy and diminishing in quality and quantity (Collado, 2013, ACUA, 2008).

Poor and vulnerable people in the communities of San José Villanueva act from triggers of threat and opportunity. Because of these triggers, people take desperate measures. The conditions for change are so desperate that most of the people interviewed expressed that they had to cross 'private property' to get access to water, drink from contaminated sources, try to make potable water themselves, etc.

More than sixty people in the communities of San José Villanueva have suffered from chronic lack of water access (Márquez Ortiz, 2014, Torres, 2013, Alfaro, 2012). More than 350 families live within the landscape of San José Villanueva and suffer from chronic water access difficulties. For people in these communities the main problem is that getting access to clean water becomes a labyrinth. They have to sort out their everyday water access challenges with difficult dilemmas each family has to weigh in and weigh out. For instance, should they buy water or risk consuming water from contaminated sources like river Aquisquillo? Using bleach variants, they may de-contaminate only some of the chemicals contained in river Aquisquillo's flows. Every family living in San José Villanueva's rural to semi-rural areas experiences over and over the same contamination problem (Cruz, 2014, Torres, 2013, Anonymous Interview D, 2013). Crucially, no state institutions assume responsibility to help relieve their lack of clean water access. ANDA does not reach them. The municipality of San José Villanueva does not do it either. The way they access water is by crossing labyrinths of problems. Some forces beyond their reach have made their situation even more difficult.

In San José Villanueva, inequality in water access is dramatically evident and it makes this case study so unique. It is located in a truly unique geographical landscape and socioeconomic setting. The Balsam Mountain Range is a place of paramount beauty due to its natural habitat and vegetation. Centuries ago, it had been a dense tropical forest truly remarkable for its Balsalm trees, which made this rich, landscape a highly fertile area for agriculture. The hydrographical region of San José Villanueva is that of Estero San Diego.

However, from the 1990s onwards, after the Peace Agreements the situation started to change. The province of La Libertad was suddenly a region that started to appear in the map of possible venues for investment. The Ministry of Planning devised a plan called PLANSABAR that made the governance of water possible for this region (Gornés Cardona, 2011). However, after the decentralisation that took place at the time, remnants of this process were left. The water provider SEM for San José Villanueva has been private. ANDA has only partially reached spaces that were left out. The communities of San José Villanueva stand in this unique position: no one covers their water provision needs. Nationally ANDA was not covering them and neither the local provider SEM had the capacity to provide them with water (Collado, 2013, Gornés Cardona, 2011, ACUA, 2008).

The seven communities of San José Villanueva live as the original settlers in this region. Some of them are younger, like the community of Sosa, which is part a product of the post-earthquakes of 2001 inner migration movement. They came from Comasagua after the 2001 earthquakes destroyed their households and needed a place to live and stay. Water quickly became a top priority for these communities as more and more people started to live in the area. Because these communities were already socially excluded and vulnerable even before moving, their challenge was from the very start to find clean water to access from nature from the very start to secure it for themselves. As Friends of the Earth state “nature is poor people’s wealth” and that is exactly what it has meant to them. The local rivers and natural springs were their main source to achieve water access. Rivers within their proximity like river San Antonio and river Aquiquisquillo became their main water sources. The seven communities of San José Villanueva live closest in proximity to river Aquiquisquillo, which according to accounts from the original nahuatl it means “water that flows freely” (Orellana, 2014, Aguiluz, 2014, Granados, 2014, Ramírez, 2013). Ironically, clean water from this river is not readily accessible for all.

The communities informally and legally recognise ADESCOs as the most important political actors for change in their communities. However, another key social actor is the

municipality. The municipality of San José Villanueva holds power at a wider level of organisational space. ADESCOs connect with the municipality of San José Villanueva through meetings and direct communication. In theory that is where ADESCO leaders and the mayor of San José Villanueva, Pedro Durán, deal and tackle most of the local development problems (Durán, 2013).

The next key organisational range in the social governance of the municipality are the churches of the region which are both Catholic and Protestant Evangelicals (Durán, 2013). For instance, a key role played by the leaders of these churches is that very often they play conciliatory and moral roles in many of the social problems that they experience. This includes water access.

The communities of San José Villanueva experience hardships to access daily clean water due, in part, to their own marginalization from the national water provider ANDA and even from San José Villanueva's local private water provider, SEM, which provides only to some of the central urban areas of the main town. Because of this institutional exclusion from national structures of water governance, the communities have made efforts with further alternatives.

The communities have connected with social development organisations in the region. ACUA has been by far the most important one (Beltrán, 2013, González, 2011). Located geographically in a nearby area (Zaragoza) this organisation has played a remarkable role as a pivot of many local initiatives neglected by the municipality and national government entities. ACUA, founded in 1994, has grown as an organisation focused in securing poor people's livelihoods and particularly their clean water access, from a political ecology perspective.

The power of individuals

The main social actors in the communities are people themselves, but they are also different within themselves in leadership and cooperation for actions in social change. Distinctive

gender based inequalities rifts the communities apart. Men and women relate to water in different ways. At the level of water governance decision making processes in San José Villanueva women have weak influence. For instance, less than a third of the leaders in the these communities' ADESCOS are composed by women (Orellana, 2014, Granados, 2014, Torres, 2013).

Moreover, this research verified from observance and interviews, that women have been left with most of the burden of securing water and managing it every day for their own families (Granados, 2014, Torres, 2014, Anonymous Interview D, 2013, Jiménez, 2013, Anonymous Interview G, 2013, Leyva, 2013, Zaira, 2013, Anonymous Interview H, 2013). Culturally this is accepted. Salvadorean literature like "One Day in the Life" (Argueta, 1998) often portray rural women as having the burden of taking care of the home and fetching water wherever it is.

The communities of San José Villanueva are loosely scattered in family homes around the area. However, at least three massive construction sites coexist with these communities' surroundings: the residential La Hacienda, Miramar and El Encanto Villas & Golf urbanisations. Neighbours with income and wealth many times higher than their own have slowly squeezed the communities. The exclusive model of residential homes with modern European and American style houses stand out prominently like islands in the landscape of San José Villanueva. The contrast could not be sharper when the material evidence stands side to side in walks around the area. From a simple walk around these residential areas one can see swimming pools, lush well irrigated gardens, cisterns to store water, among other high-water consumption installations (Anonymous Interview A, 2013).

The key architects of the urban projects mentioned are two corporations in real estate businesses. The first one is Grupo Roble which stands out as part of a transnational conglomerate of family owned enterprises of Los Poma. This corporation is one of the biggest in in the whole of the Central American isthmus (Bull and Cuéllar, 2013).

In addition, El Encanto Villas & Golf club project also stands out as capital beyond national borders. The project stems from Guatemalan investment joined with the national of JOR S.A. de C.V. According to the National Registry, the latter corporation has a capital of 24 million USD\$ (Castellanos, 2013a, Castellanos, 2013b).

An offspring project connected to the former corporations which also becomes central to the issue of water access in San José Villanueva is the Public Partnership (PPP) called FIHIDRO. This is the first public private partnership in the country. Twenty-nine participant corporations from the private sector proposed to create this initiative as a means to secure water access for real state urban developments in La Libertad. The FIHIDRO project is one of remarkable importance because it is the first of its kind in the country and because it gives privileged access to clean water to corporations in a partnership between the state and the private sector. The following chapter explores this power relation strategy with further depth. For the moment, it is sufficient to know that corporations contained in this partnership are key players in the water access and control patterns of San José Villanueva and the wider province of La Libertad.

In terms of networks, the community leaders also participate in sub-regional environmentalist associations such as COPAMA and CORCULL. These mid-range regional organisations have a history of efforts to combat the degradation of the Balsam range (Cordillera del Bálsamo in Spanish).

The last players in this power map are those less evident and often hidden from view, but still crucial. These are the donor network organisations behind local initiatives of water access, governance and sustainability. For instance, Engineers without Borders (ISF) have played a leading role among the donors of the region (Collado, 2013, San Juan, 2013, ACUA, 2008). This Catalan NGO has as its main aim to help these communities in very direct, hands on approach. Their role here has been to supply them with the necessary technical knowledge and financial support to empower them to change poor people's water scarcity

situation. They have been the key providers of technical knowledge with hydrological and engineer studies like the Plan for La Libertad 2007.

Next in the equation are transnational NGOs such as Oxfam. Oxfam has provided a range of funds for projects in ACUA oriented to 'empower' people in the region to be able to claim their human right to water. This means that in their projects, they have included processes of awareness and education for the communities. ACUA executes these funds.

In a similar fashion, CDC, as a national NGO concerned with consumer rights has embraced supporting the communities of San José Villanueva to defend their human right to water. CDC joins with similar objectives to ACUA and often works in collaboration with them. Both ACUA and CDC also receive funds from organisations like Oxfam and ISF.

Lastly, in the power map of community actors, it is important to situate the role of the government even if it is largely absent from securing San José Villanueva's communities clean water access. The regional office of ANDA located in the wider province of La Libertad has made connections with the ADESCO community leaders in San José Villanueva. The communities for their part have made continuous efforts to pressure ANDA to provide them with water in their rural areas using institutional means of calls and letters.

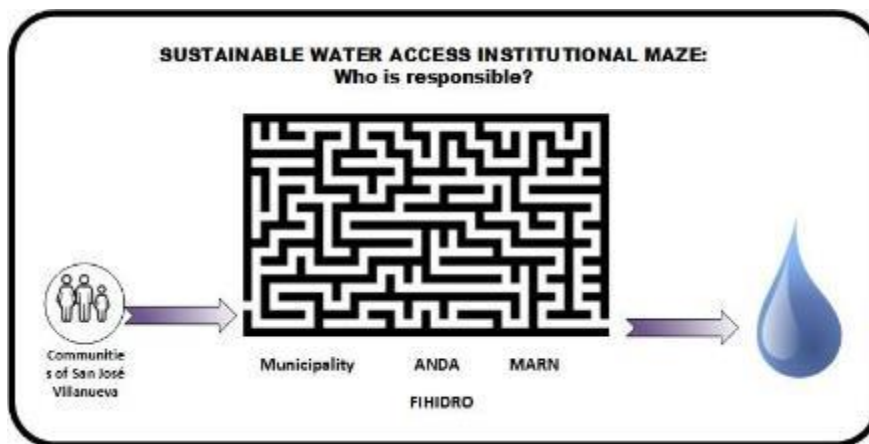
Local/Global Axis: Institutional Maze Runners Seeking Water

The situation of lack of water access in San José Villanueva has been increasingly worsening. However, the cause lies not just on the abandonment of the Salvadorean state's obligations to provide clean water for the populations in this area of the country; but with the increasing pressure on water resources that high growth urbanisations processes in the region have been doing to the population. Affluent residential areas like La Hacienda, Las Luces, Los Sueños, and others have added increasing pressure by extracting water from the already declining water resources of the area. In the case of the San José Villanueva communities their plight has been to watch in real-time how their river Aquiquisquillo, one

of their key and only sources of clean water, has rapidly become both weaker in its affluent of water and contaminated by the sewage coming from La Hacienda.

Furthermore, the current social context has largely closed alternatives for the communities of San José Villanueva to secure clean water access. The alternatives have been reduced to: either the population acquires water by themselves either by: a) buying it to 'black market' informal providers at the prices they can get; b) using and enduring the health problems associated with consuming low quality water from the river and drink from it; c) pressuring their local/national authorities like the municipality of SJV/ANDA to provide them with the service of clean water; or d) finding alternative means of water access that include extracting water themselves from other places or spaces.

The communities and community leaders that formed part of the 'movement of resistance' to this given status quo elected to do all of these initiatives. Nevertheless, there were local/global strategies the communities of San José Villanueva have used to change their situation. to advance these objectives of achieving clean water access. The following is an account of the range of strategies they have followed to make this possible.



Most of the people interviewed from the communities of San José Villanueva say that before the urban developments of La Hacienda, Miramar from Grupo Roble and the El Encanto Villas & Golf from JOR they used to enjoy free, public access to clean water in the

rivers and natural water springs crossing the region. However, according to people from these communities today, since these urban projects spread into the region, water access as well as the quantity and quality of natural water resources has been declining dramatically. In particular, they mention as illustrative examples La Hacienda residential area and El Encanto Villas & Golf.

The communities at large have faced the situation from two political standpoints. Those who have chosen to react and do something about it and those who have remained apparently politically passive.

In the communities' own analyses, changing their precarious water access situation meant pushing the Salvadorean state to be accountable for their water deprivation. However, this also meant that the rules of water governance should change locally and nationally. The communities favoured more acting locally in the short or medium term and only occasionally joined in actions with wider social movements like the National Water Forum (NWF) to pressure the state to change and create water laws clearly in tune with the human right to water. The communities aimed to access clean water in equal conditions as those of other rich residential areas and urbanisations. The communities favoured certain types action and tactics to gain social power and secure water access.

San José Villanueva's communities started an exploration process regarding the key local/global social actors that they could tap in into in order to achieve their clean water access goal. First, they started with looking into help from the key nodes of counter-hegemonic resistance organisations. They started by finding out organisations and networks sympathetic to their water plight. The first door they knocked to do this that was in tune with the communities' needs was ACUA. This local NGO chaired by Walter Flores (1996-2010), Ana Ella Gómez (2011) and Samuel Ventura (2012-present 2014) has advocated for changing the water access conditions of communities in southern La Libertad. ACUA, because of their local/global connections had the right support from local/global players and the right information at the right time. Sergio Alfaro, Alejandra Santos and other

community leaders sought meetings with them, as accounted in interviews with each of them, in order to ask for help.

ACUA has offered technical support to all of those communities struggling for water access in the municipalities of San José Villanueva, Zaragoza, and Puerto El Triunfo in the province of La Libertad. The flows of funding and technical knowledge came from ACUA's own connections to transnational development NGOs with available expertise and funds on the subject of water management such as Engineers Without Borders (ISF), and water as human right advocacy (e.g. Oxfam Solidarity Belgium and the Red Vida international network).

As evidenced in ACUA's project initiative documents in the region of La Libertad, the first thing to do was to connect all the dots in the board. In other words, all the communities scattered in southern La Libertad had to unite with knowledge and funds on the subject of water as a human right and technical uses and management of water. 'Connecting all the dots' for the communities meant that ACUA could serve as a meeting hub for all the communities of the region and facilitate the process of knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing between these communities.

ACUA facilitated in turn the space and resources to make it possible to do workshops, collective meetings and one-to-one private meetings with community leaders connecting on local/global scales. It meant that ISF engineers coming from Barcelona, Spain could meet on a one-to-one basis with community leaders from San José Villanueva via ACUA's facilitation in-situ or by transfer through e-mails, telephone calls and documents that circulated back and forth.

In this local/global flow, opportune communications from local point A to local point B and local point C, D and so on influenced the way these communities connected on a local/global dimension to best achieve their interests. Different social scales were dynamically present in these social practices facilitated by the chain of ACUA's connections: from the community leaders of ADESCOs, the inter-community meeting with neighbouring

communities from other municipalities of La Libertad and the backstage donors and supporters of ACUA's know-how and funding.

The communities of San José Villanueva clean water access defence 'moves' were centred on alliances with organisations that could link them up on local/global scales . With this effort the communities gained support to fill the gaps of knowledge and funding they needed to do things for themselves. For instance, the first step in empowering the communities was with exact, measurable, scientific diagnoses of the kind of water access conditions they had. ISF provided the knowledge, expertise and funding to make such study possible.

Once ISF's water access diagnosis was done, the communities could use that analytical document as a powerful instrument for change. They used this document to focus their advocacy pressure toward the nation's autonomous water provider, ANDA. To this point Sergio Alfaro, points out that "I connected with ACUA and ACUA connected us to ISF. Then we connected as communities on an advocacy level with ANDA" (Alfaro, 2012)

The strategy of connecting the dots came to a full circle, when ACUA also connected them on another level of empowerment: that of making advocacy strategies matter on a local/global scale. The strategy here was to connect with local/global social actors that could supply them with ideological arguments underpinning their local knowledge with a more global outlook. For instance, the inter-communities bridge facilitated by ACUA was strengthened by the water/environmental associations COPAMA and CORCULL across the region of La Libertad. COPAMA and CORCULL managed to do this 'strengthening' to the local communities via campaigns and events with local/global connections.

The campaigns with most impact in the local reality of SJV communities were the national campaigns on "Blue Democracy" (2006-2007) and "Water is Ours" (2009-2012) coordinated with the National Water Forum. These campaigns although oriented to pressure the government on the lack of legal frameworks for the uses of water also provided the

communities with material and key arguments on how to face neoliberal water structures of governance. In specific, the material pin-pointed local/global hegemonic water networks' social actors in El Salvador and how they were involved. For instance, how case studies like the exploitation of natural resources by construction companies of Grupo Roble to their Bálsamo Range habitat was part of a wider trend of transnational neoliberal corporations profiting from the weak or inexistent legal frameworks.

The Swarm Strategy: The Collective Way to Find Water

San José Villanueva's communities may be poor, but they have mobile phones and use them heavily on water access strategies. They use their mobile phones to connect with each other, gain information and record meetings with pictures and video. In addition, the communities connect with social gatherings '*in masse*' such as tuning in to radio or joining religious networks that go beyond their locality. They hear the radio and see television programs from local to national religious ministers and priests that in a way, trickle down and pre-digest information to them, that provides them with 'understandings' and ways of thinking about their own problems.

Another important way in which women engage in local/global practices is the way of gossip and mouth-to-mouth gossip in their mobility paths. It means that from home to the river, and from the river or well to home, they already communicate through various means that are faster and more widely located.

Using the local/global axis of power we find that the San José Villanueva communities have not worked isolated in their quest for water access. The communities have engaged with political organisations through their own organisation. On seeing the situation they have been ambivalent about this. The leaders of the communities together with the communities themselves have created what they call the '*inter-communal associations*'. At first, this type of association was the communion of all seven communities united with the goal of solving problems they have not been able to solve alone such as clean water access. Indeed, as expressed by the leaders of San José Villanueva's ADESCOs, one ADESCO alone is relatively powerless to pressure for changes in local and national water governance.

The radical problem behind all of these organisational initiatives is the labyrinth situation in which they immersed themselves. Using their own readings about their water scarcity conditions, they proceeded to trace who is responsible for what in water governance. First in the line of scrutiny was ANDA. However, their efforts to make ANDA accountable for their

water marginalisation had so far made very little progress. The first obstacle was for any ADESCO already a big hurdle: in order for ANDA to assess any community as a potential 'client' to provide its water service it first needed to present a social study of feasibility. This is a technical study about their own hydrological needs. This implies making a study that costs money to make. Under normal circumstances given their own poverty situation, this is a remarkably difficult pre-requisite to make. Insufficient funds can be a wall of an obstacle for any community.

The other route is to make is to invoke the local mayor to support them and find ways to make water accessible and sustainable for them. The local municipality has a partial responsibility in making sure water resources in the region are well cared. Conversely, this goal in itself is confusing. In an interview with the local mayor, Pedro Durán argued that it is not sufficiently clear in the municipal code that it is a municipal obligation to provide communities with potable water access. This is true to a certain extent, but then the articles state that it is an obligation of the municipality to protect and promote natural resources in the region. As ISF has found the contamination situation of river Aquiquisquillo gives evidence of the contrary.

Next in the line of responsibility for water governance in El Salvador is the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) (Larios, 2013). The communities knocked various times on the door of this institution to no avail. Again, the problem here according to the authorities in this institution is that they do not have the mandate to govern all uses of water and no resources to cover such task. MARN argues that with the small budget they have, they just need to prioritise limited goals and do whatever they can with what they have. Their governmental plans have focused on other areas. This is again, partially true. Yet, it is also true that MARN is responsible for the construction permits supplied to corporations in La Libertad who have increasingly degraded ecosystems and exploited water resources across the country and specifically in La Libertad. This has been the case during

the two decades in which the right-wing neoliberal ARENA held power and in the left-wing leaning period of President Mauricio Funes-FMLN during 2009-2014.

For the people of San José Villanueva next in the line in the political maze of water access are the private water providers. As evidenced in interviews with people from the communities, when they are not able to get access to water through public providers, they have resorted to 'for-profit' private providers. This strategy for water access has its costs because it amounts to at least 10 dollars per barrel of water. In the long term, this mode of accessing water completely knocks out many of the families, which live in deep poverty. Without enough income, accessing clean, affordable water becomes a highly exclusive affair for many families.

Each of the communities have negotiated and dealt with the barriers mentioned above using shared strategies with particular flavours. For instance, the most common strategy has been using 'survival mode' strategies. In this mode, the communities care to find access to clean water as quickly as possible through whatever means available to them. Some people within the communities have resolved to resist the status quo of water governance in their local/national context. However, the majority of marginal collectives seem to choose more discrete roles. Unlike counter-hegemonic groups who prefer to use strong resistance and opposition to neoliberal water governance, marginal collectives prefer to act with rather less confrontational tactics based on pragmatic, short-term views. Counter-hegemonic water groups are the subject of chapter six.

A Material-Ideational Axis: Dirty Water, Dirty World

The material/ideational strategies of power adopted by the communities of SJV show they adopted some of the traits and tactics used by counter-hegemonic water networks. On the one hand, they adopted discourses and ideologies on the human right to water coming from regional/national campaigns adopted by regional social actors like ACUA, COPAMA,

CORCULL. On the other hand, San José Villanueva communities had their own local and very pragmatic approach to solving their water problem.

The community leaders together with the communities started their own local water activist strategy with a local/national analysis. They adopted a pragmatic strategy faced with the fact that counter-hegemonic campaigns, protests and events advocating for the human right to water were slow to bring change in the national scale and that for it to trickle down all the way to the local sphere was going to be too slow.

The ADESCOs of San José Villanueva knew that in parallel to their communities' lack of clean water scarcity, the people living in the rich residential neighbourhood of La Hacienda were also having water-access problems, admittedly less critical than theirs. River Aquiquisquillo was declining in its affluent and La Hacienda depended heavily on this water source for their water supply. La Hacienda Committee of neighbours decided to pressure ANDA to provide them with the water service. As the people in La Hacienda were economically better off they had better chances to be heard on a one-to-one basis in ANDA's regional and national offices. Hence, their perspectives to solve this demand were good in contrast to those of the community leaders of SJV. San José Villanueva's community leaders opted for a less confrontational tactic than its counter-hegemonic peers and decided from their own community meetings that it was best if they made some efforts to connect with La Hacienda's leadership committee to see if it was possible to find a joint solution. For the communities this was not an easy decision to make as a strategy forward. La Hacienda had already better access to water than San José Villanueva's communities themselves did. La Hacienda urbanisation was extracting intensively from river Aquiquisquillo and had its own water purifying plant. Despite all of this, the communities decided to dialogue with them to make them allies instead of enemies to make advocacy efforts to gain ANDA's water service.

The community leaders of SJV adopted, in other words in relation to La Hacienda, an opportunistic strategy using their local/global advantages. They calculated that by meeting with La Hacienda's neighbours committee they could convince them to join forces materially

and ideationally to make a compelling case for ANDA to provide them with water. The communities would provide the already collected water technical feasibility water analyses made on the region by ISF to make the 'technical-scientific' argument to ANDA and La Hacienda would provide the political muscle and rhetorical discourse necessary to convince ANDA to focus on them and the communities. In this respect, it was a win-win situation.

SJV community leaders also developed strategies of resistance of negotiating pragmatically with those who would otherwise be their enemies. SJV communities knew from their continued workshops and campaigns with ACUA that public-private partnerships were increasingly becoming new spaces for corporations to find key new niches of market and subsequent profit.

In the case of the construction companies that had built the residential urbanisation of La Hacienda and the large golf club villa of El Encanto around the river Aquiquisquillo such as Grupo Roble, the communities knew that there were material means to fund a water project for the communities. An example of this was the public-private partnership project of the Investment Fund for Water (FIHIDRO) which was a project aimed to provide water for southern La Libertad. The funds and project proposal came from private companies interested in expanding their construction projects and securing the clean water access for their initiatives. The companies proposed a win-win deal: they would provide the funding for the extraction of water resources, and ANDA would provide part of the expertise and funding available from the government to make it feasible.

When the project came to fruition on the 15th of June 2011, it was signed and ratified by ANDA and the twenty-nine corporations, a new prospect for investment in La Libertad to connect urban projects to water services from ANDA emerged. However, the actual investment to connect ANDA's water service to SJV communities and La Hacienda still did not come. Moreover, apparently the FIHIDRO project only intended to benefit with priority the rich residential urbanisations and projects that the funding companies had built (this would have included La Hacienda, but not the communities). A campaign lead by ACUA and

the communities of SJV reflected on this fact. According to them, out of the 22,000 water connections planned in the FIHIDRO project, at least 75% were being destined to the private residential urbanisations and not for the communities. In other words, the SJV communities had slim chances of benefiting from such project. It was only when they started lobbying with the neighbouring La Hacienda committee that they were able to push forward alternatives.

In an interview with one of the directives of the La Hacienda Committee, (Morales, 2012) it was only because the SJV communities made the link with them that things started working with ANDA. The local mayor of SJV agreed in this point. Moreover, the communities of SJV were able to spot that one of the members of the Committee was a left-leaning and politically more progressive person. This was vital information for them, because it made them analyse the prospect of joining forces with them by having first a one-to-one meeting with this person. Then once the communities had persuaded at least one of the members in La Hacienda's committee to meet, their strategy would focus on finding ideological points in common to persuade them to support their cause and make it a joint effort.

Overcoming the odds on the lack of water access in the region of San José Villanueva has not been easy for it has tested the creativity of these communities to find answers to their problem. What can the communities do when the state institutions are absent or where they cannot find any rules of water governance to make them accountable to provide them with water as a human right?

A key feature of the communities of San José Villanueva is that they knocked all possible doors and as seen in the previous section, in so doing they have also connected with as many organisations and institutions they could in local and global spaces, although admittedly indirectly via the help of middle institutions. A key characteristic is that other series of obstacles have limited and hampered the communities' outreach to solve their water access problem. This is when we enter the realm of the material/ideational axis of power relations.

Whereas in the last section we saw how the communities themselves have been able to connect to wider organisational bodies that does not summarise their whole approach. A key feature in the power relations perspective is that their search led them to connect them pragmatically to all organisations that could help them without discarding them under ideological grounds. On the one hand, the leaders of the communities have engaged with those in the counter-hegemonic side of water politics in El Salvador. It means they have connected to all the social activists' movements and organisations such as ACUA, CDC and social networks at the regional level: COPAMA, CORCULL and national level like the National Water Forum (NWF).

On the other hand, they also have connected to those with opportunities presented from initiatives in the public private partnerships sphere such as FIHIDRO where corporations and ANDA would make it possible to get access to water. The point of the organisational efforts has been not to lose sight of any chances. Political readings for the communities of San José Villanueva have been very important. There is not one unified system of thought or ideology. Their statutes refer to finding the greater common good for all. For the communities, being pragmatic pays off.

Women's own practices exemplify simple, yet pragmatic strategies to get access to water to survive, rather than making confrontational acts:

For instance, women know that storing water is necessary to survive, but when they see that others like La Hacienda are better off with their water access they tend to focus on what they need to do to secure it. "This water access problem is eternal, even in winter. What's ironic is that there up there in those storage tanks [points out to the residential La Hacienda's storage tanks] water even overflows." (Cordero, 2014) Everyone tries to store water in their own *pilas*." (Cordero, 2014)

Ester, Lotificación El Amate, old woman

Other women speak about their resignation to get water even if it means walking longer distances, buying it more expensively elsewhere, making long queues among other problems. “The communities of Espíritu Santo and El Amate have been having water access problems. But there [in Espíritu Santo] they have *quebradas* (*water springs*). However, the problem is that they have been drying up. People from Espíritu Santo come all the way here [to the public tap water in El Amate] to get water. People come here desperate. If not, people get water from the river [river Aquiquisquillo]. Silvia charges 2 *coras* [*\$0.25 cents*] or 1 dollar every time we come here. One dollar is charged when one buys, 2 *coras* when one just comes to pick up water here (...) People come to the public tap water in El Amate to pick up water. They have an informal system of taking care of it. People collaborate when queueing to pick up water.”

The Power of God: When Faith Moved Mountains and Brought Back Water

“At first, faith moved mountains only as a last resort, when it was absolutely necessary, and so the landscape remained the same over the millennia. But once faith started propagating itself among people, some found it amusing to think about moving mountains, and soon the mountains did nothing else but change places, each time making it a little more difficult to find one in the same place you had left it last night; obviously this created more problems than it solved. The good people decided then to abandon faith; so nowadays the mountains remain (by and large) in the same spot.

When the roadway falls in and drivers die in the collapse, it means someone, far away or quite close by, felt a light glimmer of faith.” (Monterroso, 1969)

The above story is a popular tale in Central America about the creative and destructive power of people’s faith. This is certainly true in El Salvador in the sense of its influence for the social mobilisation (or not) of poor people in the country. In the same way, people from the communities have had flickers of faith and shook up seemingly unmovable mountains. Two types of strategies regarding their ideational relation to faith emerge in their water

access quest. On the one hand, there are those that believe praying to God about their water access problems would bring a solution and therefore waited passively for it. On the other, there were those people who proactively prayed to God (or made alliances with those who did) but in parallel got into action to solve the water access problem by whatever means possible.

The majority of people interviewed showed how strong was the prevailing idea that acting 'in company' with God had in people's water access politics. When people in fact got their water, they of course applauded their community leaders for the feat. However, privately in interviews, they acknowledged that all of this was "God's work".

Although ideationally the signs of pragmatism as hands on approach were evident, there was always a sense of something else going on. In people's expressions, the idea of God helping them was very much present not only in their language, ideas, metaphors they used, but also in their practices. The legitimacy of the churches was very important. For instance, in both the Catholic Church and some of the Protestant Lutheran, and Baptist churches in specific the idea of nature and the defence of nature has been very important. In El Salvador, there was a great change in the way the church framed the doctrine on issues of the faith. After the Catholic Church made it a mortal sin to damage the environment, a big shift emerged in the way priests addressed these issues.

Local priests and pastors enjoy great legitimacy in San José Villanueva's communities. This gives them great power over decision-making matters locally. Both the mayor and the communities have invited them for their community events. It has been a great mobilisation factor. According to Sergio Alfaro, leader of the community Escalón Centro not everyone wants to participate in community organisation. Many do not realise its importance. Thus, it is hard to mobilise people to meetings even when these are for their own good. Inviting the local priest or pastor, or both, guarantees participation. In addition, religious leaders' presence also guarantees legitimacy to morally charged discussion about matters of water

justice and redistribution. This is why community leaders invest in making good relationships with the local priests and pastors to have the backing of both churches.

More importantly, for many people in the communities of San José Villanueva, the idea of God has been a key strategy to gain resilience and hope in their quest to secure water. Among all the women interviewed, most confirmed that they usually pray and ask God for help to get them water and/or make God inspire someone to help them. Once help comes, the women interviewed confirm that they 'just knew' that God's mysterious ways would make them finally achieve clean water access. Although it was crucial to pray and ask God for help, most women accepted that they had to complement that with their own efforts and do something about it, so that the final outcome could be achieved.

Women's water strategies of survival and the ideational power of God

As one of the community participants in a workshop for this research put it "We knew that the water project would advance, but only when God would change the minds and hearts of those with water control". For those who used religion as an ideational frame to understand water governance one process for change was clear. It was clear that God (or someone with the help of God) had to change the minds and hearts of those controlling the gates to water resources. Making that change happen would be one of the main objectives of those organisations working with the communities.

For ACUA's social activist, Edy Tejada, the real surprise is that among many of the water initiatives promoted, it was hard to mobilise people, even when the communities themselves recognised their water poverty and scarcity. People as she says "would mobilise in masse for other themes, not for water. An example is the protest and subsequent marches for the right to water would not gather anything near to the number of people mobilised against the privatisation of health or other topics" (Tejada, 2013).

For Edy Tejada , the problem is that poor people affected by water scarcity do not visualise the critical nature of the water access problem they are having. Using the simile of the frog

that does not realise that she is being boiled; in the same way, people do not realise the real extent of the water degradation that they have just because they can still access water. Even if it appears difficult to them, the fact is that they can still access water even if it is admittedly less in terms of quality and quantity. In other words, only when people reach a tipping point would the communities start making changes. However, what could the tipping point for the communities be?

For Tejada (Tejada, 2013), the tipping point has still not been reached by the communities of SJV. Some people have protested, but many have 'normalised' their situation. In a meeting with Sergio Alfaro from the community of Escalón Centro and María Mejía from the community of Sosa:

"Our regional work has been long running. Before these initiatives of the 'committees', we had already formed COPAMA, CORCULL, we had done many forums with ACUA, with SEFE, with the National Water Forum. In the end, the experience we accumulated in the community organisation became key. I had hoped that COPAMA, the organisation that works for the environment and water would be able to become the central structure at municipal level and strengthen all the rural areas. But the problem was that they gained too much of a protagonist role and this was their mistake. They did not centralise any mechanism to influence the communities and see the results of this effort."

Research interviews detected that swarm tactics for social mobilisation triggered by religious analysis and political interpretations of current events were common practice. When asking people, one by one, they confirmed that along with going to community meetings, they prayed. In their prayers, they would pray for something specific to happen, such as the creation of a new water project. This religious association gave FIHIDRO, as a potential new project that could help supply the communities with water, a completely new connotation for many people.

Knowledge is Power: When Being Power Savvy Counts

Leadership in the communities is hard to acquire and maintain. ADESCOs are left with an immense and troubling quantity of problems and little resources to solve them. People have limited options in terms of the amount of time they can invest. Noticeably leadership in the communities was structured in the following way.

The communities gathered around the leadership of Sergio Alfaro from the Escalón Centro community. In effect, this leadership was noticeable from the very start. Sergio Alfaro's credentials gave them this unique way of persuasion. Because the majority of the community leaders were agriculture peasants their level of education was noticeably low. Many had just gone to primary or secondary school at the most. However, Sergio had gone to university and was studying Law at that period (2010-2012). This changed directly the way the communities were led. He could understand what were their rights. He would be the one that would become in effect the general strategic leader. The committee of communities would be led by him. Sergio would be engaging almost on conditions of equality in dialogues with the local authorities such as the municipality of San José Villanueva. Sergio would be engaged in trying to connect with institutions that could help better their communities' quest for water. This is how Sergio became the 'man-to-go-to' for many of the people in the communities not just for leadership, but also for advice on various issues. Whereas many of the people in the community had not even any notion of how to use a computer, Sergio would be able to write letters in a computer as well as give orientation and 'cunning' political ideas and strategies for water access. In fact, he could use technology that other could not and had access to devices that others could not, such as his own tablet for writing and recording meetings.

In a meeting with ANDA's regional office the communities were already prepared. While some like Sergio would do the hard talking with the authorities, others would be recording the conversation and taking pictures with their cell phones to secure photographic and voice evidence that the meeting had in fact occurred. They would also request signatures

and statements of intent that whatever these authorities would say to them, they would have sufficient evidence with them to back up their promises. From this evidence, it is easy to see that the communities were prepared to pressure ANDA using the best of their capabilities.

The rare, but precious skillset of some members of the communities would come in not just handy for the communities' but critical for their own power relations with other institutions. Sergio had as support in the community, a young doctor named "Juan"³⁰ educated in Cuba. The doctor was well respected, even though he was one of the youngest members in the community's leadership. Again, part of his success as leader was that Juan had a university level skillset. His knowledge provided him with legitimacy to participate in the leadership of the community and people would be more open to advice or listen to his ideas.

A key activity for the communities was to pressure ANDA and the municipality to react to their requests of help for water governance. The first hurdle they had to jump was the fact that they had to find some technical support, studies to support their request. ANDA requires that the communities provide a 'feasibility study'. This is not an easy request to make. The communities did not have the knowledge or funding for this. However, the communities of San José Villanueva found an answer to this by contacting ACUA and ACUA contacting ISF. ISF provided the knowledge and resources including the technical engineers to make a complete hydrological study of the area of La Libertad that would map the complete situation and the necessities of the communities in terms of water access. In other words, the process came to be like this:

³⁰ Asked for his name not to be disclosed.

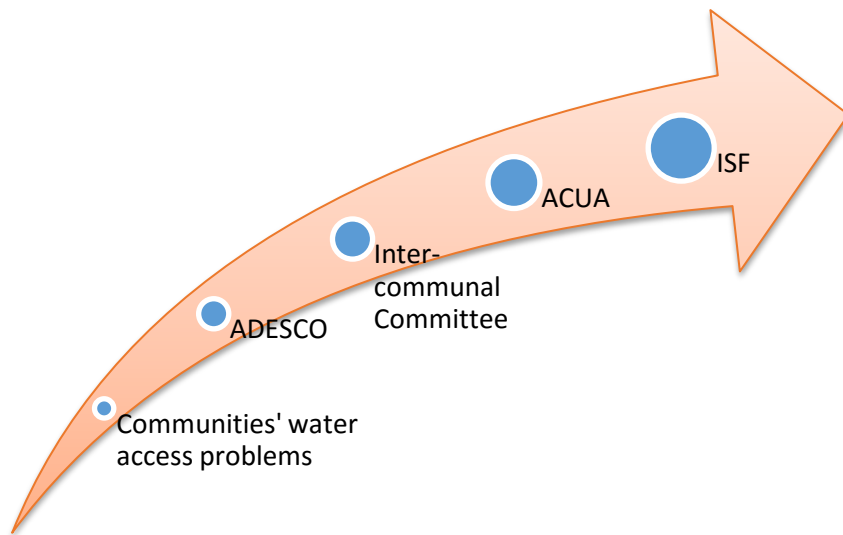


Figure 45: Communities Going Upstream For Help

The communities trying to find a way to make the national institutions listen and respond to their water needs became in fact ‘maze runners’ of an institutional labyrinth. However, their capabilities allowed to visualise a unique opportunity. The community leaders learnt that the committee in the rich residential neighbourhood of La Hacienda were also having problems with water access and wanted to accelerate ANDA’s response. They also noted another nuance. Their representatives in the committee were divided over the idea of including the communities or not in this request. There were some people in La Hacienda’s committee that did not care, but others did. Sergio Alfaro arranged meetings with those more sympathetic towards the communities. The plan was that making an alliance they could present a unified request for water to ANDA.

Figure 46: Communities of SJV: Pragmatic Alliances



Source: Own construction

Instead of making them their enemies, which was very easy to do, the communities recognised the fact that it was the powerful families and interests of those in La Hacienda who could push forward the process of connecting the pipes and getting the service from ANDA. They recognised that water flows to the powerful. In fact this situation were the powerful always win water access was recognised in the interview with the mayor of San José Villanueva, Pedro Durán.

The community 'maze runners' were pragmatic and saw opportunities where others had not seen it. Those in counter-hegemonic water networks did not see that there could be the possibility of negotiating with those in the rich neighbourhoods. It was simply out-of-the question. Polarisation in El Salvador explains a lot of the mistrust. If the communities had not taken this step, they would have been waiting for many months more and the outcome of how many pipes and connections to the water system would have been insecure.

For the purposes of gaining evidence for this research, communications with ANDA to know more about FIHIDRO were difficult and secretive from the beginning. In fact, many interviewees noted that getting to interview the ANDA's President Marco Fortín was a serious hurdle (he would dodge all interviews giving excuses of diverse nature). In addition, getting public access to the contents of the FIHIDRO project was prohibited. This denial of information proved in this research has had serious consequences for the communities affected by water deprivation in La Libertad. They simply could not know the nature of the project and the impact it could have on its capabilities to access water. In El Salvador, the government had already approved the Law for Transparency of Information in 2010. However, even with this Law in place, ANDA's offices formally denied access to information about FIHIDRO. An official written request for the FIHIDRO document by ANDA's offices noted:

"In relation to [the request for the FIHIDRO document], such type of information is contemplated in the exceptions defined in Article 24 of the Public Information Law and in Article 39 of the statute of this Law as confidential information, and that such information will remain so indefinitely in time, the Agreement in this requested project contains rights and obligations that are exclusively pertinent to those entities participating in the signature of this document" (See appendix 2: ANDA's information denial, emphasis by the author)

If a researcher cannot be entitled to have access to FIHIDRO, what kind of access to this information may the communities of San José Villanueva have to the actual information? Denial to access information about key water governance issues affecting poor people in San José Villanueva and across the province of La Libertad illustrates how power relations operate in material and ideational ways. *Decision making processes* affecting the poor have been made elsewhere by those in power. The poor in turn have absolutely no idea on the impacts those decisions will have in their water access freedoms. If public funds from ANDA are obviously contained in FIHIDRO, the question is how is it possible to close public scrutiny? What kind of public accountability has ANDA for the communities and for the

public in general? Are all Public Private Partnership initiatives in water governance going to be shielded by a wall of secrecy?

Jumping into FIHIDRO, making alliances with La Hacienda

The communities inter-alliance, plus the knowledge they had gained from collaborating with ISF and ACUA, gave them capabilities to pressure ANDA for their right to access water and overcome the passivity with which the municipality of San José Villanueva had dealt with their problem. The communities would not allow the fog of diffused responsibilities from the State to disorient them from achieving their water access goal. They would learn the names of who's who inside each institution and would keep the pressure using diverse tactics.

Indeed, San José Villanueva community leaders like Sergio cared to build a power relations map about who's who and their responsibilities in their water access problem. For instance, the community leaders learnt that the Spanish Cooperation Agency (AECID) had given millions of Euros to the government of El Salvador to be used in favour of rural communities' water access. Sergio Alfaro as a community leader was prepared to jump ANDA's blockage and go directly to their 'donor'. In other words, community leaders like Sergio Alfaro illustrated the importance of being 'power savvy'.

The communities found ways within the system to get their water by learning who talk to and about what. For them, a key strategy was to talk about their incorporation into FIHIDRO's priorities. Since their efforts back in the early 2000s until 2013 ANDA had only given denials or empty promises. ANDA would continually reply that their aim was to invest and connect rural communities to the national water grid. However, time went by and all of these promises were continuously falling into empty space. ANDA kept shifting the goal posts.

Agency/Social Structure Axis: Water or Golf?

From the moment of research (2010-2014) until its completion a few hundred meters from the communities of San José Villanueva, El Encanto Villas & Golf, the biggest and most exclusive golf course in Central America was being built. The transnational company Dye Golf made the design and Guatemalan and Salvadorean capital lead the joint venture. These investors intend to have the mega-project operational by mid-2015. However, already different stages of the golf course had been finished by 2014. The contrast between the sheer luxuries of the home villas of El Encanto and the household of the communities of San José Villanueva could not be bigger. El Encanto sells each house for more than \$260, 000 and only its residents and a percentage of foreigners who are prepared to buy the membership many join the El Encanto club. However, El Encanto's social exclusion and potential predatory impacts on the natural ecosystem and the hydrological balance of that region has alarmed social activists and the communities of San José Villanueva. ISF had already demonstrated in their hydrological analyses of the region that southern La Libertad had already highly depleted water resources supplies.

On top of the environmental and hydrological impact, El Encanto's Golf Club and Villas as a project oriented for the rich sectors of El Salvador and abroad, contrasts with the general poverty of San José Villanueva. Poverty kicks in multiple ways and ditches vulnerable people at the margins of society with less freedoms and rights than others. On average 23.3% of the rural poor cannot read nor write in El Salvador, a percentage that rises up to 30% if the person is a woman (MINED, 2014). A book to read about water as a human right could cost \$17.50 on average on local libraries in El Salvador. A book at that price would have equalled 15% of today's rural minimum wage (\$113.70) (MTPS, 2014). To be born poor and to grow poor can be damning in rural areas of El Salvador.

Another factor that appeared at every interview and observation process was that of education. In one of the workshops done for this research, some community leaders (at least two) could not sign the assistance form, because they could not read nor write.

Following Paolo Freire's view that critical education empowers to change the world it is also here true, that the lack of it closes the view for change. Among the most educated individuals of the seven communities questioned was Sergio Alfaro. So was the Juan, the doctor. However, community members less politically savvy than Sergio or other educated leaders would lack the same kind of leadership initiatives. This is why the best description of the power relations strategies used by San José Villanueva's poor was to act as a swarm following leaders with more knowledge on water politics, but also learning from everyone else's scattered and 'weak' bits of knowledge. The communities relied on networks of hidden, less evident interactions of solidarity and different ways of coping with the lack of water access. Ideationally too, their strategies were influenced by their limited interpretations of their reality. They tended to favour more short-term kind of actions. The communities would as a whole miss out the causality factors of their water access deprivation. Their water access deprivation was taken more as a given and therefore became more accepting and conformist rather than frontally resisting. In their acceptance, the communities inadvertently plunged into dynamics of 'collective coping' survival strategies rather than more structural solutions.

Despite all of this, men and women in the communities of San José Villanueva also demonstrated that they may be weak and vulnerable, but not powerless. They used their agency, achieving more subtle changes. Although the communities did not engage directly in changing the water governance system like other counter-hegemonic networks (e.g. National Water Forum), they tweaked and used the few decision-making spaces they could enter to bring change. Power relations of survival translated in water access strategies completely different to other hegemonic and counter-hegemonic networks.

For instance, ACUA tried to make people conscious and politically aware about their human right to water, but in many occasions, this exercise became an uphill road. ACUA found out too soon that the concept of 'human right' in water politics is not exactly useful for the poor. It is a concept far too abstract in El Salvador. That is why one of the key 'water as a

human right' campaigns in the country had to change its key slogan from "water as a human right" to a simpler, more straightforward message: "water is ours". The poor would mobilise to that message, rather than the idea of a 'right'.

People's weak agency capabilities means continuing the water governance status quo.

Edy, a social activist from ACUA knows how difficult is to mobilise people at the community level. She argues that for every social activist, many more passively engage in activities destined to solve the community's water problem. These passive people choose to 'go with the flow' and engage in water activities only once they are very easy to get. For instance, many members of San José Villanueva's communities joined in only when they were sure that a water community project was almost at reach. Other times, passive community members would support a cause only if someone they know or believe in was also joining in or leading the project.

Most community members in San José Villanueva chose not to lead, but rather to follow others and they never proactively fomented organisation activities. Moreover, these community members would not even question or critically analyse the need to engage in social activism. For many, they could even be dismissive of water politics activists seeking to solve their collective water problem, arguing that doing so relies on a view they don't share: that the earthly problems of the world like clean water scarcity may be solved by the ways of men and women and not by God. Those with religious views believed, water access would ultimately be solved by a Higher Force, that is, God. Passive community members did not see themselves as passive thought. They saw themselves as active, for they would pray each and every day that the Lord provide them with a way to access water. If the Lord brought them a water project or not is "up to Him" so let it be.

'Let it be'

In a way, the community's organisation resembles a pattern about community participation in El Salvador research institutions such as IUDOP and UNDP have found in other aspects of

people's agency. When engaging with 'empowering the community' the most important fact is to know that sometimes less than a tenth of that community will be active in seeking a solution of the water problem. The rest may just be preoccupied with surviving, that is, getting alive to the end of the month and then the next. Water, as vital as it may be, sometimes does not mobilise people as, for example, other material 'things' of their existence that enable them to lead a decent and valuable life. They may mobilise themselves and start acting upon other matters that appear urgent and that may bring immediate 'relief' to the hardships of their existence. For instance, the construction of a road was one of the examples given by ACUA in which people's mobilisation reached the peak of mobilisation for many communities.

The research asked through interviews to community leaders why is it that mobilisation for the construction of a road gets more people engaged than, for example, securing clean water access? Surely ensuring everyone had clean and secure water access could be more important than many other things? It ought to be as priority as life itself?

Community leaders such as Alejandra Ramírez and Sergio Alfaro argue that everyone is engaged first with things that they each individual ranks in a different scale of importance, according to their own individual assessment of prioritisation. Although rationally speaking, ensuring clean water access in affordable, reliable and regular flows may be crucial for someone to ensure that they lead a healthy and valuable life, it may not appear so crucial for poor people. This may be counter-intuitive. This is because poor people in San José Villanueva have come to *normalise* their water access deprivation and therefore have de-politicized it.

Interestingly, clean water access had stop being a concern for the main town of San José Villanueva. They had secured access with ANDA. Couldn't the proximity of this town centre trigger the other communities' envy for a clean water access that is as regular as them? Apparently, another barrier that characterise many of these marginal collectives is that they often do not have time to engage in these activities and the 'rebellious' nature of these,

may be seen as a threat' or sometimes that engaging in these things is just 'a foolish waste of time'. Pessimistic views about their chances to get access to water prevail in these evaluations of how and when to engage in clean water access struggles and their chances to get out of these 'fights' victorious. They see themselves as powerless and in their self-evaluation, they subtract power to themselves. In the UNDP human development reports of El Salvador, this characteristic of powerlessness has been found to be strongly present within the poorest people in the country.

On another level, San José Villanueva's women, displayed the most important social practices of alternative resistance in the communities. Women in these communities often do not involve themselves in social activism, not because they do not want to, but simply because they are hands-tied. They are assigned family duties that constitute a burden in their time and their levels of agency and empowerment to act. Therefore, their practices of alternative ways of resistance are with one another. They go to the river together to wash their clothes, they give themselves moral support and although they might not be radically changing their situation, they are in fact, alleviating their problems and most importantly, they are surviving.

The women of the communities of San José Villanueva are all different but they have certain things in common and those that do not become water activists, resist and secure water in other ways. From the perspective of an outsider, the perception is that these people, especially women, are passive because of their levels of non-confrontation and lack of visible actions. In addition, they may seem not critical of the structural water injustice they live and do not engage up in arms for radical social change. But this perspective of passivity would be a mistake. San José Villanueva's engage in commitments from the individual to the communitarian level to get hold of water.

The micro cosmos of San José Villanueva depicts with extreme accuracy the wider social inequalities and the normalisation of social injustice of El Salvador. Whereas the rich residential neighbourhoods like La Hacienda, El Encanto Villas & Golf, Miramar, and others

not far from where they live, enjoy freedoms and rights simply inaccessible to most of the population that range from enjoying luxuries of material wealth like swimming pools, cisterns, lush green gardens well irrigated and access to clean, potable water whenever they want it thanks to their own water treatment plant and the necessary level of income, in contrast, the communities of San José Villanueva have experienced hardships of water access to which no one has been accountable for.

The problem is systemic and the particular social structure of Salvadorean neoliberal capitalism has deepened the disadvantages that stem from class, gender, even racial characteristics. These factors are rarely factored in the conditions of water governance in the country because somehow they seem unrelated to water. However, the story of the lives of real people in San José Villanueva reveal something remarkably different.

The waters of the Aquiquisquillo River reveal particular obstacles that vulnerable people within the communities of San José Villanueva have to beat in order to get access to water. Obstacles arise from El Salvador's unique social structure. Having agency means having the capability to change conditions of structural nature. The agency people have to beat those obstacles is different depending on each person's own capabilities. The capabilities to access water are not the same for a woman, a child, an elderly person, a disabled person, or someone who is extra-vulnerable due to specific social stigmas, cultural barriers given by race, class or gender. The people of San José Villanueva have used their agency to find and access clean water: their material/ideational and local/global power showed how they were able to connect with the right people at the right time across scales and surpass ideological barriers with pragmatism to make unsuspected political alliances with those in La Hacienda. Women have their own views about who to pressure or not given their limited reach: "Yes, we do know who to ask, the Mayor! But here no Mayor has ever done anything about water" (Interview: Burgos 2013)

A Cautionary Tale: Women Chained to Rivers and Water Springs

In Central American Folklore, women and children frequently appear depicted as suffering spirits wondering rivers and water springs. One such narrative appears in the legend of *La Siguanaba and El Cipitío* in El Salvador. According to the legend, La Siguanaba is a beautiful indigenous woman who walks along the banks of rivers and water springs, naked and she is usually washing up clothes. From a distance, she is so good-looking that she attracts unfaithful men and lures them to come near her to isolated gorges. However once they have gotten closer, she turns around and reveals her true self; she is really a horrendous creature, with long pendulous breasts, which she drags along the river stones and long nails, long matted hair, and an ugly face like a witch. The sheer sight of this horror scares these men so much that it makes them lose their minds.

This common folk tale widely used in El Salvador illustrates interesting underpinnings about Salvadorean gendered patterns of social exclusion linked to water. La Siguanaba in the past had been originally called Sihuehuet (“beautiful woman” in Nahuatl). However, Sihuehuet had been a bad woman in two counts. First, she had been unfaithful to her warrior husband when he was at war and second, Sihuehuet had been a bad mother relegating her motherly duties as she was investing time to meet her lovers.

Cipitio was the bastard offspring she had with one of her lovers. Cipitio had a big belly because he was badly fed and out of hunger, he had been eating ashes and worms. For being an unfaithful wife and a bad mother, Tlaloc, the water god had cursed her to become this hopeless spirit forever tied to rivers and water springs where she would remain crying, attracting unfaithful men and washing up clothes until the end of time always looking for her bastard child, Cipitio. As part of the curse, this woman would always be called Sihuanaba (“hideous woman” in Nahuatl) and Cipitio would remain a boy for eternity.

According to some scholars, the Siguanaba and Cipitio legend may have been brought and adapted in different variations to Central America from Spain during the Colonial Period,

used by the colonists as a means of exercising control over the indigenous and mestizo population on cultural issues they believed important in the context of Catholicism. Today, traces of this machismo culture and social practices related to water can be seen reproduced in present day El Salvador.

Figure 47: Salvadorean River's Wondering Spirits : Depictions of La Siguanaba & Cipitio



Source: Google Images

Today, five centuries after Colonialism poor Salvadorean women are still found in most rivers, gorges and water springs washing up clothes and suffering particular gender types of exclusion, which shape their relationship with water. Tlaloc's curse seems to have extended to this day. From as early as 4 am or late evenings women from the communities of San José Villanueva this study found them to be scattered all along the banks of river Aquiquisquillo washing up their families' clothes and spending long hours carrying this water back to their homes. Poor children with these women are also modern day *Cipitios*, chronically underfed and drinking such contaminated waters of the Aquiquisquillo river with faeces and parasites it is not hard to imagine their risks of water-borne diseases.

Figure 48: Woman washing up clothes in river Aquiquisquillo



Source: Own picture

María³¹ says she has lived in the community of San José Villanueva for all of her life. Being 80 years old, she says that she remembers a time in which the community's river flowed with force and where they could drink clean water straight from the river. She remembers jumping in the gorges and twists of the river. It was not only that the river Aquisquillo was wider, deeper and cleaner but there were also many more sources such as natural springs and smaller gorges and rivers. Women's own experiences reflect their situation:

³¹ Not her real name, anonymous interview in San José Villanueva

“Sometimes I come here to wash, but I end up not doing it because [river Aquiquisquillo’s water] it is just too dirty.” (Interview: Burgos 2013)

“People come here from 4:30 am to get washed and wash up clothes because then they have to go to work.” (Interview: Burgos 2013)

The extreme hours these women use to get to the river and other water springs, be it midnight or dawn also revealed strategies of survival in themselves. According to accounts from all San José Villanueva community women interviewees and from visual observations documented in pictures (see fig. 48), river Aquiquisquillo starts to drastically diminish the quantity and quality of its flow at around 7 am. According to them, this is due to the water extraction pressures coming further upstream from rich residential neighbourhoods like La Hacienda and Miramar. The women know that the river starts decreasing its flow and accumulate foam and bad smell and colour when most people living upstream start getting up and use water for their daily chores. As soon as the people from the upper class neighbourhood jump in the shower, and use their washing machines, dishwashers, water to wash their cars, irrigate their gardens, or maintain their swimming pools they start extracting water that gets processed in their own water treatment plant from the river. For this reason, the women start their day as early as possible to do their washing and pick up water for drinking even if this means going at difficult times.

With one added caveat. A woman of any age in El Salvador frequently faces risk when walking at dawn or at night in public but often isolated places like rivers, water springs or gorges. As seen in chapters 1 and 2, El Salvador is a society that has been recognised by having one of the most violent crime rates in Latin America and a high percentage of them are gender related crimes.

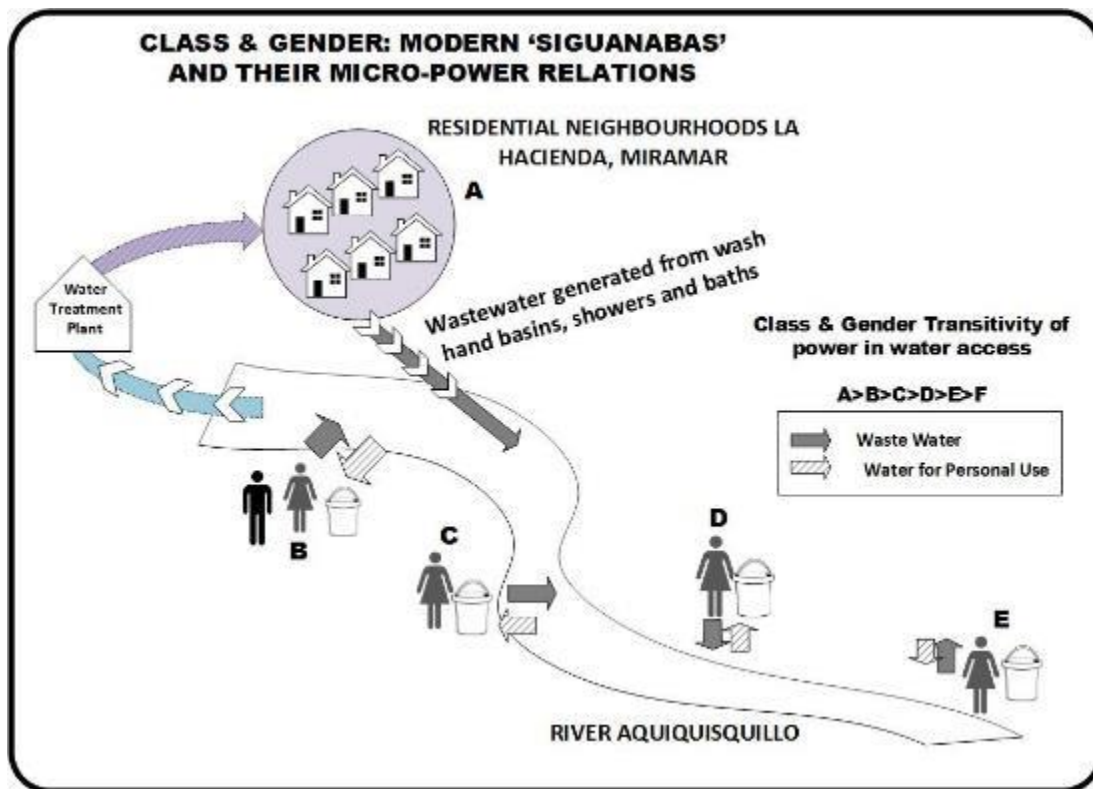
The risk of violence, sexual harassment and even rape increase for women living in socially deprived areas of El Salvador. Although violent gang related problems are not as high in San

José Villanueva as in other urban areas in the country, many of the women stated their uncomfortable feeling of going to the river to wash themselves or their clothes.

An additional obstacle that reveals the way power relations shape women's water access is also the competition they themselves experience in the river. The further upstream a woman allocates herself the better water she will have available for her own washing. However as each woman uses washing up detergent, soap, chlorine upstream those further downstream will have accumulated more and more of those chemicals. Those who arrive earlier get the best places, but those who arrive at the same time often face a territorial kind of dispute.

Depending on the fierceness of character each woman tests the other to see who will get the best place. As the scholar, writer and community organiser Saul Alinsky noted in his book *Rules for Radicals* "Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have" (Alinsky, 1971, p. 127). Thus, a kind of social hierarchy forms along the river. Those who were the last to arrive or could not position themselves forcefully enough in the social hierarchy that forms along the river would have to accept to be allocated last on the downstream with the foreseeable consequence they would get the worst flows of the stream. The balance of interpersonal power relations usually favours those women that display more empowered self-confidence on their political position in the community. Sometimes a woman may increase her chances to secure the best spot in the river if she comes with her own troop, that is, if she comes with more company, bringing with her, her husband, children, mother or close friends to the river. In fact, this is why sometimes as Alejandra explains, the riverbank of river Aquiquisquillo becomes a politically contested area.

Figure 49: Class & Gender Hierarchies in Water Access



Source: Own construction

Figure 50: Women washing clothes in River Aquiquisquillo, San José Villanueva



Source: Own construction

Figure 51: Dry and Dirty: River Aquiquisquillo's death chronicle



Source: Own picture

Evidence from interviews to women along the river Aquiquisquillo revealed that even when using clearly contaminated water, they remained oblivious to its consequences on their health and that of their families. “— *Do you suffer from any water related illnesses?* —No, to date we have not really. — *Do you drink from this water as it is or do you purify it, or do you*

get your drinking water from somewhere else? — “Some people purify this water, but we drink it this way. —*Do you not get sick?* —I have sometimes felt cramps from drinking this water and I have to go running to the toilet [he says laughing] —*And your children don’t suffer from diarrhoea?* — No thank God, no. We are immune.” (Interview: Burgos 2013)

María has to carry her water out from a weak and contaminated river just down the valley in an inaccessible creek about a mile from where she lives with her two children. It is hard work, especially because it is an incredibly difficult task to carry the buckets uphill in the burning sun of San José Villanueva, the municipality where she lives. She knows the water from the river is contaminated because a study she has seen from a local NGO has revealed that levels of contamination of the water flowing in the river are not deemed safe for human consumption, so she does not use it for drinking “only for washing the clothes, the dishes, to wash ourselves and for all the things around the house”. If she uses the water is by treating it with chlorine and putting it in the sun or more often than not, by buying it from the men coming in vehicles with potable water to fill up her storage tank. She knows, furthermore that it is good to keep some fish in the storage tank because this allows her to see that the water is safe for life. Because she is poor, she feels helpless and that she has no other options to change this “God wants us to be like this”.

The way this chapter is constructed is by discovering what authors have called the “liquid dynamics of power” because in the same way a scientist can sample the water in a river that flows, and were Heraclitus said that no water is the same, it is also true that in this flow of things, different elements compose this flow. The flow of these power relations can be synthesized in three flows, one that looks at the flows of power in terms of spatial social relations of power. Another, which looks at another type of flow that has distinct properties: how social relations distilled can be sampled in terms of material/ideational flows. The circle of change is always orchestrated in a way that is not always tangible, or visible.

For instance, if a woman lives in canton Los Amates and does not engage in the water conflict neither on the hegemonic or resistance spaces. She is therefore in the marginal collectives category. One could argue she has very little agency to act and affect the decision making processes that occur around her. For, on the one hand, she cannot read. This has nothing to do with her ability to understand what is at stake with water access, but she does not understand for example, complex terminologies such as “human right” or a “right”. Furthermore, she lives in partial submission to the power of her partner at home. She has to go and pick up the water and then go to the river together with a myriad of other women in the same situation as well as the girls to wash the clothes of the men. She suffers in higher degree the lack of access to water but she does not engage in the political struggle for her right to water access.

The fact is that because the social structure in El Salvador is highly unequal, i.e. it is structured in such ways that it resembles a pyramid. Those in the bottom of this social structure, become unable to access water due to the pressures of society, but also due to their own capability weaknesses.

Knowing Who to Tap to Bring Back the Water

Arguably El Salvador’s social structure is what locks in many of the patterns of social exclusion including water access inequalities. But for some of the poor, the key is to know to tap into to get water. The municipal mayor of San José Villanueva was not viewed as an ally at all: “—Are you happy with your water access situation or have you asked for help to the Mayor? —No we’re not happy with it, but no one has done anything to change this water situation, We’re always told lies.” (Interview: Burgos 2013). The communities of San José Villanueva learnt the hard way that institutional dams could be open or close depending on the people. Poor people’s water politics and the strategies they used for change depended

principally on the way they mapped their social reality, learning who's who in order to influence change.



Conclusions: Winning Battles But Not The War

"It cost too much, staying human." (Sterling, 2006)

The map of key social actors for the communities of San José Villanueva and their power relations have shown that they are relatively disconnected in local and global ways. They do not connect directly with transnational NGOs like Oxfam, but they have stronger links with ACUA, a local NGO that has been key to their quests. The power relations they present are hampered by conditions of gendered social inequality, lack of education. Their strengths in water governance lie in their faith networks and family ties. Communitarian leadership has meant that they have been able to address their water access problems in ADESCOs. However, their disconnection with the municipality has limited their advocacy effectiveness with national authority providers. Because they have been pushed to limits, the communities have looked pragmatically for options, which can render them effectively with clean water access. Even though they have been cooperating with organisations typically

counter-hegemonic like ACUA, they have been pragmatic and have use power strategies to insert themselves in the Public Private Partnerships initiatives like FIHIDRO. In 2014 they became successful in accessing clean water and this initiative was a product of their pragmatic link to powerful people from La Hacienda and using the PPP FIHIDRO as a tool to connect with ANDA.

Poor people have used their power of resilience and pragmatism to go beyond the ideological rifts affecting water politics in the country. They do not care about political streams of 'left' or 'right', or conceptual categories like a 'human right'. In fact, communities in San José Villanueva feel disconnected from idealisms that care about rights, as they don't make abstractions. Education levels are low, and basic needs are high. They have only themselves as platforms of trust and reliance so they do whatever it takes to survive. Materially water is for life and for survival; hence their ideational views are mostly defined by a one-dimensional utilitarian view of water. God perspectives help them go by and believe better water access time will come. Religion based organisations have helped mobilise and de-mobilise in equal measure the communities activism. On another level, their spiritual disconnection with water is observed. It seems this is why they do not seem to care about water pollution either. It is as if they have grown a 'thickened outer core' of resilience that allows them to see the short term, but not the larger picture. In the long term, these communities may not be able to have access to water at all from river Aquiquisquillo due to its contamination processes. Power relations cross all points of the water access hydro-social cycle these communities present. The following chapter will extend the hegemonic aspect of these relationships.

5. HEGEMONIC WATER ACTORS: STRATEGIES OF DOMINANCE



Introduction

This chapter's key aim is to investigate how hegemonic water actors use their power in action to achieve their objectives in El Salvador's water governance. In turn, the analysis also includes how these strategies affect poor people's capabilities to access clean and sustainable water in El Salvador. The chapter anchors its analysis on a case study of seven poor communities living in the semi-rural region of San José Villanueva, province of La Libertad, El Salvador. The first three parts analyse each a dimension of power in which hegemonic water actors perform their strategies to achieve their objectives: first the local/global, second, the material/ideational axis and third, the agency/social structure axis of power. The fourth section integrates these into one and analyses their outcomes in relation to their objectives, and in relation to poor people's water access. Finally, the fifth part critically evaluates the implications of the key findings and concludes.

Figure 52: Map of El Encanto Villas & Golf Project in San José Villanueva



Source: (El Encanto, 2014)

Local/Global Axis of Power: Going Viral With Quantum Leaps

To understand what has been going on in the battle for clean water access and control in El Salvador, it is crucial to identify the key social actors in this field. The most important social actors belong to organisational bodies that already have well established influential roles in the governance structure of the country. Identifying these organisations can sometimes present a challenge, as often they do not operate with an explicit political agenda. Many disguise their interests under layers of neutrality or ambiguous discourses. The common feature, which allows us to categorise these social actors as 'hegemonic', is their relative position of power in El Salvador's water governance and their political 'sign'. The identifying features are essentially based on ideational values. These are entities, individuals and organisations that see 'water-as-a-commodity' susceptible of being governed under market rules by the 'optimum' most efficient price.

Counter-hegemonic water groups subscribe to dominant neoliberal approaches streamed in today's globalisation processes. They see water governance as means to an end, that is, by controlling water and the rules that surround water they can use it to make a profit out of water. They occupy powerful positions of economic power in the country and encompass the 'elite' sectors of Salvadorean society. They exhibit dissonance between their stated position on water governance and the actual actions they do concerning water. They hold influential positions in key spaces where decision making processes in the country's governance.

The groups of people, organisations and networks outlined in this chapter constitute the key units of analysis of the chapter. How they connect with each other, how they make bonds with each other and use strategies to achieve their interests is what this chapter tries to discover. This chapter identifies the key social actors El Salvador's hegemonic water network by contrasting evidence from observation, interviews and a compilation of political, technical positions in key water governance conflicts.

Profile of Key Social Actors

All sectors of society including civil society, private enterprise and the state are represented in the map of hegemonic social actors in El Salvador. Regardless of the difficulties of classifying some of these organisations, the important pattern to note is that many organisations are already frequently involved in key decision-making processes in the country or are widely viewed to be 'influential'.

At the core of the great majority of water governance conflicts one name stands out from the rest in El Salvador: the National Association of Private Enterprise (ANEP). This organisation was established in 1966, as an organisational body designed to represent the interests of private enterprise in the country. It became the most iconic voice and supporter of the neoliberal revolution of pro-market policies during 20 years of government by the

right-wing political party, ARENA in 1990s post-war El Salvador (ANEP, 1996). ANEP's mission, in their own words, is succinct: "to foment and protect the system of free enterprise" and its vision "to be the most representative and credible body in the private sector *to influence the direction of the nation*" (italics emphasised here, (ANEP, 2014b). Because of its size, encompassing a network of more than 50 trade associations, representing 55 economic subsectors and over 14 thousand companies in the country, it is hard to deny the influential weight this association has in the country's economic governance.

ANEP is today a powerhouse of local to global capabilities. According to Bull (2012a) the evolution of business associations in Central America since the 1960s, reflects a trend in which many business groups shaped by "various international influences" have diffused and upgraded their presence beyond El Salvador's borders to Central America, Latin America and the world. These 'international forces' have both divided them and unified business groups and changed their nature, but with one feature in common: they have fundamentally increased their political, economic and technical muscles, that is, they now have much larger capacities and 'capabilities' to do and to be agents of influence in the country to extents they did not have before. ANEP's profile is an example of this. It is today an association that is in effect, already a network with powerful ties and skill sets in local/global ways. Although ANEP is traditionally defined as a national association, this research argues that this categorisation no longer applies in practice insofar as it ignores the changes in which this association has been involved and its internal power dynamics. As researchers studying the evolution of business groups in Central America in the last few years have shown, there has been a steady trend towards their transnationalisation (Segovia, 2005b, Bull, 2012b, Bull, 2006, Segovia, 2002b). Today, many of the biggest members in ANEP (banks, airlines, industries) are no longer organisations with national outreach linked via family ties, local alliances or national associations (Paniagua Serrano, 2002) but much more than that, they have become expressions of transnational local to global capital (Bull and Kasahara, 2012, Bull, 2008). This has happened in such way that it is

no longer accurate to define ANEP as a solid, static national organisation. ANEP could reasonably be defined as a 'liquid' local/global association, whereby many of its key and most prominent members have transformed into entities simultaneously connected across different societal scales.

Salvadorean Association of Industries (ASI), an affiliated member of ANEP, is an umbrella body for industry. It is important because it is one of the biggest business associations in ANEP and its membership includes organisations with a strong influence over the economic destiny of the bottled water industry e.g. *Embotelladora La Cascada*, *Industrias La Constancia (ILC)*, or with strong ties to industries that use water as fundamental part of its production process, e.g. agroindustrial industries such as rice: *Arrocera San Francisco*, sugar: *Compañía Azucarera Salvadoreña (CASSA)*, corn: *Derivados de Maíz de El Salvador (DEMASAL)* among others (ASI, 2013). At least 23 industrial sectors are represented by ASI. It has both economic weight and national/international significance. According to ASI the industries represented produce 92% of El Salvador's exports, contribute to 24% of the GDP and generate 40% of formal employment in the country (ASI, 2013, p. 7).

A member of both ANEP and ASI, *La Constancia Industries (ILC)*, is the biggest beverages company in the country. It produces and sells beer, soft-drinks and bottled water is today an illustrative example of an influential transnational corporation in the field of water governance in El Salvador. ILC is a member of ANEP. This corporation ceased to be Salvadorean owned in 2005. La Constancia was acquired by beverages company SABMiller plc, the second biggest brewery in the world (La Constancia, 2014) and has since become a subsidiary branch producing services for other transnationals like Coca Cola.

Every year ANEP generates several public events, policy papers, public statements, conferences and actions destined to influence decision-making bodies in the country. Since 2000, ANEP has organised the National Summit of the Private Enterprise (ENADE) and produced position documents for each of these yearly events that reflects their political views on pivotal governance issues in the country (ANEP, 2000). Water governance has

figured prominently as part of the environmental aspects of these ENADE documents, especially important for those published during 2010-2014. The most important effort to influence El Salvador's water governance has been the position document of ENADE 2014 (ANEP, 2014a, 52-93,191) destined to disseminate directly their own proposal of a General Water Law better suited to their needs and which they created to influence the process of the ongoing negotiations of this law in the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador.

By far the most important lobby association within ANEP and ASI and highly influential in the water governance sector is the Salvadorean Association of Bottled Water (ASIAGUA), which is the representative of the four key companies in the bottled water industry: Industrias La Constancia (ILC), Agua Alpina, Las Perlitas and Aquapura. These companies have a number of things in common; their longevity in the bottled water business, being among the very few in the country that have approved international certifications of water quality, such as: the Water Quality Association, the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF), the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA). In addition to its ties to ASI and ANEP, ASIAGUA has strong ties with the Salvadorean Chamber of Commerce and with transnational business groups such as the Latin American Bottled Water Association. ASIAGUA's mission is in their words "to promote the culture of consumption of quality bottled water based on the concept of sustainable development for the benefit of consumers and partners while at the same time, representing the common interests of the industry" (ASIAGUA, 2014) (translation done by author). Again, in the same way as before, the transnational capabilities of ASIAGUA are significant as its members have transnational ties embedded to their business.

Another 'liquid' key organisation that illustrates the local/global character of hegemonic water governance players is the Salvadoran Business Council for Sustainable Development (CEDES). This association set up as the local chapter of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) was born in 1995 as a not-for-profit, public utility entrepreneurial foundation in El Salvador. Its charter based on the WBCSD vision to create

“business solutions for a sustainable world” follows its global objective of galvanising “the global business community to create a sustainable future for business, society and the environment” by sharing “best practices on sustainable development issues” and developing “innovative tools that can change the status quo”. This rather broad field of action has meant taking an advocacy role for businesses around the world to help “drive debate and policy change in favour of sustainable development solutions” (WBCSD, 2014). In this respect, their advocacy role has included influencing policy debates in what they consider, from a business perspective, to be better solutions in El Salvador’s water governance. CEDES holds among its members at least 35 corporations which include the beverages company Industrias La Constancia (ILC), construction development companies like Grupo Roble, sugar companies like CASSA and CORINCA, conservative right-wing leaning newspaper media companies like La Prensa Gráfica, El Diario de Hoy and El Mundo and banks like Scotiabank, Davivienda, industrial companies like Sherwin-Williams and Unilever among others (CEDES, 2014). Significantly, many of these corporations are also already expressions of transnational capital themselves and therefore also bring transnational interests to the advocacy role.

In the academic sector, the Salvadorean development think-tank FUSADES has played a very important role in providing a source of knowledge, ideology and discourse to influence and change the outcomes of various economic, environmental and water governance debates in the country.

In the media, the right-wing newspapers, La Prensa Gráfica, El Diario de Hoy and El Mundo have historically had close ties with corporate agendas in the country, already evidenced in past research (see) In terms of environmental and water governance the logic has been to follow the lead of ANEP, CEDES and FUSADES’s discourses, amplified through their local/global outreach in the media including channels like Twitter, online media, written press, radio, television and public events. The local/global presence today of many entities

in this cluster has meant that their strong campaigning coverage can influence local/global conflicts by swinging public opinion according to their interests.

From a political perspective, the main player, tightly linked to the above hegemonic players, is the right-wing political party Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA). Founded in 1989, it was created with the aim of promoting neoliberal policies. Its rule of 20 years, from 1989 till 2009 was plagued by scandals of corruption in the institutions that had the role of supplying clean water access to the Salvadorean population. The most recent example is the prosecution of ex-president Francisco Flores for stealing tens of millions of US dollars in aid donations destined for victims of the earthquakes experienced in 2001. Similarly, in 2004, a network of corruption was exposed in ANDA linked to the ex-president of ANDA, Carlos Perla that resulted in the siphoning off of millions of dollars intended for water access projects.

Finally, there are those entities deemed in Salvadorean society to be 'neutral social actors' such as UNDP, the Catholic and Protestant churches, the Inter-American development bank and other international organisation such as USAID, SICA a Central American body dealing with water issues. They either see themselves as neutral, because they see themselves as politically disengaged or because they do not comply with all of the hegemonic principles of water governance and rather sit on the borderline between hegemonic side of water governance in El Salvador.

In 2009, the left-wing political party, a former guerrilla movement, FMLN under the presidency of Mauricio Funes came into power by winning the presidential elections that year and ending the historical legacy of 20 years of neoliberal policies and tightly knitted collaborative schemes between ARENA and the private sector mostly visible in the alliances with ANEP. However, this did not radically change the course of environmental and water governance policies because the leads of economic power have been there.

Expressions of these fuzzy set of 'neutral' and very elastic institutions have been the Central American body dealing with water issues, SICA; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in El Salvador and others.

Among the above described hegemonic social actors, there are principally three which have influence and play a leading role in the water access conflict lived by the communities of San José Villanueva. First, it is the role of the local/global social actor Grupo Roble, part of ASI, ANEP, CEDES and transnationally linked with business groups from Guatemala and Panama. This business group constructed the rich residential zone La Hacienda right at the heart of the community, appropriating land and vital water resources used for the community's livelihoods. Furthermore, the river Aquisquillo became the main source of fresh water for the residents of the new residential zone putting pressure on its flow in two ways: Firstly by extracting water for their own use with pumps upstream in the river which reduced the water flow to the villages and secondly, contaminating the river with grey³² water expelled further downstream in the river.

Local/Global Interests and Objectives

The uniting factor between hegemonic water actors is the way they perceive water. Broadly, they view it as a commodity, an economic good susceptible to privatisation and one that can

³² Grey water is a term used to describe flows of water that are polluted by domestic usage excluding sanitation

be governed according to the rules of the market. As many interviews revealed (for instance) the overall objective is to control the water governance regime and the different uses of water in the country according to market-based principles. A critical analysis of the content aspect of these interests from a perspective of power will be dealt in the section on material/ideational axis of power, as there are many nuances that need to be explored. For this section the analysis explores how these interests and objectives have a common local/global link and character using the case study of San José Villanueva. Water access has been the focus of the conflicts in this region and municipality as explored in chapters 2 and 4.

Powerful water actors in this region have transnational presence and interests. These are reflected in the local/global conferences, events, programmes, projects and policies that the above-mentioned social actors have created around the issue of water access. In the case of the local region of San José Villanueva, the interests of hegemonic players have focused on ensuring water access security for their business projects.

The province of La Libertad is part of a major investment route for projects foreseen to expand tourism and businesses along the main arteries of the province and especially along its coast. One example of these mega-investments in the region is another local/global player, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), an independent US foreign aid agency set up to “help lead the fight against global poverty” (MCC, 2014). El Salvador was the winner of a five-year grant phase 2 of the MCC in 2013 and the chosen projects focus on making the region of La Libertad a touristic hub, with new residential projects, golf courses, and malls. As explained in chapter 2, projects like El Encanto Villas & Golf and Residential La Hacienda have been linked to major local/global interests in the water resources of this province and the nation as a whole.

Water security implies considering that in order to sell these projects, they first have to be viable, and water access is a key condition for this. It matters because for the transnational projects in this area, the reasons entail maximizing the extraction of benefits, but for this

the maximization of extraction of water resources is necessary. Furthermore, these projects consider a big part of the consumer interest, not just the local rich elite, but plainly directed to elites around the world. The Golf course and residential El Encanto is an example of this. It is a project has been especially designed to cater to the needs not of the average Salvadorean but of those who elites that can afford to live in “a Perfect Lifestyle where you can breathe fresh air, live in tranquillity in a developed world residential complex, ecologically balanced, with top technology, surrounded by mountains and in the middle of a majestic golf club” (El Encanto, 2014) (Author’s translation). All this comes for a price in water resources, and this shall be discussed in the next section.

The local/global ties of large scale-projects like these are formed from an investment trend focused on exploiting the natural resources and locations close to the coast for touristic purposes and the maximisation of benefits. They are in demand from well off Salvadoreans and foreigners living in the already crowded city of San Salvador seeking for alternative living spaces. In El Salvador, golf is a sport played mostly by elites. Therefore the golf aspect of these residential urbanisations gives clues about what kind of exclusive consumerist market it is directed at.

However, in order to complete these projects, water security has to come from somewhere and this is where the project FIHIDRO enters the scene. FIHIDRO is a public-private partnership, a ‘collaboration’ between the water services provider ANDA and a consortium of corporations. The corporations are need ANDA to guarantee that their urbanisation projects are supplied with sufficient clean water. A deposit fund was created financed by these corporations to ensure an expansion of the water services which would also entail providing the neighbouring local communities with water services too. The point of the fund was as these corporations stated a “win-win” situation. Water would be provided for all thanks to this private investment and the diligence of ANDA in making sure that it did so. Many social activists denounced FIHIDRO as part of a trend in public-private partnerships that have proliferated not with the primary objective of providing clean water access, but

rather profit-based needs by transnational corporations that seek securing the expansion of their water-intensive projects.

Local/Global Strategies of Power

As discussed before, hegemonic water networks generate L/G social practices of many kinds. These can range from L/G events, programmes, projects, actions and publications to virtually every type of L/G activity or action that is designed to further their interests. For instance, a typical L/G social practice of a hegemonic water network may include networking events with water experts from all around the world. Conferences on water governance give ample opportunity to spread the contents of that conference through internet, social media, blogs, podcasts, YouTube videos, or even face to face conversations or workshops that can then be replicated by others. These L/G social practices eventually spread desired L/G policies, messages, and blueprints necessary to build the water governance frameworks they seek. By achieving these aims these social practices become automatically transcalar relations of power³³. In other words, the greater the networks' capabilities to connect locally and globally the greater the L/G power they enjoy and the more effective they are in achieving the outcomes they seek all around the world.

The social practices analysed here include social practices in water governance that were deemed as crucial by all the interviewees and that were cross-checked with field research both a local/global scales including different documentary sources of information. They all

³³ This L/G presence spreads particular material and ideational content. This 'content' will be examined in the M/I axis of power in the next section.

have a common theme: they are social practices oriented at pushing forward the specific agenda of global governance that the hegemonic networks pursue.

The common concern for all hegemonic social actors has been the pursuit of a GWL that regulates all social actors' actions and responsibilities to govern water in El Salvador. In the view of one of its members such as La Constancia/Saab Miller: "Water is a human right, but we need a good law that can help us govern this mess in which we're in." (SAB Miller 2013)

Among the many different strategies seen reflected in the social practices of the preceding section, there has been a noticeable pattern: local/global spaces where the big, transcendental decisions in water governance in the local and global arenas (as well as transcalar) are 'occupied', colonised or secured by the hegemonic water networks. The L/G power relations that characterise the colonisation of L/G spaces is the holistic nature of the L/G events, conferences, publications, among other actions that manufacture key material and ideational initiatives and spread them through the network in hybrid, highly efficient and 'speedy' ways. The velocity of institutional creation of spaces at the local level was noticeable with the creation of the 'Water Circle' initiative by the hegemonic water networks in El Salvador when the GWL was being discussed. In less than a year it had co-opted and become the most prominent site of discussion in El Salvador, even pushing aside the role that had been until previously given to the National Water Forum in El Salvador (which was deemed as part of the resistance networks).

Setting the Agenda From a Distance

There are a series of L/G tactics of power that are used by the hegemonic water networks. The first of these is denominated the 'Elephant in the Room manoeuvre': this represents the idea that hegemonic water actors in the local/global governance occupy L/G spaces so overwhelmingly and omnipresent that they virtually drown out other voices of governance to spaces of local/global marginality. This was seen in a variety of social practices, from the World Water Forums, the consultation processes in the General Water Law and the

communities clash to try and influence water policies and projects that affect them such as FIHIDRO. The power 'trick' is to occupy their L/G capabilities of hybrid, holistic presence across scales to occupy all the seats available in what would otherwise be deemed as an open participatory space apparently accessible to everyone. However, to enter the L/G spaces occupied by the hegemonic networks is so difficult that in practice the majority of forms of L/G participation are biased toward the powerful. The result is that spaces are created with clear L/G transcalar qualities but the seats are 'taken' or are 'too small', too few or too marginal to make equal influence as those in hegemonic positions of power or influence in the water sector.

Hegemonic power relations in water governance are clearly present in El Salvador's society. Key social actors in water governance structures recognise this. For instance, the following quote illustrates this phenomenon:

"I would say that the progress of the region in institutional support [for water access] has meant we face two central elements that are lagging behind in implementing modern standards. The first element is the governance of the sector. The second has to do with the **economic dimension and political economy of the sector, almost no one talks about it**, because behind ... actually when you talk that there are economic interests that delay this [water law],... I can not implement things they do not want to pay ... in the end the story of this is the political economy of water ... Behind the water and the productive sectors that have made use of the resource and have made use of the resource from our colonial era to date have not paid for this ... and we have a great sin, we are in a region that has plenty of water appeal really. (...) There is a factor of governance and there is a factor of political economy in the sense that there are economic sectors and sectors based on accumulation such as water industries, requiring extraction activities and key inputs like water. These industries are willing to be regulated, but they are not willing to pay, and some have never paid. Then these 'lobbies', these economic groups entrenched in the policies of our countries, in congress, political parties will put the brakes on a law, on a new institutional

framework that is emerging and has already incorporated this concept well , [that water is] economic and scarce (Artiga, 2013 12543) (translation and emphasis in bold by the author).

Developing Tight Networks of Water Governance

The second tactic of L/G nature is that of the *development of networks*. This could be seen as a 'spatial game' done between hegemonic water actors so that they can be *in situ* in key nodal decision points *when and where needed*. In this manner, they are able to influence the discussions in opportune moments and spaces, without causing any disturbance that could make them go detected. This is exemplified in the way the different water actors interchange local/global spaces in hybrid forms: for example an individual "X" is part of a Salvadorean development NGO called FUNDE *and* is also part of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) network *and* forms active part of the powerful lobbying group of the 'Water Circle' that pushes for reforms in the General Water Law (GWL) decision making processes. In this way, a single nodal point assembled in an individual becomes seemingly like interchangeable Matryoshka dolls, that is, it can change the way spaces are entered, perceived and hide away the different L/G interests behind.

What L/G Power Achieves

The evidence of the outcomes of the local/global social practices studied here shows that the local/global *intensity* of social practices has empowered the hegemonic water networks analysed to orchestrate rapid, hybrid, highly holistic initiatives such as "the Water Circle" to influence and change the course of the debates not just in the GWL, but in all spaces of debate that put their water interests at risk.

All of the already mentioned local/global entities are in effect *social actors* and inter-relate with each other to produce a series of social practices: coordinated events, programmes, projects, assessments, public statements, etc. However, these social practices do not operate in a vacuum. They form part of local and global social realities that have consequences of direct and indirect nature for people. Social practices translate into

outcomes of local/global power that alter the ways in which the communities of San Jose Villanueva access their water.

There are many different local/global types of impact in relation to the poor's water access conditions are distinctly evident in the research. For instance, local/global social practices of hegemonic water networks in El Salvador explain the '*hyper-transfer instant speed of knowledge*' across different spatial scales in water governance. As could be seen at the World Water Forum 2012, as a local/global site the policies of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) become transferred, tropicalised and re-packaged in different languages at increasingly close to instantaneous speeds of transfer of knowledge. Many people and stakeholders in the water sector could not go to this event due to lack of funds. However, some did grasp the basic content of the conference and its key insights and messages. They managed to use the Internet in distinct means such as: mobile phone apps, YouTube videos, twitter streams, blogs, websites (and not just the organiser's websites but those that reported the conference, newspapers, other members of the hegemonic network, people assisting) and many others. The upside of this is that this dissemination of knowledge is faster than ever and increases the chances for members of the different institutions to 'pass on' the knowledge. For instance, the same PowerPoint slides and PDF documents used to give a presentation on IWRM by the World Water Council can be used by the Ministry on the Environment officials as soon as they 'get off the airplane' in El Salvador, or even before they arrive by sending it by e-mail to their colleagues.

What is the possible impact on the poor of these L/G practices of instant knowledge dissemination? This can be seen by the prominent place that this local/global knowledge occupies. It is knowledge that becomes almost omnipresent (see IWRM knowledge as an example of this) and of a particular kind (water as a commodity) which percolates and trickles down, up and sideways through different entities in charge of the governance of water across the world. In this way, the messages of the hegemonic network can be effectively and efficiently be drilled down in the public discourse shaping in effect ways of

thinking, behaviours and actions. However there is a less obvious side effect of this and it lies in the fact that however prominent this knowledge is occupying local/global spaces in almost instantaneous fashion, the reality is that the space in which this knowledge is primarily discussed and debated prior its dissemination is closed for the poor. For example, the cost of entry of a World Water Forum 2012 reached 350 euros for people coming from developing countries and up to 700 euros for people coming from OECD countries. For the community leaders of SJV, this represents the equivalent to many times their wages in a month and this is not including other costs and expenses. For them these kind of spaces are effectively closed and so their voices could not be heard.

The second impact on the poor caused by the L/G social practices of the hegemonic water network is that on the loss of perspective of the reality of the poor. The communities do not complain and did not complain when asked about their participation in water events at international level. The fact is that they *did not know* and could not imagine what local/global spaces they ought to 'occupy' in order to influence outcomes of water governance in El Salvador. Not even at the national level were they 'savvy' enough on how to engage and sustain dialogues with the Water Forum and even the hegemonic 'Water Circle'. The poor become caricature stakeholders only present as beneficiaries of the local/global entities

The third impact on the poor by the L/G social practices of the hegemonic water network is that of local/global exclusions are also easier on those that have the means and credentials to enter key events like the World Water Forum or the Government, but that try to represent the poor. Repeated examples were given in WWF-2012 whereby some of the governments opposed or manifestly not in favour of the human right to water such as Canada and the UK formed part of the consensus that closed access to Maude Barlow, fellow activist of the Council of Canadians that object to the local/global impact of Canadian mining industries on water across the world.

Local/Global Outcomes of Power

As this section on the axis of local/global power has shown, the local/global conditions in which hegemonic social actors operate in El Salvador have allowed a comparative advantage to develop allowing them to deploy their power strategies, tactics and actions most effectively. At least three key factors deserve attention here:

Firstly, hegemonic social actors strategize across different societal scales in *long term local/global planning schemes* in order to control water resources. The 'local' façade of many of these corporations conceals the fact that they are transnationally oriented and transnationally based. One example of this is the FIHIDRO project, which on the local level made the construction of residential projects such as Residential La Hacienda and El Encanto Villas & Golf Club possible. Other examples include the FTAs between El Salvador and the US (CAFTA), between El Salvador and the European Union (AA-EU), the MCC project. All these schemes required simultaneous, hybrid cooperation between social actors of different sorts at different social scales. The commonality of interests has permitted to challenge and intervene 'by surprise' different patterns of resistance by using local/global capabilities to move resources, people, technology, knowledge and many other power resources.

The grand strategy may be evident from these examples, but it does not mean that these social actors have one single plan that connects all local/global actions in pursuit of their interests. On the contrary, it looks like they are networked in different local/global spaces both formally and informally. The World Water Forum is an excellent example of a formal local/global space that is used to network cooperation schemes and plans face-to-face between a great range of hegemonic social actors. However, many other bilaterals, tri-laterals and other ways of arranging 'business' opportunities using water as a central 'lubricant' for them has enabled the success they have reached across the world.

On another level, in terms of the outcomes in water governance reached with these local/global strategies, is that of diffused responsibilities. The 'local' façade of many of these

corporations conceals the fact that they are transnationally oriented and transnationally based.

I. Material/Ideational Axis of Power

This section explores how hegemonic water actors lead their material and ideational battles simultaneously to best achieve their water interests. It examines the depth and breadth of these actors' power strategies along a conceptual space represented here as the material/ideational axis of power.

Using the same backdrop of the context of water access struggles between the communities of San José Villanueva and the interests of corporations in the same area, we can now direct the focus on the way water conflicts like the ones experienced by these communities of San José Villanueva experience. The conflicts are defined by the ideologies that function as hubs of discourses and trickle down as narratives about power.

M/I Key Social actors

Hegemonic social actors materially and ideationally change their positions and arrangements when they face their material/ideational battles. In other words, the relative importance of *who leads what* depends on the nature of the conflict and if it requires material/ideational muscle. Some social actors have more capabilities than others to be deployed successfully in such scenarios. These capabilities inform and compliment the strategies of local/global power.

In El Salvador, FUSADES is a leading think-tank in the material/ideational vanguard of social actors devoted to spreading neoliberal water governance processes. Many of the key conflicts in water governance require knowledge based strategies and FUSADES has the right intellectual machinery to back up the material processes sought. In order to be successful the material and ideational processes happen simultaneously. These strategies in turn can legitimise many of the material practices that hegemonic social actors aim to perform on the ground.

Take for instance the project FIHIDRO that legitimises privileged access to water services for corporations like Grupo Roble, facilitating clean water access in their residential project of La Hacienda.

The most important set of leading social actors in the hegemonic side of water governance is that of the 'water experts' with local/global presence and whose knowledge feeds from ideational and material 'best practices'. These experts are in charge of configuring, legitimising, defending and disseminating across the country 'the best practices in good water governance' and they do it in as many local/global hotspots necessary to diffuse any resistance to their material projects. In other words, there is a material configuration of people, money, instruments of local/global nature that social organisations use to achieve their interests.

In order to understand how the clusters of production of material and ideational flows from hegemonic water network are settled, first some general distinctions on the nature of the relevant entities in this section must be clarified. Those entities that according to the evidence are omnipresent in L/G spaces are not necessarily always the ones that have the leading role in the production of material and ideational flows. It may even be possible that some entities become more prominent in material flows at local levels than ideational ones at global scales for example. Everything is possible, however, the point in focus here is to understand how the collective, the clusters of entities become effective factories of production of material and ideational forms of dominance and how they use particular strategies to advance their interests.

The M/I knowledge cluster In this particular cluster the knowledge that was generated and built in the previous cluster, gets disseminated through various means. This particular cluster concentrates a heterogeneous number of entities that are part of communicative, diffusion centres, such as newspapers, radio, Internet presence, media in general, etc.

In this particular cluster, knowledge production takes place in the form of ideational means that convert ideologies into discourse in the water cluster.

The M/I dissemination cluster

Donors

In this cluster, the uniting principle is that all the entities involved create the material means that allow the social practices of the clusters above mentioned to work. It is here where 'matter is created' so to speak, as it becomes clear that the organisations here trickle down financial and material assets and investments to effectively dominate the governance of water. However, one of the key characteristics is that although the existence of this cluster is clear, its members almost never reveal the transfers of money and assets provided to the

overall network and many times has to be inferred or learned from other sources of information.

M/I Social Practices

How material practices become ideational practices

Take for instance the following interview with a representative from ASIAGUA, the association that represents the interests of the most important bottled water industries:

“-So why don’t poor people have any clean water access? I’m going to tell you now: We already know that there is water. The problem is that why, if water comes from the sky, no one has water? That is what we call *institutional weakness* from the state. This is not something from this year, but rather it has always been there and is what has stopped the state from accomplishing its mission of providing water to the people. Why? I don’t know. May be there haven’t been important investments sometimes, the lack of a normative [law] on water. The problem then is that we want to frame water into a normative law thought out more for an scenario rather like Mad Max, [trying to order chaos with vindictive, excessive force] that is, they present a normative law in the Legislative Assembly aimed at grabbing the water from the industries, not just from the water industry, but from *all* the industries in general.” No, they say, all water has to be for... [the people].

So that’s the solution that is given, when the solution ought to be the institutional strengthening. There is a water law now that we are working as an industry together with the private enterprise. Where we are presenting viable options because we believe that there is scarcity among abundance. The emphasis then is a little bit different.

We think that if the right thing was done possibly there could be an accumulation of all these water resources that go sliding down the mountains in the form of floods and mudslides. I say that with so

much water we ought to be able to sell it.” Interview with Luis Chávez, Executive Director of Industries of Bottled Water (ASIAGUA) (translation and emphasis done by the author)

Transnational hegemonic networks develop material relations of power that function at least at two levels. The first level corresponds to the transfers of money in the form of donations, salaries, flows of investment have been evidenced to affect the policies around the governance of water in El Salvador. Two key examples have been gathered from the interviews and the observation of the general process of proposals and design of the General Water Law (GWL) in El Salvador.

First, the flows of investment during the period of 2005-2009 period by the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) were used as the means to propose, design and construct an ambitious plan to ‘modernise’ the water sector of El Salvador and create an institutional framework that would facilitate the neoliberalisation and commoditisation of water. Second, the financial flows that came embedded with a credit by the Spanish Cooperation Agency (AECID) to the government of El Salvador and that came with conditions to put in place a GWL and mechanisms to implement it.

The second level pertains to the physical, material objects, pipelines, dams, boundaries designed to shape the flows of water, gifts in-kind and other material means that assembled together hold close relationship with the previous flows of hard money transfers. These physical manifestations of social practices occur in the governance of water and shape the behaviours, attitudes, practices and actions for those in the receiving the receiving end. Here, evidence indicates that there are a lot of these aspects that are correlated with both the ability and inability of people in the communities to access water.

How ideational practices become material practices...

Hegemonic water networks use their clusters of entities to generate material/ideational power holistically in order to create and re-create a reality that is conducive to legitimise their actions and secure their interests in the water governance domain. The communities

of SJV although consciously or unconsciously on the receiving end of these M/I flows become affected in many dimensions.

The first of these dimensions is at the level of ideological colonisation processes. The example of the World Water Forum 2012 illustrates a series of strategies that hegemonic water networks use to frame and set the agenda, the lenses from which to look at problems of water governance and the language and discursive forms from which to disseminate these ideas.

The neoliberal ideas of water as a commodity and as an economic good constitute the main reservoirs from which discourses run to disseminate knowledge. The neoliberal idea of water gets disseminated in various forms is the main export of framed and how it relates to the supposedly contending idea that water is a human right.

M/I Power Relations

Hegemonic water networks are able to exercise control and dominance in the local/global water domain field through local/global, material/ideational social practices.³⁴ These M/I practices are basically a compendium of L/G strategies used by clusters of entities in the network to achieve a holistic dominance of water. For scholars that have explored this subject (see, Swyngedouw, Mehta, Boelens), the ideational goal is water control,, but as much as possible, without the use of force. Furthermore, the goal of controlling the water domain according to their particular interests is integral to the dominant conceptions of the world that flourish in today's neoliberalising and globalising capitalist system. For the water domain, this entails repackaging and framing the *idea of water* as an economic good because this way it 'fits' and obeys their rules and logic, their views and conceptions of how the water domain should work. These ideas would translate into material social practices, that is, in tangible real life actions in which water, for example, would be subject to utilitarian style structures of management, different degrees of privatisation processes among others. These idea that water is an economic good have become so successful that as people in the resistance network state "questioning that water is an economic good becomes an anathema". The fact is that water is still in material terms the 'next-big-thing' as means and ends of investment for capital expansion.

Thus, ideationally speaking, M/I social practices have a common, all-encompassing holistic conception and operational forms of governing water as they want in the world. This section

³⁴ Hereafter, all M/I social practices are to be understood as containing L/G properties and will simply be said to be M/I.

explores how these ideational and material practices transform the way the communities of SJV access clean water, hence achieving their goals of hegemonic domination of water.

How M/I Power Wins

Poor people living in the semi-rural communities of San José Villanueva in the province of La Libertad, El Salvador know that *usually* those who have power end up having water. It is present in their own narratives as the mayor of San José Villanueva in a speech to the communities:

“You have won the possibility of having water today, not because of your own influence in the matter [with the public authorities of ANDA, the public service water provider] but because those who have power living beside you [the residential La Hacienda] have special connections and power to influence this.” Pedro Durán, public speech (7th Jan, 2013) (see, Duran 2013)

The question is how do `the powerful` use this power so effectively that they end up gaining control of water? The previous key local/global water access problems demonstrate the following seven tactics:

The Salamander Tactic

As could be seen in L/G events, programmes, projects, and other social practices in the realm of water governance, the idea that water is a human right was initially rejected by hegemonic water networks. However, because the adoption of the human right to water by grassroots organisations and the final official global embracement of this right at the United Nations, those in hegemonic water networks used what will be called here as the ‘*Salamander tactics*’ which succinctly illustrates the idea that the tactic of camouflage, by changing its visual identity to adapt to the environment that surrounds them. It does so by co-opting or mimicking the opponents’ key positions, language, concepts and basically everything that gives them their advantage or strengths.

This tactic was evidenced when hegemonic networks challenged and opposed to the idea of the human right to water and its practice. As it has been noted in the pieces of evidence summarised below, hegemonic water networks initially opposed to the concept and idea of the human right to water, as its application supposedly endanger their interests bringing to a halt the ongoing process of framing water as an economic good. However, these same hegemonic networks quickly shifted to change the meaning of the human right to water to mean what *they mean*. This is evident in the practices of the private sector across local/global scales and spaces: for instance, this research shows in the documental evidence below how there has been a shift in discourse throughout time and across scales by the likes of powerful corporations influencing the realm of water governance.

Starting with the biggest, Nestlé, Coca Cola, Saab Miller during the latter part of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s (corporations which have direct presence in El Salvador through capital investments and with the leading company of the country, La Constancia), used to negate or be opposed to the human right to water, either in practice by opposition to laws that could push forward this view in the form of regulations in El Salvador or by using negative language and discursive practices on the subject. Fast forward a few years to the beginning of 2010s, in the 2012 edition of the World Water Forum and the evidence indicates that they now preach *the complete opposite* of their remarks a few years back. Today, they absolutely support the Human Right to Water and have a common position about this that repeats in this format: “we do not support the human right to water out of good will, but because it is essential for the sustainability of our business strategy.” (Nestlé 2013, Coca Cola, 2012)

The Trojan Horse Tactic

To dominate without the use of force, for the hegemonic water networks it matters not only who they are and how much power they have, but to whom they embrace, who they make alliances with and how they use these as instrumental means to shift public opinion about their interests and intentions. Intentions are hard to demonstrate, but interests in water

governance for the hegemonic networks is to open high value markets in less and less regulated ways. The evidence that is collected here is how El Salvador's governance structures, the cluster of state entities, together with that of the civil society and enterprise entities have used the existing opportunities to use loopholes in commercial laws to advance their water interests and lock them in *before the General Water Law comes into place*.

Key examples of *Trojan Horse* tactics are evident in the contemporary water governance of El Salvador. The quest to push forward agendas that would create the country's first General Water Law (GWL) and the necessary institutional frameworks to order and govern the different uses of water in El Salvador has given sufficient evidence about this. This tactic has been evidenced, for example, in the 'small print' of transnational holistic frameworks of governance in the country such as the advancement of free trade agreements and public-private partnerships such as FIHIDRO.

In these frameworks of governance the big and small print of the constitutive documents of these practices have left sufficient operational loopholes to let corporations invest and 'colonise' water related economic activities coupled with the evident omission of the human right to water and environmental sustainability and water security to ensure its access to the poor. This has been a pattern that has been followed in virtually all the free trade agreements that El Salvador has subscribed to as a country in the last two decades. In every transnational law, key statutes and privileges have been given to companies to control the uses and management of water in ways that can be controlled by them. This is the case of the public-private partnership initiatives such as FIHIDRO. This is why in the public debates on the issue of water governance in the Salvadorean Congress in 2013 have not just discussed the General Water Law, but the Public-Private partnership.

The Judo Tactic

Power tactics can be used to bring things into completion by gentle, subtle, quasi-invisible practices. Using a 'Judo' approach (which means 'the gentle way'³⁵), hegemonic water networks have been able to effectively conquer the opposition by reversing the force of the strikes intended to hit them and win their position, as a weapon against them.

One example of this 'Judo Tactic' has been the use of the concept of 'participation'. By using it in appropriate times, the hegemonic networks have been able to open up opposition 'gently' and with seemingly benevolent intentions to lock in their interests. For instance, the statutes of the General Water Law, under the slogan of 'water is for everyone', managed to convince legislators that CONAGUA, the public institution that they were suggesting as a possible lead for the governance of water in El Salvador, should include not just public authorities, but the private sector and civil society sectors as well. In other words, that

³⁵ Judo is originally defined as “(柔道 jūdō?, meaning "gentle way")” It is a modern martial art, combat and Olympic sport created in Japan in 1882 by Jigoro Kano(嘉納治五郎). Its most prominent feature is that in the Judo way of fighting, there is no predominance of punches or strikes by hands or feet, but rather the use of the force of the opponent is translated into energy that can be used against him/her. Competitively, the objective is to “either throw or takedown an opponent to the ground, immobilize or otherwise subdue an opponent with a pin, or force an opponent to submit with a joint lock or a choke”. (Wikipidea, 2013)

because the idea of democratic participation has a positive outlook, why not include everyone in the driving seat? This way everyone would be represented in equal measure in the governing bodies of the CONAGUA.

Avoidance tactics

Avoidances of information sharing tactics have been detected in various ways. As it can be seen here, the repeated denial of ANDA to give interviews on matters such as the governance of water and the FIHIDRO case which has direct implications for the people in the communities of San José Villanueva has been an effective strategy to secure their positions. An official letter from the government proves this point, as the FIHIDRO documents are secret, they are not to be shared with citizens.

The Divide and Conquer tactics

During the field trip research and interviews, the community leaders of San José Villanueva reported having been pressured to resign, but not just by the use of force as in the 'bully tactics' above but by trying to divide them. The local mayor Pedro Durán executed this in various ways, by setting up by decree 'new' community leaders that did comply with the interests being sought.

What M/I Power Achieves

All of the key strategies and tactics of power signalled above have diverse effects in the governance of water in El Salvador and in turn, in the marginally poor's patterns of water access. What are these effects? What effects does M/I power have on the poor's water access patterns?

The Obstruction of Change

The M/I Power exerted by the hegemonic water networks have certainly proven to be effective in stopping successfully all attempts of creation a General Water Law that does not

comply with their interests and priorities. The fact is that several initiatives at regulating the ‘water anarchy’ in which El Salvador functions have been presented for public scrutiny in Congress and time and time again they have failed to be converted into an official General Water Law. The different tactics used have in other words, prevented possible regulatory frameworks in the water governance domain to come to fruition.

Agenda setting victories

Having been successful in deterring alternative water governance frameworks, hegemonic water networks have also been able to push forward their own governance structures. They have done this together with their own blueprints of normative policies that ought to be applied in El Salvador. Evidence here is also rich, whereby different ideational positions have been successfully converted into practices that have set the agenda on water in different spaces. The way the ‘Water Circle’ initiative created by hegemonic water networks actually succeeded in setting the agenda of discussions and debates in the National Congress is empirically evidenced in:

The inclusion of the private sector in the General Water Law in El Salvador: The configuration of the private sector in the governing body of CONAGUA in the statutes of the General Water Law was achieved thanks to the synergy of many power tactics. First, using the tactics

Agency/Social Structure Power Axis

The hegemonic water networks in El Salvador are sleek, fast, efficient information providers, have overwhelming capabilities in creating, spreading and translating their ideas, their knowledge into material actions with clusters of ad –hoc academic, institutional, private sector alliances with a myriad of social actors. What does this all tell about the power of agency in a context of social structure that allows them to be sufficiently ‘empowered’ to beat the odds, the alternative positions and become the *hegemon* of water governance?

How do these dialectics of agency/social structure power function and what does this mean for the final outcomes of water access for the poor?

In contrast, the communities of San José Villanueva being poor and vulnerable have sometimes been ‘tagged’ by other entities as ‘illegal’ or as ‘powerless’, or as ‘uneducated’ or ‘ignorant’ or as easily ‘brainwashed’. See the following quotes from hegemonic water actors:

“These communities have no rights to access water in private land mainly because they are illegally settled in land and therefore have public services denied such as the provision of water” Quote from interview to top official from the Ministry for the Environment (MARN)

This situation begs a critical question that this section of the chapter tries to answer: are hegemonic networks of power too well situated in the agency/social structure realm that they can lock-in the local/global, material/ideational axes of power?

The notion of agency here meets a hybrid convention of power that reassembles the notion of freedoms to do and to be in terms of capabilities. Capabilities to influence and change decision making processes do not come into a void of society. They are nurtured, elaborated and fed in a social structure, an ‘ecosystem’ in the same way a tree flourishes in a fertile land, full of nutrients, water and sun. In the same fashion then, hegemonic water networks have certain kind of capabilities that have been nurtured by the Salvadorean social structure in conjunction with the global neoliberal capitalist system at work in the world and which in turn, give them special kinds of agencies.

A/S Entities

Hegemonic water networks command authority and dominance in water governance not just because of their local/global, material and ideational *capabilities* but because they use their relative power advantages in terms of agency and social structure. Hegemonic water entities are relatively well situated in relation to using their agency and social structure

capabilities to change and put in practice their agency, that is, a set of capabilities that *others do not have in equal measure*: the capabilities of agency. Each of the entities of the network and in turn, each of the members of the entity, may have particular characteristics that enable them to succeed in bringing upon change in decision making processes that bend the balance to their favour. For instance, private corporations in El Salvador have the agency to reclaim their rights using legal frameworks such as free trade agreements or policy laws. La Constancia/Saab Miller report having an economic advisor.

Hegemonic water networks achieve dominance of the water governance field in El Salvador via different capabilities. As a whole, these capabilities are of diverse nature, but could be seen as a resourceful toolkit, which together enable them to exercise their agency, that is, their influence to bring about change. Each entity and the members of each entity are for instance, well educated, have a range of potential

Hegemonic Water networks have particular differ depending on who's who in the network. For instance, some institutions have a better 'know-how' of the realms of the circles of power in Congress than others. Other institutions may have a better and more specific 'reach' with the academic sector and use these local/global connections to their favour to influence change.

In this section, the research uses the clusters identified in the local/global axis of power to identify the uses of agency at different, transcalar spaces. The power of social structures is that of broadly given factors of societal context that limit or expand the agency of the network's entities and individuals.

A/S Social Practices

Hegemonic water networks have the capabilities to influence and shape processes of water governance and swing the balance effectively to their favour. These capabilities are *exhibited in all the three key processes of water governance that the communities have been*

subject to: the FIHIDRO case, the General Water Law, the inclusion of water in Free Trade Agreements, etc.

The way this has worked can be seen from the agency/social structure axis in the following forms:

How Agency shapes Social structure

Starting with the FIHIDRO case, the mayor of San José Villanueva, Pedro Durán stated: “These people [the communities of San José Villanueva] would have never been able to get their access to water if it hadn’t been by the way the rich people in La Hacienda asked for their water to ANDA. They have important connections” (Durán, 2013)

What A/S Power Achieves

The outcomes of the interactions of hegemonic water actors are many. They have effectively been able to react and colonise with faster and more holistic ways the rules of water governance in El Salvador. On the one hand, the most important outcome has been the way the General Water Law has come to be a key space for their achievement objectives. As we can see on the way hegemonic water actors connect with each other, they have a direct linkage with transnational corporations and these in turn propitiate material and ideational means to the key political body of ANEP as the hub of big corporations and to ARENA as the political party in charge of taking up the challenge of proceeding with the goals. FUSADES provides appropriate knowledge to legitimate and substantiate the underlying ‘philosophy’ of water-as-a-commodity and its organic ties to Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

In terms of power relations the main outcome that can be observed is the pre-colonisations of many of the inner-workings of institutions and their rules.

II. Findings and Conclusions

Hegemonic water actors have used strategies that have been mapped out in the different situations that the communities have experimented in terms of water access. The construction of rich residential neighbourhoods and two massive golf courses in La Libertad despite the shortages of clean water access and their use of the Public Private Partnerships, Free Trade Agreements and other investment schemes like FOMILENIO 2, have created pathways for growth without sustainability. The outcome has created a primary space for the accumulation of wealth while dispossessing the poor and the vulnerable from their right to live in a sustainable area. The Ministry of the Environment for long dispossessed from material economic means and legal rules to lead and deny construction rights to elites in the country have been the main vehicle for this accumulation by dispossession process.

For the case study, the communities have won and lost water access in different ways. The FIHIDRO mechanism has provided a supposedly open opportunity to communities in the area to access water thanks to the investment. However, the problem is that many of these opportunities come as an after-thought, a secondary trickle down process of connections that do not prioritise and undisclosed the real long term outcomes of water access in the region.

Hegemonic water actors, from the angles examined in this chapter display all the indicators of success. They have the key governance laws on their side and the social structure built through years of hegemonic neoliberal colonisation of the rules of general governance in the country. In other words, from this perspective, it can be said that they are in effect, winning the water control battle, even before the real war starts.

The Liquid Hegemonic Network

This chapter has corroborated the existence of a hegemonic water network operating in El Salvador. It is a quite effective cluster of different organisations promoting a 'de-politicised' view on water governance, 'participatory' and business friendly. However, this hegemonic network is also legitimising patterns of too much freedoms for corporations to decide how water ought to be governed according to their own interests. The Salvadorean Hegemonic Water Network manages to be holistic in its approach thanks to the variety of organisations that compose its Water Board. It uses holistic strategies of governance in the water domain and achieves dominance without the use of force through these diverse means of action.

The Subjugation of the Poor

The poor are unaware of the chain of causality and connections that the Salvadorean Hegemonic Water Network does to the decision making processes surrounding their own water governance. That is, many can identify by default ARENA-ANEP-FUSADES as the triad that promotes water privatisation processes, but they are not aware about the key transnational corporations behind or the way they connect with a far wider set of organisations, donors, people, elites.

6. COUNTER-HEGEMONIC WATER ACTORS: STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE

"They should give awards of resistance for being Salvadorean." Roque Dalton



Introduction

This chapter studies the power of counter-hegemonic water networks. It shows how people organise themselves into water activist networks and use power strategies to achieve their common goals in El Salvador: to stop, challenge and subvert the country's hegemonic neoliberal model of water governance. The chapter dissects and explains the inner workings of an invisible water war, where counter-hegemonic water activists battle the prevailing forces of the status quo to create an alternative water governance framework radically opposed to it. The chapter identifies who the key counter hegemonic water actors are and contributes to this thesis' overall logic of analysing power dynamics by applying the 'axes of

power' approach to a specific case study: the seven communities of poor, vulnerable people living in San José Villa Nueva, El Salvador. In analysing these communities' day-to-day struggles for clean water access, this chapter aims to explain how counter-hegemonic water networks use power strategies to influence how Salvadoreans achieve sufficient access to clean water.

The chapter adds value to the thesis in three ways. Firstly, it explores who the counter-hegemonic social actors in El Salvador are and how they use strategies of resistance to minimize the scope of El Salvador's hegemonic neoliberal water governance. Secondly, it clarifies how these social actors organise into networks to advance their interests focused on making the human right to water a reality for all, but especially for the poor. Finally, the chapter reveals the outcomes of their actions, by asking: Have counter-hegemonic actors affected the capability of poor people to access their clean water?

The chapter's power analysis reveals the impact counter-hegemonic social actors have on vulnerable people's capability to access water. Likewise, the evidence presented here outlines how counter-hegemonic water networks operate beyond territorial borders and act instead through local/global spaces across the world. Regarding material-ideational relations, the evidence shows how these resistance networks use power tactics involving the use of a wide range of material resources (e.g. money, infrastructure, technology), as well as ideological and discursive choices (e.g. language, symbols, concepts). Finally, regarding agent-structure power relations, counter-hegemonic water networks also show their capability to tap into their own creative strategies for social change by using their empowered agency and their social structure to advance their interests.

Empirically, the chapter focuses on San José Villanueva's poor communities, which are suffering from chronic clean water scarcity. It asks why, despite several efforts to change this water deprivation situation over a number of years, the order of things in El Salvador's water governance remains unchanged. How effectively do counter-hegemonic social actors

use their power to change El Salvador's hegemonic water governance for the benefit of the poor? Have they managed to improve access to clean water for poor people?

Overall, the chapter argues that counter-hegemonic water networks' have been 'hitting the core model of neoliberal water governance with the wrong end of the stick'. The counter-hegemonic power strategies to diminish the breadth of El Salvador's neoliberal water governance have had limited impact because they have not exploited their capabilities along the three axes of power to the maximum. The outcome is a deadlocked static situation of water injustice and exclusion for the poor in the country.

Profile of Social Actors

This section presents a profile of the social actors involved in El Salvador's counter-hegemonic water resistance movement. A counter-hegemonic social actor could be a community leader, an association or a local, national or transnational NGO. This chapter maps the key people, organisations and collectives of '*counter-hegemonic social actors*' whose objective is to change the current way water is governed in El Salvador. It illustrates in four steps the nature of these social actors by first explaining their shared reasons to join the water resistance movement. Secondly, what common goals and objectives these social actors' seek to achieve. Thirdly, who are the lead social actors in El Salvador's water resistance movement? Finally, what types of activities these social actors undertake to achieve their shared goals? Examples from both the case study of the seven communities of San José Villanueva and El Salvador more widely contribute to this profile. The analysis of power axes in later sections of the chapter explores the strategies these leaders of resistance use to challenge the prevailing hegemonic water governance in El Salvador.

A Common Cause

Who joins the counter-hegemonic water movement in El Salvador and why? What are the reasons behind their quest for change? Examining why people join El Salvador's counter-hegemonic water movement is essential to this analysis. Scholars like Goldstone and Tilly (2001) have previously argued that a social movement does not happen *sui generis*. On the contrary, people are compelled to jump into a social movement due to sufficiently strong undercurrents of political opportunity and threat (Goldstone and Tilly, 2001, 180-183). In El Salvador's case, Almeida (2011), following Goldstone and Tilly's work, argues that due to the country's particular history, there are three common reasons of political opportunity and threat which have compelled people and organisations to join social movements. First, El Salvador has had an expanding regimen of liberalisation, the latest being the hegemonic neoliberal model from the 1990s to present 2014. In parallel to this, and for a large part of its history, an environment of intimidation and repression eroding rights and opportunities has prevailed in the country; and finally, the latest waves of globalisation have had great impact in the Salvadorean context. The genesis of the Salvadorean water movement lies within this context.³⁶

A major reason to join the counter-hegemonic water movement in El Salvador appears to be *threat*. Take for instance, the case of Josefina Escamilla, an elderly woman from Las Marías, a poor community in the district of Nejapa, San Salvador. On August 14th 2013, Josefina and her community became water activists. They blocked a high-traffic road in Nejapa armed with banners and water rights slogans. Their objective was clear: to denounce a threat to

³⁶ See chapter two for a detailed overview of the historical context.

Nejapa's water supplies. In their view, Nejapa, which is already an area whose water resources are overexploited, could be in great danger of completely exhausting its water reserves due to the unregulated water extraction practices of the soft drinks industry. They specifically denounced the insatiable demand for water from one of them, SABMiller—one of the largest transnational beer corporations in the world (SAB Miller, 2014). SABMiller's local branch, La Constancia Industries (ILC), was planning to build a new well in Nejapa to multiply its water extraction capacity and boost its profitable business.

Josefina's case is a typical case of water activists reacting to circumstances, which threaten their water access capabilities. They share a common sense of outrage against hegemonic water governance structures and denounce the threats to their right to sustainable access to clean water. However, all too often, their efforts are futile. Josefina's protest was partially successful in terms of bringing media attention to her water sustainability problem. However, judging from the results of similar social practices in the past, the likelihood of stopping the construction of SAB Miller's well is slim. From 2005, the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) had already pointed out that this region had reached its water exploitation threshold limit (MARN, 2005). Despite this, SAB Miller's water extraction rate has been growing without limits. Already, in 2011, SAB Miller had hit the record mark of producing one million hectolitres of beer for the first time in its history in El Salvador (SAB Miller, 2014). This translated into record amounts of water being extracted. In addition, those institutions charged with regulating water usage like MARN, have been too slow and too weak to enforce the weak rules that existed. With such unregulated water extraction practices, both the present and future water sustainability in Nejapa is at risk. Josefina summarised her reasons to protest like this: "We are already old, but we fight for the water that our children and grandchildren are going to drink. (...) We can live without electricity, but not without water (...) if we had a Water Law then everything would have been a lot easier" (Ayala, 2014).

Threats are not the only reason to join the counter-hegemonic water movement. Another shared reason is *opportunity*. Arguably, with the end of the 1980s civil war and the signing of the 1992 Peace Agreements, provided a new opportunity to focus on water access issues and environmental governance through democratic means. However, this new opportunity to open a renewed water justice agenda in El Salvador perished with the rise of neoliberal practices during the 1990s-2000s.

Since 2009, cracks have started to appear in the dominant neoliberal water governance, encouraging water activists to press for change. This is due to the emerging political context. Firstly, in 2009, the rise to presidential power of the left wing political party, FMLN, opened up new spaces for what were previously marginalised, hydro-environmental and social justice concerns. For the first time, a government signalled that it would override the existing neoliberal water agenda with radical changes in its policy-making practices and efforts to push for new legal frameworks to aid its work.

Secondly, since 2010 there has been official global recognition of water as a human right, which has provided major boost for all counter-hegemonic water activists around the world. States around the world now subscribing to the Resolution 64/292 of the “human right to water and sanitation” act (UN-GA, 2010) signed by subscribing parties to the United Nations General Assembly, including El Salvador, are now obliged to follow it (UNHRC, 2011). This means that water activists can now preach the gospel of the human right to water and sanitation without fear of being de-legitimized, but also hold the Salvadorean state to account for it. The HRTW now dictates that states should secure water which is “affordable, accessible, culturally acceptable”, and delivered in a “participatory, accountable and non-discriminatory manner” (De Albuquerque, 2012, 9). Consequently, now a major overarching legal framework pushes governments across the world to take irrefutable steps to secure access to clean water for all its citizens.

Thirdly, the rise of new water policies, legal frameworks and indicators of progress in tune with the human right to water, have created new prospects for change. Examples of this are

in the HRTW inspired water laws in Nicaragua, Honduras and Bolivia. The United Nation's initiative post 2015 Millennium Development Goals, now includes efforts to find better indicators and strategies to achieve clean water access for all.

Finally, from 2006, there has been an increasingly strong water movement, which has gained organisational momentum. This has been due to the strong rise of many new counter-hegemonic social actors. The most important ones to mention here are the National Water Forum (NWF), the Anti-Mining Collective and ecologist groups, which converge and overlap in these political spaces.

In summary, in tune with Almeida's work on "Waves of Popular Mobilisation", El Salvador's counter-hegemonic water movement has its very genesis and existence anchored in a combination of threat and opportunity factors. These factors feed the reasons why social actors join the water movement but also drive their identity, their alliances and their combined ways forward. The following section examines the common set of goals and objectives of this collective movement.

A Common 'North'

Social movements begin with a common goal to fight for and a plan. Thus, all social movements require a map with a guiding goal and set of collective objectives. In the case of El Salvador's counter-hegemonic water movement there is one overarching goal and sets of objectives that roughly all members of the movement set as their common 'North'. The common goal is to stop, challenge and supersede the neoliberal model of water governance in El Salvador with an alternative model of water governance that prioritises the human right to water and its sustainability for present and future generations. This goal not only serves as a compass for the counter-hegemonic movement, but also serves as an identity mantra that guides their actions. This section describes this aspect of the water movement.

It is possible to identify anti-neoliberal water governance goals and objectives that link key players in El Salvador's counter-resistance. However, this is not always clear cut because not

all 'water activists' fighting, for example, for 'water as a human right', 'water sustainability' or 'water fairness', are by default counter-hegemonic. As the previous chapter evidenced, many hegemonic actors have captured these labels and co-opted these tags and this can now also be seen as a recurring practice of hegemonic water players in El Salvador. Discursive tags such as 'water-as-a-human-right' become 'trojan horses' repeatedly used by various hegemonic water actors to advance their interests. This practice allows them to take their opponent's flagship ideals while still embracing neoliberal practices in water governance. This has been the case of key hegemonic water players in El Salvador like Rafael Castellanos, the CEO of the golf club El Encanto and member of Grupo Roble³⁷, whom identifies himself as a 'water activist' fighting for 'water sustainability' and believes in 'water as human right' (Castellanos, 2013a). Other hegemonic actors too, used this tag interchangeably such as Luis Chávez from the powerful corporation beverages association ASIAGUA (Interview Chávez 2013) or Waldo Jiménez from the national association of enterprises (ANEP) (Interview Jiménez 2013), among many others.

³⁷ The corporation that constructed the rich residential La Hacienda at the heart of the communities of San José Villanueva

A key differentiator is that counter-hegemonic water activists practice what they preach in their anti-neoliberal water practices. They share counter-hegemonic objectives not only in



what they say (their discursive practices), but in what they actually do (their social practices) in order to achieve their interests. Unique to them is their shared goal to: a) remove the hegemonic neoliberal model of water governance from its roots, b) in parallel to this action, plant the seeds for an alternative water governance model. The alternative water governance model seeks to apply the human right to water in policy practices across the nation. In addition, their underlying priority is not a ‘water for profit’ logic, but rather a ‘water for life’ logic manifested in securing poor people’s clean water access and the sustainability of water in nature.

Figure 53: Poster ‘Water is not for sale, water is to be defended’

Source: ACUA (2014)

In addition, counter-hegemonic water activists define themselves in sharing an anti-status-quo understanding of the causes, diagnosis, and possible solutions to El Salvador’s water problem. Three reasons stand out. First, they share a common view about the nature of the water access problem for the poor and the vulnerable in El Salvador (a shared diagnosis). Second, they hold a common discourse on eco-political concepts, ideas and principles that best explain the water deprivation and injustice poor people suffer (a shared ideational framework). Third, they hold a consensus about what to do about it (a set of shared prescriptive solutions and social practices).

The Proposed Route

To change the existing water governance system, rebel water activists broadly agree on one route forward: implementing the human right to water (HRTW) across the country. According to the great majority of counter-hegemonic water activists interviewed, a HRTW inspired model of water governance would change El Salvador's current neoliberal and weak institutional form to a more socially fair, participatory, environmentally sustainable, and institutionally strong governance. This would give a democratic government enough legitimacy and power to regulate the excesses of influential social actors that seek to use water for profit to unsustainable limits.

In addition, the counter-hegemonic water movement agrees that a General Water Law (GWL) compliant with the HRTW is the first key step to creating an alternative model of water governance. Such a legal framework would regulate all of the uses of water in accordance with the HRTW and legitimise the creation of institutions to enforce the new rules. In this way, the HRTW would become the backbone of all water governance practices in the country. There is a common understanding that with a GWL in place, the structures of governance and social practices in Salvadorean society would no longer exclude any human being from achieving access to clean water, regardless of his or her economic or social condition.

In summary, the counter-hegemonic water movement may be 'a broad church', but its members follow one 'religious idea': to defend the human right to water and its sustainability. As it appears in the logical frameworks of donor organisations like Oxfam Solidarity Belgium, one of the key donors to counter-hegemonic organisations, the first task to change the dominant water governance model is to change "the beliefs, behaviours, actions and outcomes" of those influencing the way water is governed" (OSB, 2009). To do this the aim is to 'colonize' and convert key structures of water governance to the 'gospel'

of the human right to water and its sustainability. Broadly, and in policy-making terms, counter-hegemonic social actors see the creation and implementation of a General Water Law compliant with the HRTW as the means to bring water justice for the poor and the vulnerable in the country. This gives them identity and union as a movement as this sequence of shared principles and objectives lead to full cooperation in the ideas summarised in the figure below.

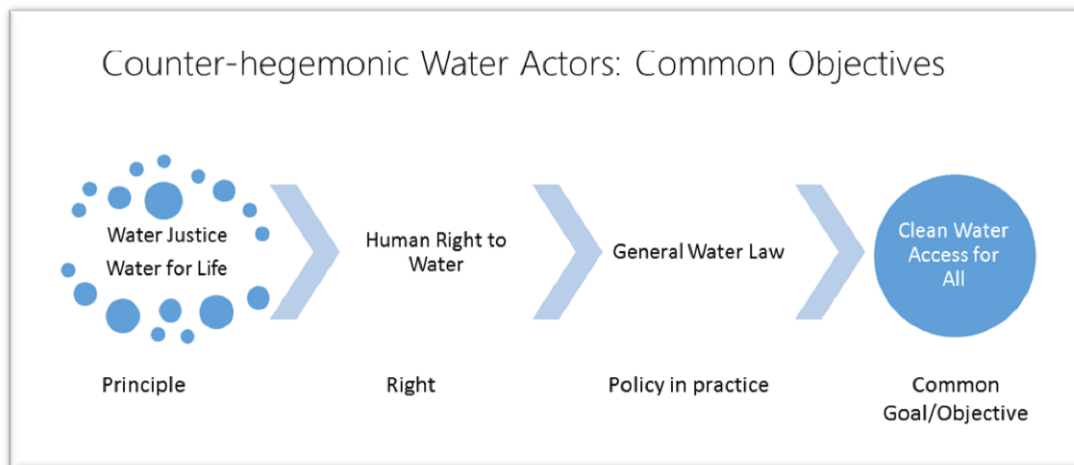


Figure 54: Common Objective if counter-hegemonic Water Actors

However, this proposed route is where the shared elements finish and where differences and subtle nuances start to arise in the movement. The next section introduces the family of rebel water organisations and collectives.

A Map of Social Actors



Figure 55: Picture of football match tactics

This section maps out and describes the members of El Salvador's counter-hegemonic water movement. By way of introduction and for illustrative purposes only, this section uses the simple analogy of a football game, with two opposing teams to explain the dynamic roles individual and collective social actors assume in the game of water politics. In workshops, counter-hegemonic social actors often used this simile to explain, in simple and commonly used terms, their strategy to achieve their goals.

Differences matter

For counter-hegemonic social actors their members have a common goal 'to win and score points': they need to make the country's first General Water Law compliant with a HRTW a reality in El Salvador. However, to do this all members of the counter-hegemonic side have to play collectively 'as a team'. To do this effectively they need to take into account the team's diversity. Every social actor has different capabilities and geographical locations so they play different starting positions and roles that can range from 'attackers', 'midfielders' (those that play as hubs or connectors of the team's overall game), to 'defenders' and 'goal-keeper'. Furthermore, the team can make offensive and defensive strategies depending on the context. For counter-hegemonic social actors, the simile is useful to depict: a) the strong

ideological and policy-making polarisation between hegemonic/counter-hegemonic networks in El Salvador's water politics. In addition, b) the fluidity of the connecting alliances social actors have to make at individual and collective levels. As in a game of football, the members of the counter-hegemonic water movement resemble the different members of a team that directly opposes and challenges another (the hegemonic one) on a pitch (El Salvador's society). In this 'game', the winner is that side who gets to achieve its key water politics objective: change the water governance model according to its own set of interests. This is the nature of the game of water politics in El Salvador.

Equally, following the game of football analogy, each social actor resembles an individual 'player' with a limited, but distinctive set of capabilities or 'moves' to attack the opponent's goal and move across the pitch. In real life, this means that each counter-hegemonic social actor—for example a community leader, an association or a local, national or transnational NGO— plays a unique specialised role and set of capabilities from which it engages the competition for change in the existing water governance model. In policy-making terms, it also implies that individual efforts to change the existing framework of rules in the water governance game (e.g. the country's first-ever General Water Law) may not come to fruition without proper tactics and strategies to exploit collectively their differential capabilities.

The football analogy helps to highlight the relevance of finding out the differential capabilities of the key players in the counter-hegemonic water movement and what role they currently play. Later sections explain the dynamics of the water politics game in terms of power strategies by using the axes of power framework applied to the San José Villanueva case study.

The Key Players

The different social actors constituting today's counter-hegemonic water movement in El Salvador reflect great diversity. They include people like Josefina, communities of activists like those in San José Villanueva, regional organisations like ACUA, a local development

NGO, or wide social networks like the National Water Forum (NWF). These social actors may be territorially standing in and out of El Salvador, so geographical barriers become secondary. Hence, both ‘the pitch of the game’ and their positions are fuzzy or overlapping. They comprise religious organisations, political ecologists, international development organisations, committees, associations, etc.

Nevertheless, a few features are clearly distinguishable: when approaching from a bird’s eye view Salvadorean society, the biggest and most important groups or sets of social actors in the counter-hegemonic water movement are evident. The following are the most visible and important ‘hubs’ or ‘networks’ of social actors of the counter-hegemonic army of water activists.

The National Water Forum

The National Water Forum (NWF) is by far the biggest and most important hub of counter-hegemonic water organisations today in El Salvador³⁸. The NWF began in October 17, 2006 as a group of fifty entities working together on water justice topics. Six years later, by 2013, the NWF had doubled its number of affiliates with more than a hundred active member organisations from diverse sectors of society including many from international origins (NWF, 2014c). However, the NWF is not a legally formal organisation nor does it intend to be one for flexibility purposes. The NWF’s membership includes both national and transnational organisations.

³⁸ More informally in El Salvador, the NWF is more widely known as simply ‘the Water Forum’.

According to its members, the NWF has an open-door policy that welcomes in all those organisations who wish to defend the sustainability and the right to water. This “permanent platform” of like-minded organisations seeks to make water resources “accountable, efficient, equitable and participatory” in El Salvador “while also avoiding water privatisation” (NWF, 2014c).

Tied to these goals and objectives, the NWF members commit to three specific political mandates. First, all NWF members should “oppose any form of privatisation of the water supply service”. Second, all members should seek the “universalisation of the human right to a dignified and equitable access to water”. Finally, NWF members should “oppose projects that put in danger water sustainability, such as metal mining, uncontrolled urbanisation and the construction of large dams”. In other words, their mission is to oppose any project that threatens “the provision and renewal of water resources” and affects “the quality of life of the Salvadorean population” (Ibid.)

Following its goals, the NWF has actively fought political battles to push ahead for changes in the prevailing water governance status quo. Two examples stand out. First, the NWF entered the battle for a water governance reform by being the first in submitting a fully blown proposal for a new General Water Law (GWL) in El Salvador. This GWL proposal introduced on World Water Day on March 22, 2006 was the first ever presented by a civil society group to the Legislative Assembly in the country. Two key members of the NWF, the Salvadorean Ecological Unit (UNES), an ecologist NGO, and CÁRITAS El Salvador, a catholic NGO, were the figureheads of the movement that made the formal submission. This GWL proposal skyrocketed the National Water Forum into the mainstream of the public policy debate arena. Many member organisations of the NWF campaigned for it to reach not just the politicians in the Legislative Assembly, but to spark awareness in the general population. Since then, the pioneering National Water Forum member’s GWL proposal has become the benchmark against which all other proposals submitted afterwards have compared. The GWL 2006 proposal has been the water activists’ key protest flag to push for the law’s

ratification in El Salvador's Legislative Assembly. The second milestone came on January 22, 2007 when the NWF presented a draft Law on Water and Sanitation Subsector to the Legislative Assembly. This time another leading member of the NWF, the Centre for the Defence of the Consumer (CDC) together with grassroots organisations led the initiative.

According to the National Water Forum's organisers, the direction of the organisation is co-ordinated by an "open central committee". They define it as an "open space for the participation of all organisations that want to be involved" (NWF, 2014c) and one that works with a rotating leadership. The NWF's openness has meant it has included organisations from all sectors of society and not necessarily just those specialised in water-related issues. Examples of organisations include communitarian organisations, committees, religious groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), municipalities, etc. It even takes on board international organisations interested in El Salvador's water governance. Examples of transnational members of the NWF include Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Lutheran Church, and PROVIDA (a local branch of ICCO, a Dutch organisation). Despite the openness of the NWF's central committee, in its coordination in practice, some organisations have engaged more intensively than others have. The following account is a brief description of the most active entities in the NWF's central committee:

ACUA

All counter-hegemonic social actors recognise the Association for Agriculture and Water (ACUA) as the most important social actor in water politics and the environment in the region of La Libertad, El Salvador. ACUA is a relatively young non-governmental organisation that started in 2005. Many of its members come from former guerrilla and community based organisations for example one of its founding members was CORDES. ACUA works at the grassroots and divides its work into projects and programmes which specialise in water. The organisation is devoted to mobilising and empowering people to secure water access. The projects and programmes ACUA undertakes on the ground have been shaped by their ties to key donors. Some of their international donors include

Engineers without Borders (ISF) from Spain: Peace with Dignity; from Belgium: Oxfam Solidarity, from the UK: Action Aid, from the US: the Share Foundation.

ACUA, as a local development NGO and member of the NWF, has a distinctive capability that other NGOs do not have. They work locally and act locally, that is, their technical staff and social activists work directly with the communities and may even live in their proximity. This gives ACUA a geographical advantage. It is common practice for the majority of development NGOs to be based in the capital, San Salvador and from there direct the efforts to link up with the communities around other provinces in the country. Their territorial arm reaches across the whole of the local region of La Libertad allows ACUA to specialise in the nuances of the local challenges faced by the communities. All of this makes the capabilities of ACUA important, and ACUA plays a pivotal role of a 'mid-fielder' hub in the water politics game of El Salvador. It connects communities in the region and at the same time links to the nation-wide battles being fought by the National Water Forum.

ACUA is the most important node for the counter-hegemonic water resistance in La Libertad. The spaces in which this organisation moves across many scales of Salvadorean society. The organisation has built alliances at a local, national and international level. Through its work this ACUA has weaved its own water resistance network in La Libertad and collaborates closely in many of the community's regional battles for water access. It believes that the HRTW and the sustainability of water are part of a far reaching project: a solidarity-economics model of governance (see, (Montoya, 1995, Montoya, 2003, Montoya et al., 2005).

UNES

The Ecological Unit of El Salvador (UNES) and the Centre for the Defence of the Consumer (CDC) are key examples of organisations that operate at a national scale. They play a similar role to ACUA acting as a linking hub between organisations, but at a national level. They work with entities promoting the HRTW in the region of La Libertad and form a bridge

between organisations in their niche field of political ecology and consumer rights, respectively, from the local to the global and vice versa. In this way, they play a pivotal role in the creation of campaigns to exert political pressure for the HRTW in El Salvador.

The National Ecological Unit (UNES) is a development NGO specialised in engaging in frontline anti-neoliberal politics of water and the environment in El Salvador. Because of its choice to both directly lock horns with political opponents and lead political strategies and tactics right at the vanguard of the water movement, UNES has historically played an offensive role in the politics of water in El Salvador. In other words, this player plays an attacking role of 'striker' and has specialised in this position. According to Ángel Ibarra, founding director, its antagonistic political ecology perspective derives from its complete clarity that "the neoliberal model of governance" is directly responsible for the patterns of social exclusion and environmental degradation experienced across the country. UNES shares almost the same pool of donors as ACUA.

For example, UNES and CDC (below) have played a leading political and financial role in the creation of wider and inclusive water politics fora such as the National Water Forum; in national campaigns for the right to water like the campaigns "Blue Democracy" and "Water is Ours"; in the formulation and advocacy for proposals like the General Water Law. They continue to work on related issues by devoting staff, time and resources to develop alliances in this field. UNES has specialised in working for the defence of the environment and has devoted a programme designed for the broad defence of water in the environment and as a human right.

CDC

The Centre for the Defence of the Consumer (CDC) is a development NGO specialised in the defence of consumer rights. It is a civil society organisation that fosters building a culture of rights and obligations for sustainable consumption, through the support of the articulation

of a consumerist movement, the incidence of public institutions and the promotion of critical consumption.

Their political muscle stems from their capabilities to act upon the inner workings of legal affairs regarding water rights violations in the public services arena. Based in San Salvador but with a nation-wide reach through ENLACES, its own grass-roots network sibling born out of CDC's own efforts to create community-based consumer rights associations locally around the country, CDC has developed its own grass roots network. CDC engages with water politics of resistance from the angle of consumer rights. From therein it has built its own gravitas and institutional strategy choosing for example to push forward for legal frameworks containing the human right to water, including the General Water Law, the Nation's Constitution and leading the debate for a need to create a Potable Water Subsector Law. CDC plays a 'mid-fielder' role because they occupy a central position supporting and connecting with grass roots and consumer rights organisations and networks across the country like ENLACES. It occupies a unique niche unoccupied by other counter hegemonic organisations.

CEICOM

The Research Centre for Investments and Commerce (CEICOM) is a small research-based non-governmental organisation. They specialise in analysis of the impacts of processes of investment and commerce in El Salvador including the impacts on water access. Like UNES, CEICOM plays a forward position, but is less visible against the neoliberal leaning policy-making process in the country. CEICOM's central purpose is to research the consequences and impacts that neoliberal policies and social actors have on the rights and livelihood of poor and vulnerable people.. CEICOM has specialized in producing the necessary research needed to provide incisive arguments against the inclusion of water in free trade agreements, against the tactics of privatisation or semi-privatisation processes of public services including water under the umbrella of public-private partnerships; but most importantly to stop mining corporations from entering the country and contaminating its

water resources. For this reason, CEICOM has played an important role in the National Anti-mining Network and has concerned itself with building a united front against the industry's contamination threats to El Salvador's water resources.

PROVIDA

PROVIDA's institutional slogan states, "With social justice there will be health and water for everyone". Founded since 1984 as a humanitarian association, this organisation has specialised in the field of health and water by empowering the capabilities of the poor and the vulnerable from a human rights perspective. In their own words, they engage with the politics of water because "we defend life"

NWF-OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Other social actors in the coordinating committee have been: 1) FUNDASAL: The Salvadoran Foundation For Minimum Housing and Development (FUNDASAL) is an organisation that deals with water due to its own work in fostering social housing. 2) MADRECRÍA: Madre Cría is a non-governmental organisation that works on development projects and enters the politics of water from its work on the environment. It also works on maternal and child health and on reconstruction processes after natural disasters. This includes a concern over sustainable water management.

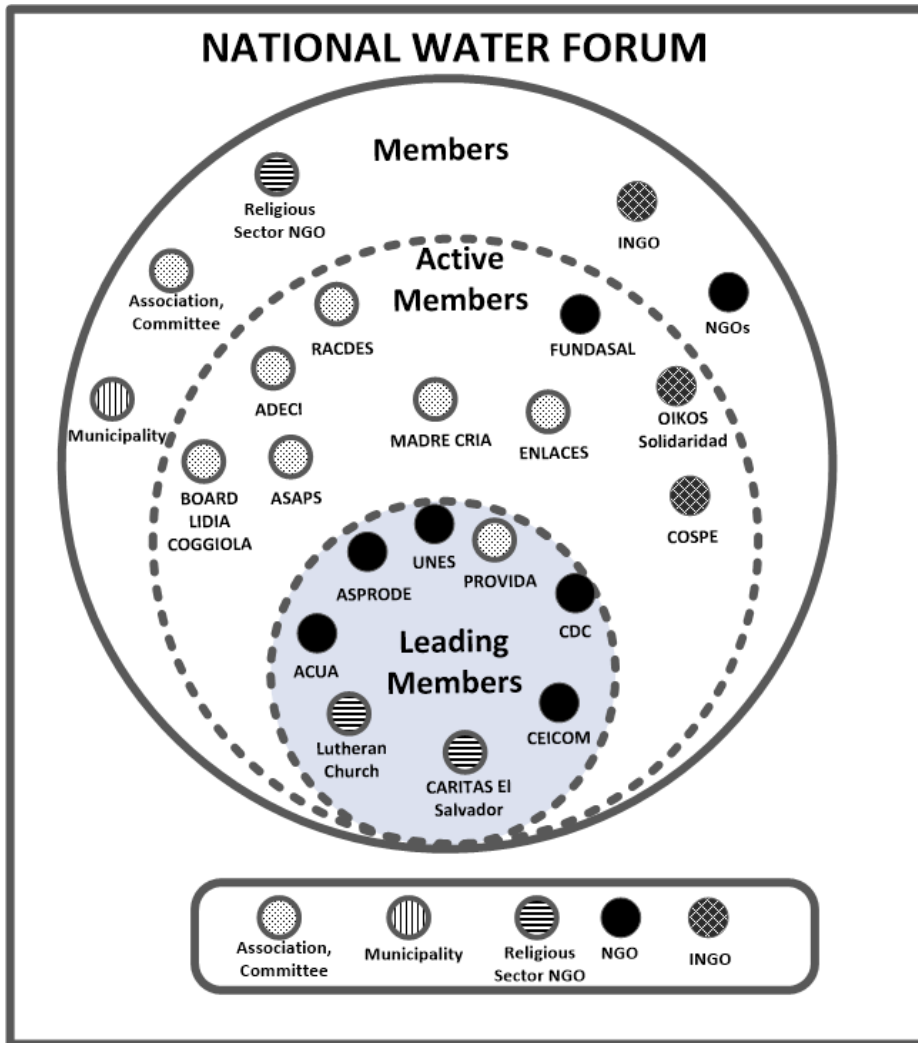


Figure 56: National Water Forum

The Anti-Mining Group:

This is a political association for organisations opposed to mining activities in El Salvador and concerned with the threat mining activities pose to the contamination on water resources and the environment. Their objective is to stop mining companies from entering and practicing their economic and exploitative activities in the country.

This collective of organisations joined forces in the campaign “Water is, and will be, ours”. This space, even broader than the NWFs has a single point of focus: the constitutional reform for the human right to water and approval of the law.

For instance, CEICOM, UNES and CDC are Salvadorean NGOs specialised respectively in commerce and investment, ecology and consumer rights. These three organisations share interests in promoting the human right to water. The first two work together in anti-mining campaigns to safeguard the environment and water resources in particular, and they do so through a network called the Anti-Mining Forum (Mesa Contra la Minería). The latter two, UNES and CDC, work on defending people’s sustainable access to clean water: the first through a political ecology perspective; and the second from a consumer rights perspective. Together they work in like-minded networks such as the National Water Forum. At a macro-scale, the Anti-Mining Forum and the National Water Forum (NWF) form part of another social web, the National Environmental Front, a coalition to promote a sustainable environment in the country.

The Transnational Development NGOs Cluster

Oxfam

Oxfam Solidarity Belgium is promotes the human right to water in the region and collaborates indirectly on the ground with the communities of San José Villanueva as they provide funds for projects to local and national NGOs that work with them, such as ACUA, CDC or wider clusters such as the National Water Forum, the Hemispheric Social Alliance, and others.

Engineers without Borders (ISF):

ISF is a Barcelona based organisation of engineers devoted to infrastructure and appropriate technology projects focused on improving the lives of vulnerable people across the world. Their work focuses on intervening by providing knowledge through human resources and investment for communities to change problems for example in water access. One example of their work in hydrological diagnoses of the southern region of La Libertad. They have been a key funding partner and associate of ACUA. Their own sources of funding depends largely on the Spanish Agency of Cooperation (AECID).

The cooperation programs of ISF focus on long term planning arrangements to secure access one or more basic services. Examples of basic needs they cover are production and agro-commercialisation. ISF focuses on issues of process: the planning, construction and improvement of infrastructures and the capacitation, training and participation of the communities in initiatives such as this.

The Religious Groups

The Church:

There are many different branches of the Catholic Church, which defend the human right to water and the environment with varying degrees of proactivity. However variable this may be, overall the Catholic Church represented by its highest authorities in the country, such as the Archbishop have engaged in defending the human right to water from a very active standpoint . The Catholic Church sees actions done by people to damage the environment as a “sin” and this includes the contamination and depredation of water resources.

Both the Catholic and Protestant Church have argued the idea that water is life and therefore should not be denied to anyone.

The Media

Connected to the previous sets of counter-hegemonic water organisations are those in the media. The core organisations that compose this cluster are: Digital newspaper Contrapunto, Newspaper Colatino, Community grassroots radio network ARPAS, the left wing party radio MAYA Radio Bálsamo.

Alternative Salvadorean media such as the network of communitarian radios ARPAS and left leaning newspapers like Co-Latino and Contrapunto covered the protests.

Individuals from this network, also participate in the education cluster, actively collaborating in the resistance network as individuals rather than as part of an organisation. These individuals principally come from the main universities: the Central American University (UCA) and El Salvador's National University (UES).

The Private Sector

In the private enterprise sector, different types of organisations exist, which support the promotion of the human right to water and its sustainability from a not-for-profit perspective. Most of them come from informal sector initiatives or, small to medium enterprises such as cooperatives. However, one significant social actor actively participating in the resistance network and usually supporting left-wing initiatives in the country is ALBA Petróleos. This is the main oil sector company tied to Venezuela. IN general however there is a notable lack of 'for profit' enterprises and organisations in the resistance. Some of the enterprises that have joined in support for the human right to water from a counter-hegemonic perspective are ALBA social enterprises and small and medium enterprises associations like CONAMYPE.

The map of 'social actors of water resistance' is dynamic, for instance, certain actors of resistance have engaged in actions and campaigns at different points in time. Key actors have not necessarily overlapped. However, this research gives a snapshot of this map to clarify as best as possible the 'coordinates' of the key social actors of resistance in El Salvador. The map does not aspire to represent all social actors in the water resistance arena but rather those who are actively leading the way. The map groups these actors in clusters according to who they are, whom they associate with and what they do in the water governance domain across different scales. In doing so, the groups reflect their common ties, linkages and their nominal set of functions and actions

Types of Social Practices

Using the analogy of a game of chess, this section now describes the typical moves counter-hegemonic pieces make, individually and collectively to achieve their goals and objectives in the struggle for water governance. Later sections use this information to analyse the power strategies deployed by these social actors in the real life water struggles of the seven communities of San José Villanueva.

Those who control access to clean and sustainable water resources set the rules of the game and have the winning advantage. Nietzsche argued that those who set the rules and conditions of what is morally right or wrong gain the freedom of power. (Nietzsche, 1964:12) This can be seen in most policy-making processes in El Salvador. As described in chapter two of this thesis, for decades the overarching rule in the country's water governance has been that 'water flows where the powerful go'. This is similar to water governance other parts of Latin America's as explored elsewhere by Boelens (2006) and Castro (2005, 2001). This is simply because the rules of the game have always been unclear. El Salvador is still a 'water law-less' country, a country where some rules apply to some, in some contexts, some of the time. Hence, the powerful rule whichever way they want because there is no arbiter, no referee and no rules of how to play the game. This applies to

all the players of the game, be they individuals or collectives, corporations, civil society organisations or institutions of the state.

The players in El Salvador's water governance system do not start as equals; the counter-hegemonic actors start under conditions of marginalisation and with a lack of capabilities to defend themselves. The elites of El Salvador, boosted by neoliberal practices, were accustomed to entitle their corporations the freedom to do anything in their water governance practices, with the complete support of the state. Nayib Bukele, the mayor of Nuevo Cuscatlán, La Libertad argues that from the times of ARENA (1989-2009) the country was used to a kind of governance logic of "a loose tiger with a tied up deer" (Bukele, 2013). The "tiger" represented the large corporations whose social and economic practices were supported by the institutions of the State and the "deer" were the poor and vulnerable who were either repressed or left to their own devices.

Therefore, in this context, the starting conditions of the water governance game are unequal. Those fighting against water injustice are acting through 'counter-hegemonic water networks' to change this situation under conditions of social inequality and processes of hegemonic neoliberal globalisation. The anti-neoliberal water resistance have deployed a two-fold strategy. Firstly, a strategy of 'attack' by directly targeting the heart of the issue, a lack of a water law. They have advocated for a new general legal framework for water that comprehends a human-right-to-water compliant General Water Law, Potable Water Sub-sector Law and changes to the National Constitution. Secondly, they have deployed a strategy of 'defence', by reacting to privatising or predatory moves against water resources by corporations. They have used 'tactics' of resistance that include protests, marches and social media campaigns.

However, in the local/global water governance arena, the rules are set by the initial conditions of the players. The local/global social practices of counter-hegemonic networks become evident when considering the initial conditions of the communities of San José Villanueva all the way up the scale from local to the global and back again.

A theme that consistently emerged in interviews with members of the San José Villanueva communities was that 'small changes can be big changes'. In San José Villanueva, it at first appeared that they could do little to change their initial conditions of water governance nationally. They could not see their efforts come to fruition in the short or medium term by pressuring the State to change its water laws so that at last, they could achieve clean water access in equal conditions as those of other rich residential zones and urbanisations. However, they could carry out certain types of action for their scale of water governance.

The communities of San José Villanueva started a process of exploration of the key local/global social actors that they could tap in into in order to achieve their goal of clean water access. Firstly, they started with the key nodes of resistance. They started by seeking out organisations and networks sympathetic to their water plight. The first door they knocked on to do this that was in tune with the communities' needs was ACUA. This local NGO chaired by Walter Flores (1996-2010), Ana Ella Gómez (2011) and David Reyes (2012) was advocating for changing the water access conditions of communities in southern La Libertad and because of their local/global capabilities had the right connections to right information at the right time. Sergio Alfaro, Alejandra Santos and other community leaders sought meetings with them in order to ask for help, as accounted in interviews with each of them. ACUA was offering technical support to all those communities struggling for water access in the municipalities of San José Villanueva, Zaragoza, Puerto El Triunfo in the province of La Libertad. The funding and technical knowledge came from ACUA's own connections to transnational development NGOs with available know-how and funds on the subject of water management such as Engineers without Borders (ISF), and water as human right advocacy (e.g. Oxfam Solidarity Belgium and the Red Vida international network).

In the region of La Libertad, as evidenced in ACUA's project initiation documents, the first thing to do was to connect all the communities scattered in southern La Libertad with funds and knowledge of water as a human right, technical uses and management of water. (the content of these ideas and allocation of funds will be dealt with in more depth in the

following section on material/ideational axis of power). Connecting the communities meant that ACUA could serve as a hub for all the communities of the region and facilitate the process of knowledge sharing between these communities. Workshops, collective meetings, one-to-one private meetings with community leaders, etcetera were organised on a local/global scale that ACUA facilitated. It meant that ISF engineers coming from Barcelona, Spain could meet on a one-to-one basis with community leaders from San José Villanueva via ACUA's facilitation in-situ or by transfer through e-mails, telephone calls and documents that were circulated. In this way, timely communications from local point A to local point B and local point C, D and so on influenced the speed and pattern in which these communities connected on a local/global dimension to achieve their goals. Social practices were evident at local to global social scales, facilitated by the chain of ACUA's connections: including the community leaders of ADESCOs, the inter-community meeting with neighbouring communities from other municipalities of La Libertad and ACUA's international donors and supporters.

The approach to defending access to clean water by the communities of San José Villanueva was centred on building alliances with organisations that could link them up on local/global scales supporting them to fill the gaps of knowledge and funding they needed to do things for themselves. For instance, the first step to empower the communities with exact, measurable, scientific diagnoses of their water access conditions. ISF provided the knowledge and expertise and funding for this. Once the diagnosis had been completed by ISF, they could use that analytical document for advocacy purposes to approach the nation's autonomous water provider, ANDA. Sergio Alfaro, points out that "I connected with ACUA and ACUA connected us to ISF. Then we connected as communities on an advocacy level with ANDA."

ACUA also connected them with local/global social actors that could supply them with ideological arguments to underpin their very local knowledge with a more global outlook. For instance, the inter-communities bridge facilitated by ACUA was strengthened by

water/environmental associations of COPAMA and CORCULL in the region of La Libertad. This led to a number of campaigns and events on a local/global scale. The human right to water campaigns with most impact in the local reality of San José Villanueva communities were the national campaigns on “Blue Democracy” (2006-2007) and “Water is Ours” (2009-2012) coordinated through the National Water Forum. These campaigns although oriented to pressure the government on the lack of legal frameworks for the uses of water also provided the communities with material and key arguments on how to face up to neoliberal water structures of governance. Specifically, the material pinpointed local/global social actors from the hegemonic water networks in El Salvador and how they were involved. For instance, it exposed how the exploitation of natural resources in the Bálsamo mountain range by construction companies of Grupo Roble was part of a wider trend of transnational neoliberal corporations profiting from the weak or inexistent legal frameworks.

The campaign, ‘Agua Fuera del AdA’ translated as ‘Water Out of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America’ was one of the broadest and largest, local/global actions of the resistance that went from 2005-2012 until the agreements were signed. These sorts of transnational actions have highlighted the risks that free trade agreements represent in water governance and how they relate to violations of the human right to water and water justice. Academics, social activists, ecologists, parliamentarians, and an array of local/global actors entered the debate by supporting transnational campaigns against FTAs and the inclusion of water in the agreements. The idea was to close the door to any possibility of privatisation or commodification of water in the countries subscribed to the agreement. The campaign meant that at the same time there were marches, protests, local and national campaigns trying to influence Parliament, at the same time regional (Central American) and resistance in different countries affected by the FTAs. The campaign was messy and supposedly under the leadership of a civil society network called Alianza Social Continental (ASC). However, the question over how to fund the different actions will be seen in the material/ideational axis of power remained in those that financed the projects.

The campaigns of 'Water Out of the European Union Association Agreement (AA-EU-CA)' demonstrated that those marching in the streets of El Salvador had counterparts in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and even the Dominican Republic and Panama.

Social actors have challenged neoliberal processes with local/global initiatives. The movement for the human right to water has been disseminated across the world. However, the Latin American ideas have had the most influence on Salvadorean ecologists. President of Bolivia, Evo Morales' narrative on the idea of the Buen Vivir (Good Living) and his leadership at the United Nations to propose a full political advancement of the human right to water was a catalyst for grass roots movements.

Illiteracy rates of 23% affect the rural poor in El Salvador. This combined with a lack of access to the internet are key factors which often limit the communities of SAN JOSÉ VILLANUEVA to the local level. Resistance networks have formed in a somewhat more old-fashioned way through word of mouth and meetings under the shade of the trees in the community. Sometimes the communities ask the local NGOs for help. This help comes in the form of knowledge, funds or empowerment.. Three NGOs; CDC, ACUA and UNES receive funds from Oxfam and they all have a commitment to advancing the realisation of the human right to water in El Salvador by achieving a General Water Law. However, the means to do this are by mobilising the groups of people on the ground that are suffering from scarcity of water.

Resistance networks are comparatively less tightly connected than HWNs and are less sophisticated at the level of local/global practices. This analysis identifies various significant factors. For instance, content updates and communication via websites is less frequent. For example, the most important node of the network, the National Water Forum barely updated its main website page from 2009 to 2013. The adoption and uptake of media communications as a network through Twitter, Facebook, Google or other alternative media entities were absent from their tactics leading to a weaker presence overall. Another big limitation has been the lack of translation into English of most of the political and

informative material they have used for their campaigns. In this respect, Walter González ex-director of ACUA and former member of the leadership of the National Water Forum states: “This has been due to a lack of funding, but also of organisational limitations. Who controls the budget for the network has been a major political problem, as there are susceptibilities to the fact that some NGOs want to rise more prominently as leading the initiative than others. This has to do with the execution goals and evidence that the donors require.”

Campaigns

Locally, there have been a number of campaigns against the destruction of the environment and of water resources. In particular that run by the Territorial Group of the Bálsamo Range. The most important one has been that done to promote the human right to water

Blue Democracy Campaign:

The leadership of the NWF such as CDC, ACUA and UNES fostered this campaign. It had the objective to change the overarching legal frameworks governing the uses and management of water resources in the country. The idea was to achieve the ratification of the General Water Law (GWL) and insert the human right to water into one of the articles of the Constitution of the Republic of El Salvador.

Anti-Mining Campaign:

This campaign has been ongoing during the latter half of the 2000s as the possibilities for mining companies to enter the country to exploit gold and other minerals in the country grew. The defence of the environment and of water resources specifically gave rise to a wide-ranging set of activities destined to politically lock companies such as Pacific Rim out of the country.

Water Is and Will Be Ours Campaign:

This campaign was created with one objective: the defence of the human right to water by making a push forward for the legal frameworks of the GWL, Inclusion of the human right to water in the constitution of El Salvador and the Sub-sector potable water.

The Anti-Hydroelectric Dams Campaign:

This campaign fought to prevent the construction of hydroelectric dams and their ecological impact. Actors included all those organisations that have the human right to water as one of their key concerns.

In contrast, social agents 'in resistance' aim to use their individual and collective skillsets to model social structures capable of liberating the poor from water injustice. However, organisations in a network are not always sufficiently empowered to do this. Not all have the same levels of know-how or start from the same positions of power, location, connections or resources. Hence, CWNs face challenges that test their individual and collective capabilities.

Water Rights and Wrongs

“So those corporations that want to go on like this [without water laws] say that if the General Water Law is accepted as it is right now, there will be unemployment, crisis and companies will go bust. This is because the prices of water will go up for corporations that previously did not pay for the sustainable use of water. However, we say this kind of message is blackmail, we want a law that makes water a human right... and what do we care if one company actually goes bust when dealing with a vital need like water? We the people always have creative strategies to live and we will find ways to find other employment and survive. But without water no one would live” (Tejada, 2013).

The destruction of the environment and water was possible in El Salvador, in great part due to the weakness of the state to create, enforce or implement legal frameworks for water

sustainability and the human right to water. What types of material and ideational power strategies have CWNs deployed to advance their water interests in El Salvador?

The material/ideational strategies of power adopted by the communities of San José Villanueva show that at least various strands were adopted by joining up counter-hegemonic water networks. On the one hand, they adopted discourses and ideologies on the human right to water coming regional/national campaigns adopted by regional social actors like ACUA, COPAMA, and CORCULL. On the other, they had their own local and very pragmatic approach to solving their problem.

The campaigns, protests and events, were used as means for advocating for the human right to water, but were slow to bring about change on a national scale and hence even slower for this change to trickle down to the local level. Faced with this fact, the community leaders started their own local water activist strategy with a local/national analysis. The ADESCOs of San José Villanueva knew that in parallel to their communities' clean water scarcity, the rich residential zone of La Hacienda was also having problems. The flow of the Aquiquisquillo River was declining and this residential zone also depended on the river for their water supply. La Hacienda Committee of neighbours decided to pressure ANDA to provide them with the water service. This would have been a "business as usual" procedure, because the people in La Hacienda were economically better off they had better chances to be heard on a one-to-one basis in ANDA's regional and national offices. Hence, their prospects of solving this complaint were good in contrast to those of the community leaders of San José Villanueva. But community leaders that had at first protested and made several complaints about the rich/poor divide evident in San José Villanueva decided not to go on with the attack, but rather to engage in dialogue with them and join in their advocacy efforts to ANDA.

The community leaders of San José Villanueva adopted an opportunistic strategy using their local/global advantages. They calculated that by meeting with La Hacienda's neighbours committee they could convince them to join forces materially and ideationally to make a

compelling case for ANDA to provide them with water. The communities would provide the analysis of technical feasibility water study made on the region by ISF to make the 'technical-scientific' argument to ANDA and La Hacienda would provide the political muscle and rhetorical discourse necessary to convince ANDA to focus on them and the communities. In this respect, it was a win-win situation.

San José Villanueva community leaders also developed strategies of resistance of negotiating pragmatically with those who would otherwise be their enemies. The communities of San José Villanueva knew from their continued workshops and campaigns with ACUA that public-private partnerships were increasingly becoming new spaces for corporations to find key new niches of market and subsequent profit. In the case of the construction companies for La Hacienda and the large golf club villa of El Encanto around the river Aquiquisquillo such as Grupo Roble, the communities knew that there were material means to fund a water project for the communities. An example of this was the public-private partnership project of the Investment Fund for Water (FIHIDRO) which was a project aimed to provide water for southern La Libertad. The funds and project proposal came from private companies interested in expanding their construction projects and securing the clean water access for their initiatives. The companies proposed a win-win deal: they would provide the funding for the extraction of water resources, and ANDA would provide part of the expertise and funding available from the government to make it feasible. The project was signed and ratified by both parties however; the actual investment into San José Villanueva communities and La Hacienda still did not come. The FIHIDRO project was only intended to benefit the rich residential zones and projects that the funding companies had built. A campaign lead by ACUA and the communities of San José Villanueva reflected on this fact, where out of the 22,000 water connections planned in the FIHIDRO project, at least 75% were being destined to the private residential zones and not to the communities. In other words, the San José Villanueva communities had a slim chance of benefiting from such project. It was only when they started lobbying with the neighbouring La Hacienda committee that they were able to push forward alternatives.

In an interview with one of the directives of the La Hacienda Committee, (Morales, 2012) it was only because the San José Villanueva communities made the link with them that things started working with ANDA. The local mayor of San José Villanueva agreed to this point. Moreover, the communities of San José Villanueva were able to spot that one of the members of the Committee was left leaning and politically more progressive. This was vital information for them, because it made them analyse the prospect of joining forces with them by having first a one-to-one meeting with this person. Then once this had been done, they would have ideological points in common.

There was also another compelling material and ideational argument brought to life by the communities in their counter-hegemonic water efforts. They wanted to reach transnational spaces to pressure their national organisation: ANDA. They sought to ask a question: where does ANDA's main sources of funding come from? They learnt from ACUA officers that the Spanish Agency of Cooperation (AECID) had given at least \$2 million USD to ANDA from their Water Fund and destined to meet projects of water connection for the most poor and vulnerable in the country. This information made them decide upon a one-to-one strategy of direct approach. They would try to force a meeting or some sort of communication with AECID to ask why ANDA was not investing in their communities. As AECID was the donor, it would trigger accountability charges on ANDA. Sergio Alfaro held communications in this sense with Monica Vasquez, a representative from the agency and the communities gained better knowledge on how to pressure ANDA to provide them with water.

Going back to the rules of the game, the material and ideational axis of power of the CWNs has stemmed from the way knowledge matters have been dealt with. On the one hand, given that all hegemonic social actors were now embracing the human right to water as a buzzword, clarifications on what the human right to water really means started to multiply. Again, ACUA and the NWF played a particularly important role in this scenario. They reproduced documents and slogans that incorporated the words "common public good", "public service", "a right that prioritises life not profit", "no to water privatisations and

public private partnerships””, etc. NWF leaflets in popular language slogans incorporated these slogans and meanings to shape what the real intentions of a human right to water for all were in terms of policy-making. What was important was not to allow the co-optation of meanings in the most important sphere of water governance. If they had not gone through this careful clarification process, the outcome would have been exactly the opposite of what they had fought for in the GWL. Paraphrasing the chess master Garry Kasparov who talked about politics in his native country, Russia, using the metaphor of chess he said, “In chess the rules are fixed and the outcome is unpredictable” (Kasparov, 2013). Whereas the opposite is true in El Salvador, where the rules are unpredictable and the outcome is fixed. A general water law based on the human right to water that leaves the door open to privatisation, would have rendered it futile just because of a diffusion of meaning.

For social activists in counter-hegemonic water networks, the diffuse water responsibilities of the state have created a key battleground in terms of semiosis. Different parts of the water governance system are fragmented and split between institutions. ANDA says that it is the Ministry of the Environment’s responsibility to give permits for water extraction and that they do not have any say in this. However, sewage issues are ANDA’s responsibility according to its foundation charter. MARN deals with contamination, but ANDA does not deal with the potential contamination created by its lack of responsibility in the area.

Agency/Social Structure Power Axis

When Alejandra Santos first went to see Sergio Alfaro, she was worried about some rumours that their community’s ADESCO was going to be disbanded. She was worried about this because she overheard from neighbours in her community that the local mayor of San José Villanueva, Pedro Durán had rendered the ADESCO, to which she and Sergio belonged, ‘illegal’ or inexistent. This meant that politically they no longer represent the community and they could not undertake any actions on a legal basis in their name. In an interview in

January 2013, the local mayor, Pedro Durán, suggested that Sergio and Alejandra were all “thugs who were up to no good” as they had opposed many of his policies in the municipality. Durán was especially harsh about Sergio, as Sergio had challenged him in a public meeting Sergio, using his capabilities as law student, he had quoted articles from the Constitution and the municipal code to argue against the municipality abandoning responsibility for the provision of water to the communities.

Similarly, on a transnational scale, at the World Water Forum in Marseille in March 2012 the hegemonic social actors deployed another strategy of rendering invisible one of its keynote members. The world-renowned water activist, Maude Barlow, who was programmed to participate but was denied entry into in the World Water Forum for unknown reasons. This was denounced by her own organisation, the Council of Canadians in the Alternative Water Forum from counter-hegemonic water networks.

These cases are just the tip of the iceberg. There are many more cases in which the power of agency of the individual and the social structure in which he or she operates becomes a profound force for change. In El Salvador, the social structure examined is only a fraction, a sample of a wider system of rules and frameworks within which people operate. This social structure can limit their opportunities and their chances to bring about social change in their lives.

Those water activists representing the communities of San José Villanueva have had empowered capabilities to act and respond quickly and in an opportune manner to the hegemonic water networks’ power strategies. The case of political annihilation of the opponent’s legitimacy and credibility, the capabilities to make a change become obsolete if the communities believe in it. This did not happen. The local mayor Durán tried to substitute the entire ‘counter-hegemonic’ ADESCO by creating another himself. He selected people sympathetic to his political party living in the same communities and created a duplicate ADESCO giving them credentials to ensure they were the legally recognised ADESCO. What Durán did not know, or perhaps did not remember, is that people like Sergio had knowledge

of the existing legal frameworks within the municipal code. Sergio immediately used this to his community's favour. He quoted the articles which states that people from the same family could not form the leadership of an ADESCO and that these representatives had to be democratically elected by the communities themselves. In this case, Sergio Alfaro demonstrated his level of individual agency resulting from his education. At the same time, he demonstrated that he could tap into the realm of the social structure of legal frameworks, normally used by people from hegemonic positions, and use them to favour his community.

The previous section evidenced the local/global power axis at work in the case study and how this has augmented the capabilities of people to compress time and space and react to the local/global actions of the hegemonic water network. This next section focuses on the material/ideational power axis.

Two decades of neoliberal governments in El Salvador failed to privatise the national water entity, ANDA. The question must be asked why did they not manage to do this? The answer to this question has both material and ideational relevance. The way water had been governed in El Salvador by the elites was not particularly adjusted to bring favours to all the elites involved. Apparently, it was this, and not the resistance was the main culprit that the economic funds of Interamerican Development Bank in the 2004-2006 period failed to bring a 'modernisation' of water governance in the way of public-private partnerships or indeed full-blown privatisation.

First, this research looks at the problems in which the communities of San José Villanueva have faced. Having faced years of denial from ANDA to bring potable water services to their family homes in the region these communities were in serious chance of being left behind. However, the story changed when the community leaders from the seven communities saw that the leaders of the residential La Hacienda had problems with water as well and were asking ANDA to bring them their water services. They had greater bargaining power. The project of FIHIDRO was the umbrella that was going to do the expansion.

Their strategy of resistance was to engage in dialogue with those chairing La Hacienda's committee that were more left leaning and more 'socially conscientious' as Jose Angel said. By sitting in a 'one-to-one' and face-to-face meetings they were able to create a dialogue and decided to push forward as a collective group to pressure ANDA to give them the water services. After decades of not having water on May 2013 the first pipes connections were placed bringing water to the communities as well as La Hacienda. In this sense, the communities went for the classic 'win-win' alliance, which had not been typical of the resistance.

Materially, the resistance networks utilise a modus operandi of financing projects and campaigns. At the local level, the committees of representatives within each community had to rely on limited levels of funding. This essentially came from the voluntary contributions of poor people themselves to their representatives via a collaborative fund. For example, the meetings with ANDA meant that members of the community would have to talk. This meant that they would have to secure their transport and paper for the photocopies that they would need to do all the paper work of applications. However, collaboration in-kind was also met by the different initiatives at the local level. For instance, the local Radio Balsamo in the headquarters of ACUA has been a pivotal means of communication providing a voice and channel of communication at the community level. This initiative has been also attractive for those funding agencies that see ACUA as a good potential non-governmental organisation that could be the vehicle for their realisation of projects that are located in the sustainable development arena with local grass-roots participation. The educational, informative and union aspect of Radio Balsamo has been according to members of the communities an invaluable cooperation. It has not only been as a site but it has also been an umbrella space for those activists that work on the human right to water throughout the region. The seven communities, enticed by the prospects of pressuring ANDA effectively and gaining the opportunity to access water, have also asked the material cooperation in form of assistance for example in the equipment to organise meetings: microphone, speakers, someone to assist them with the technology and some form of transport to do this. In

addition, all of these initiatives have relied on a high amount of solidarity as they do not have the means to pay for this. An example of this was the large communal meeting in January 2013 in which all the microphones, material, vehicle, etc, were allocated to the people in the community as a solidarity initiative. Many of the DJs in the radio are volunteers.

Nevertheless, at the same time these initiatives are materially producing factories of resistance discourse at the local/global level it is true that ideationally there has been an equivalent flow.

The human right to water has been by far the most important ideational tool that has filtered down to water governance across local/global scales. It has figured in the logical frameworks of the transnational NGOs such as Oxfam, CARE, Share but it has also resonated across the United Nations governance bodies. Since its inception, as an idea of change by Evo Morales and Bolivia's government, there have been a flurry of documents, videos, documentaries, even cartoons and stories relating to the idea about the importance for life and how it is somehow connected with the destruction of nature caused by the prevailing neoliberal economic models.

However, as it is rightly pointed out by Bakker (2009, 2010, 2012) the idea of the human right to water has been co-opted by the hegemonic networks and made part of their own proposals. When in the World Water Forum 2012 in Marseille there were calls for an integrated management of water resources, the component of the human right to water was absorbed as part of the whole system of proposals. Coca Cola, Nestle and others changed their discourses from previous years (see comments from Nestle in 2010 and then in 2012 where the idea of the human right to water was deemed as harmful and finally how they have embraced it. The parallel material and ideational reaction to this power strategy has been slow. Bakker had written that the idea of 'the commons' could be deemed as a better tool for the resistance networks. This notion of the commons was however not strongly campaigned to dissociate themselves from the hegemonic networks

material/ideational power tactics. In the initial designs of the campaign Water Out of the AA!, there was a national campaign called “Water Democracy!” with the objective of making the human right to water part of the national constitution and to make the General Water Law and Potable Water Sub-sector Law “once and for all”. The campaign was led by a group of key organisations from the National Water Forum: CDC and UNES. The leadership of CDC believed that one of the big problems was how to mobilise and advocate to change the correlation of power in the decision-making processes. The word ‘democracy’ was too abstract, and complex an idea for many of its grass roots members who could not read or write. Similarly, they were unlikely to be moved to act by a still very recent concept that was also not the most popular; consequently, the idea was that the name of the campaign should be changed to “Water is ours!”

Another trigger of reaction for the resistance movement came in the form of material repression, e.g. the case of Suchitoto where a protest for the human right to water was staged in this small town and the protesters were repressed with tear gas by the then tight wing Saca government.

The human right to water and what its implementation means is not clear for everyone. Many people on the activist side get confused when quizzed about what exactly they mean by the human right to water. It seems that different people have different notions of what this right implies or what it means to apply it in practice. Everyone agrees on the most basic element that water should be available for everyone, independent of the person’s level of income or whether they live in a rural or urban area. However, does the human right to water mean that clean water should be provided free to the poor? Does it mean that the water service provision should be subsidised by the state? In addition, if the poor all secure their water access by means of a state subsidy, does it matter that the water service is privately provided?

The rapporteur for the human right to water by the United Nations, Catarina de Albuquerque, said that the human right to water is agnostic. It is agnostic because this right

does not imply by itself the public or private provision of the service. This is the main reason why it has been embraced by corporations around the world, as it does not mean their exclusion.

Ideationally, the tactics of the resistance networks have been vulnerable to this lack of clarity in their conceptual utilisation of the human right to water. As soon as questions are posed to these networks, doubts start to arise as it is reflected in their comments. In the initial campaign of the Salvadorean National Water Forum, the slogan was a call for “Blue Democracy” which meant that their concept was linked to the idea that the only way to achieve water justice for everyone was to democratize water. Democracy implies participation by everyone, however this concept would be turned on its head and utilised by hegemonic actors to their advantage: they argued that participation must include private corporations and individuals from within them.

Local/Global Power Axis

This section analyses the local/global power relations of resistance in El Salvador’s water politics. It investigates how the battles for water access of seven poor communities living in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, reveal the ongoing power relations of counter-hegemony in El Salvador’s system of water governance. To do this, the analysis focuses in on the local (case study) to the global and vice versa, to capture the range of dynamic power relations shaping the struggles for clean water access.

Key Conflicts

Interviews with members of the seven communities of San José Villanueva demonstrated a collective discontentment with their access to clean water. For example, a middle-aged

woman called Concepción, from the community Espíritu Santo of San José Villanueva washes her family's clothes in the shallow flow of river Aquisquillo on a daily basis. The river plays a vital role in her family and the community's water access. She explains her clean water deprivation situation like this: "We have this problem of lack of clean water all the time. We come here to wash [in the river Aquisquillo], but this dirty water is contaminated by that rich residential area owned by the Poma Group [a powerful consortium that includes a construction company]. We drink from this water [signalling to the river]. Sometimes we can't even wash here because it is too dirty" (Guzmán, 2013).

Despite their despair, only a small percentage of community members have engaged directly in seeking ways to address this problem and defend their right to water. By engaging in activities of resistance, water activists from the seven communities of San José Villanueva have begun to change this situation of water injustice and exclusion.

Power strategies

How have counter-hegemonic water activists engaged in the challenge to address the water access problem experienced by the communities of San José Villanueva?

Counter-hegemonic water activists have organised themselves into networks and have been able to act as a 'swarm' that connects across societal scales. For instance, in the case of the communities of SJV, when the problems in water access arose, they immediately started challenging the local actors and actors across different scales. But they also have presence across a wider scale. For instance, the way organisations connect through the aid chain of ACUA.

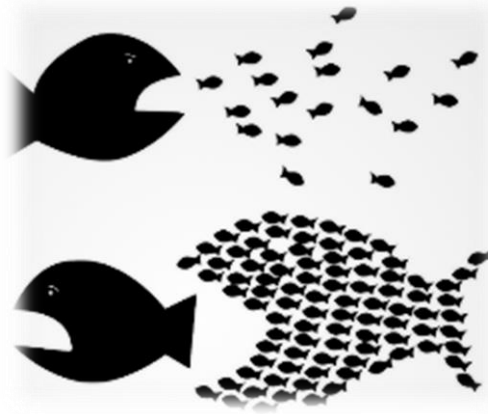


Figure 57: Swarm strategy

There is a path of connections that enable Sergio and Josefina to connect through the network and with their own efforts sustain a swarm like war for change in the water politics arena. While the communities of San José Villanueva are reacting through the leadership of counter-hegemonic water activists against the industrial corporations and construction companies, and they pop out in different spots in the country; they all carry the same message: the current way of governing water must change, and to change a General Water Law is necessary that puts the principles of the human right to water at its core. Different initiatives, different spots around the country, but also beyond the country. While it is being debated in the corridors of Oxfam in Brussels, Boston, Oxford, Madrid or Quebec it is also being debated and supported by religious organisations across the Central American region and in global arenas like the Alternative Water Forum. They get their inspiration from counter-hegemonic academic activists that also play their part in spaces like WaterLat, or the Anti-Mining groups, the Ecological groups, this amorphous set of organisations do try and advance however disorganised their strategies.

The organised disorder in which they work is very much like a swarm. They do not consult directly with each other not even in inter, intra or cross type of organisations. While the Belgian branch of Oxfam may support a project which seeks to target the General Water Law political change it also believes that should not take direct part in the country's affairs

by joining in at the same spaces and levels as its organisations were they become donors, they also have on the other hand, a gravitas to 'get into the fight' directly. In the words of the director of Oxfam Belgium in El Salvador, the problem is where the funding comes from and who controls the office

It reveals the strategic connections between counter-hegemonic water actors in order to challenge hegemonic power and bring about their desired changes. It explores how for instance, social activists like Sergio Alfaro, can tap in into a web of organisations that go all the way from the local to the global and vice versa. It could mean that being a network in a globalising El Salvador any given individual or organisation could help another in distant parts of the network. But how do people like Sergio and the communities' organisational structures tap into this network to achieve their stated interests in clean water access? Are social actors capable of using this network to connect and compress time and distance to influence change across different scales? How effective are they? The backdrop of today's globalising neoliberal capitalist system provides a context that influences how people and their social groups connect and interact to solve social problems. The following analysis sits within this context.

From individuals to community organisation

In the communities of San José Villanueva, people struggle daily to get access to clean water, but some also fight for it. At the scale of the community, each individual is an important social actor for change. All of those individuals that see in the prevailing order a legitimisation of water injustice and become outraged and thirsty for change almost certainly become water activists. In other words, in individual spaces, a degree of personal empowerment, critical consciousness and personal leadership is crucial. Indeed, this is true for those who realise that water injustice is not a given condition, but a set of conditions that can change. They see this when neighbouring districts, in contrast to them, do achieve

access to clean water daily in great quantities. Dissatisfied with the way water is distributed and managed in their localities, some people have reacted by organising themselves to change the existing order of things.

Take for instance the leadership exerted by individuals from the communities of San José Villanueva like Sergio Alfaro. Sergio Alfaro is one of the most educated people of all the seven communities of San José Villanueva. He has gone to university to study law. This was not an easy feat considering that most people in these communities have minimum levels of schooling. He lives with his family in the community of Escalón Norte and works at the local health clinic of San José Villanueva as an assistant. Throughout much of his life, he has witnessed his family and his community struggle to get access to clean and sustainable water. In this context of rural poverty, he has joined the few organisational bodies in his community to try to change this situation. He leads his community's Association for Communitarian Development (ADESCO).

According to the community leaders, ADESCOs are the first 'port of entry' for social action. It is in the ADESCOs that people from the communities organise themselves to tackle problems such as lack of clean water access, not just in San José Villanueva, but also elsewhere in El Salvador. Through these fora, they express and share their problems, brainstorm possible strategies and actions to solve them, and finally act as a collective to tackle them. Hence, ADESCOs become micro-forums for action, and in this space, they collectively select the people that will be in charge of acting and representing their interests. The sorts of activities that people in ADESCOs do are varied. For instance, they may gather up funding for the communities' projects, and establish links and associations with other like-minded organisations. These links or alliances may include other ADESCOs to represent their interests in wider spaces like the municipality of San José Villanueva and regional environmental and water associations like the National Water Forum, among others.

Around 14 people in total, two from each community, represent their interests in the local ADESCOs of San José Villanueva. Sergio and other community leaders from the seven

communities of San José Villanueva connect through the local ADESCOs in close proximity to them and have regular meetings to try to tackle their problems of clean water scarcity. Sergio, like other ADESCO leaders, plays a key role by linking his community with a trans-communitarian interaction. Together they mobilise their communities to resist the current status quo in water governance. Moreover, in this way, the local ADESCOs join forces by agglutinating

The local community leaders and their community members form a political community pressure group. This group then advocates their rights to the municipality, or in certain instances to organisations like ANDA, the national water service provider, or local to national NGOs and associations that could help their quest to access clean water.

In addition to ADESCOs, Water Boards (Juntas de Agua) are also community initiatives, which respond proactively to the lack of clean water access. These are self-organised management and communitarian service providers of potable water. In response to the lack of reaction by the state to provide this service to the population, these organisations have taken water service extraction and distribution into their own hands. In the case of the seven communities of San José Villanueva, this organisational route has not been adopted for a variety of reasons, which will be discussed in later sections. The point for the communities is to secure and produce direct results in improving their clean water access. When no alternatives are available, communitarian Water Boards can be the best option to organise a special unit dedicated to securing, extracting, managing and investing or raising funds for water access.

From community organisation to trans-municipal organisations

Alone, San José Villanueva Community leaders organised into ADESCOs have limited capabilities to solve large structural problems like the environmental destruction of water resources such as those seen in the province of La Libertad. In theory, these communities

should have no problem in accessing clean water due to their rich natural environment and geographical position. However, this region is undergoing an intensive socio-ecological transformation due to rapid high-impact urbanisation. Here, excessive logging, erosion, water contamination and destruction of natural ecosystems have put enormous pressure on the natural habitat of the Bálsamo Range. To confront this situation, San José Villanueva community leaders link up with other organisations through their ADESCOs, to gain territorial and political influence in the region. The next step up the local to global scale is the municipality of San José Villanueva.

Although the municipality of San José Villanueva should be an important actor, promoting the human right to water for all of its citizens, in practice this is not the case. Interviews with community leaders of San José Villanueva show that, in their view, the municipality of San José Villanueva has played a passive and sometimes negative role in solving their water access problems. The problem, in part, is that municipalities in El Salvador have responsibilities to promote local development, health, and a healthy and sustainable environment (according to the municipal code in articles 4.1, 4.5 and 4.10) but the articles do not mention explicitly securing clean water access for its citizens. Vague and diffuse responsibilities mean that it engages only partially and irregularly in initiatives related to improving the conditions of clean water access for the population. For these reasons, it would be wrong to classify the municipality of San José Villanueva as a counter-hegemonic social actor and part of water networks in the region.

However, the municipality of San José Villanueva is an important social actor in that it evolves according to the political party and person in power. Currently, a right wing political party, the National Conciliation Party (PCN), governs it. On March 11th, 2012 Pedro Durán became the elected major in the municipality of San José Villanueva, province of La Libertad to govern for a period of five years (1st May, 2012-30 April 2015). In the past, this municipality was governed by the FMLN, left-wing political party.

By law, under the Municipality Code, the municipality has at least three key roles: First, the duty of elaborating, approving and executing local development plans. Second, the municipality has the role of promoting the development of health programmes and environmental health. Finally, the municipality has the duty to regulate and develop plans and programmes destined for the preservation and restoration, rational usage and amelioration of natural resources of the municipality.

San José Villanueva community leaders have surpassed the obstacle of the municipality's inaction and have joined forces with larger organisations interested in working in their political/territorial spaces to defend the environment and promote clean water access. Examples are those organisations concerned with advancing sustainable development in the sub-regional southern area of the province of La Libertad located in the natural basins and forest areas of the mountainous Bálsamo Range.

Another important social actor in the promotion of the human right to water, in the communities of San José Villanueva is the Health Unit of San José Villanueva. It has the duty to promote health, water quality, illness prevention and eradication at local level. It is not by chance that, Sergio Alfaro, one of the key leaders of the San José Villanueva communities works in the health unit of San José Villanueva. It demonstrates that individuals can wear different "hats" of responsibilities in the context for water activism.

On a larger territorial scale, San José Villanueva community leaders participate where possible in the Territorial Group of the Bálsamo Range.

The Bálsamo Range has seen several ecological organisations sprout up due to the pressing ecological problems of the region and founded what is today known as the Territorial Group of the Bálsamo Range. Rapid urbanisation growth, excessive logging, erosion, water scarcity, water contamination and the destruction of ecosystems are all multiplying factors for the rise of this group. The group has six core members:

- (a) The Committee for the Defence of Water of Zaragoza (a neighbouring municipality to SAN JOSÉ VILLANUEVA),
- (b) The Patronage Liggia Coggiola (a regional development association),
- (c) The Communitarian United Association for Water and Agriculture (ACUA) (a local development NGO),
- (d) The Committee Pro Water Defence and the Environment of San José Villanueva (COPAMA) (a water-ecologist association of all San José Villanueva),
- (e) The Committee for the Rescue of the Water Basins of La Libertad (CORCULL) (a water ecologist association for the province of La Libertad) and
- (f) The Centre for the Defence of the Consumer (CDC) (a national NGO).

This Group operates at a regional level with a political advocacy aim to bring about change to water and environmental injustice throughout the whole province of La Libertad. It is a hub for organisations across wider scales of governance from communities, to municipalities to the whole of the province of La Libertad. The key municipalities in which they work include Zaragoza, San José Villanueva and Nuevo Cuscatlán.

The pivotal role of ACUA

The United Association for the Promotion of Water and Agriculture (ACUA) is a local NGO and one of the most important organisations serving as a hub for all the communities in the municipality of San José Villanueva. ACUA is a key actor working in trans-local scales connecting the latter organisations. It provides direct support to at least 26 communities and four municipalities in the whole of the southern region of La Libertad through knowledge, funding and skills for sustainable development. ACUA specialises in promoting sustainable development models in water and agriculture to secure the livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the region. In this way, because of its subject area,

ACUA plays a fundamental role in linking and strengthening communities south of La Libertad across social scales.

ACUA works across the sub-regional (La Libertad), national, regional and global arenas (alliances with Central American and global networks supporting the human right to water). The human right to water is a basic element for the connection with other entities. ACUA promotes respect and harmony with the environment through its projects. The projects are mostly aimed at fostering technological innovation, adoption and adaptation of models for the production and consumption of healthy food, the protection, access and management of water resources, as well as the improvement of conditions that reduce the vulnerability of the population to climate change.

These include important municipalities such as those of San José Villanueva, Zaragoza and Puerto El Triunfo. At the same time, ACUA links up with ecological groups like the Committee for the Rescue of the Water Basins of La Libertad (CORCULL), the Committee Pro Water Defence and the Environment of San José Villanueva (COPAMA) and the Territorial Group of the Bálsamo Range. These are active regional associations working on the HRTW. Likewise, ACUA forms part of wider spaces of political advocacy for the environment and water, such as the National Water Forum at the national level, or transnationally with the Inter-American Watch for the Defence and the Right to Water (Red Vida).

From national organisations to transnational organisations

Local/ Global networks aim to conquer institutional L/G spaces, but these are battlegrounds of elitism. Differential access to resources means differential capacities to resist and change, including education. Cash liquidity, however is not readily available for the poor. Many of those interviewed, both from the transnational hegemonic water networks and from the transnational resistance networks shared the opinion seems to indicate that there has been a normalisation of the idea of water as something that has a cost. But who is willing to pay

the price for what in the governance of water? The main national water agency is not prepared to pay for it. Neither is any other public entity of the government. Transnational agencies under the umbrella of the UN have sprouted initiatives that encourage governments to commit to better means for clean water access for poor people. Everyone agrees that water should be for all, but not everyone agrees on how to make this a reality that leads to conflict.

Their local/global perspective is deeply influenced by the way they use their connections. However, comparatively the connections are less based on tools that connect them to the wider global community such as the internet based networks. Among the crowd in the marches, a high percentage are not able to log in a computer and much less tweet or upload a photograph depicting a violation of the human right to water to Facebook or similar websites, because their capabilities are reduced. Many of the members are not able to read or write.

Local/global entities perform local/global actions. Those in the Alternative Water Forum, although people or entities directly related with the resistance from El Salvador were not in attendance, they did have representatives from organisations that help and aid their critical thinking or their projects. Examples of these were Friends of the Earth (FoE), Transnational Institute (TNI), the Canadians for Water. Many of these do incorporate in their budgets the voice of those that see water as a human right.

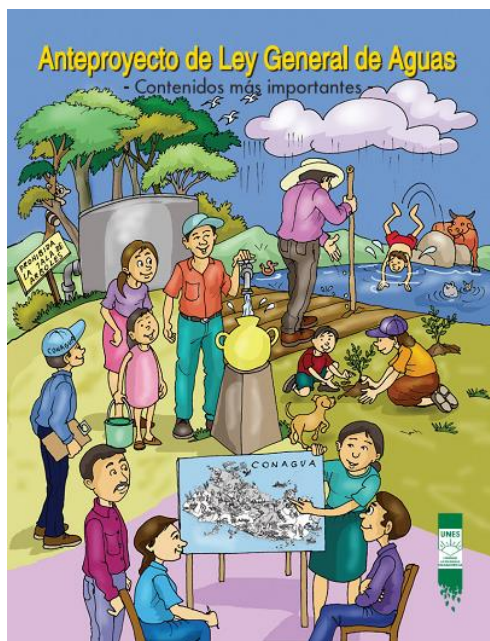
As the evidence gathered suggests, there is a movement of people that oppose the water governance dictates of the hegemonic water networks. And in a similar fashion to the hegemonic side, they acquire a transnational network nature to face up the challenge of resisting its governance. Nevertheless, there are differences. The local/global power connections are of a different sort all together. Unlike those on the hegemonic side, they have local actors that go all the way to the members of the communities. They are communal organisations that are territorial, very local in nature, but that connect in different ways.

Local/global connections become powerful when they use this dimension to advance their interests. However, the mobilisation aspect is less profound. It is difficult for the leadership to go to the places of meeting. The leaders of the community need to choose times and places outside of work to deal with these problems and generally it would be a chore to go to the capital city to protest with legislators. The means for transport thus, are supplied with project funds for 'mobilisation'. This breaks the distance barriers in the national way and in similar fashion it is the modus operandis to give vigour to protests that occur across the central American region.

Material/Ideational Power Axis

Power Strategies

¿Cómo se ordena y autoriza el uso del agua?



Todo permiso para usar el agua lo dará CONAGUA, de acuerdo a las prioridades de las que hablamos anteriormente. Los permisos serán diferentes de acuerdo al uso del agua de que se trate.

1) Derecho Comunitario de Aguas: Las comunidades que se organizan y administran sus propios sistemas de abastecimiento de agua potable o sus propios sistemas comunitarios de riego, obtendrán un Derecho Comunitario de Agua. Este derecho es de todas y todos, permanente, no se puede embargar, dividir, ni vender. **Este derecho no paga impuesto por usar el agua.**



30 | Anteproyecto de Ley General de Aguas

Social activists made use of powerful tactics to spread knowledge. But they also struggled to simplify the idea that with the creation of a water law everything would be solved. For instance take the quotes below.

- 1) “Last Monday after we went to protest at the Legislative Assembly I was chatting with my husband and he told me, ‘to me this idea that there ought to be a [General] Water Law scares me a bit, because how many laws already exist and how many of those are actually applied?’ I agreed... because laws exist but they are never put into

practice... and furthermore, the laws that are actually applied are implemented so flexibly according to convenience that the weak always end up losing.” Edy Tejada

Sergio Alfaro: 2) “Most of the time, poor people don’t have the capability to discern a social strategy. People think that if I get close to the powerful like Los Poma then they think that things will improve for them, but sadly, this is not the case. They are only used as a bridge, as a means for something else and are manipulated. The same thing happens with politicians. For me, the best tool to guarantee our fundamental, essential and social equality in human rights as stated in the Constitution of the Republic is communitarian organisation. This could be in place either by practice or by right. Another key thing is to progressively raise awareness to make people conscious, to make people think and make them feel their needs..... because often people [in poor communities] have stopped feeling their needs. They say, ‘mehh it’s alright... I”m alright like this...” but the need still exists. Many times these sorts of people become a passive load in society and become the first victims for powerful people like politicians.”

“I have been in social service as an activist for more than 20 years in the social struggle to organise communities, raise awareness to give them adequate tools for their defence. In addition, you know that in the political system often what they want is to divide them. The political system knows that the only way to govern is to divide. Moreover, people [in poor communities] don’t understand this. They think that because they [the politicians] are going to give them a small piñata and a little party they are giving them the best of the best. Perhaps it is acceptable to trigger motivation to foster organisational processes, but when it is devised as a manipulation strategy... it is just a short-lived flicker of light (*llamarada de tusa*). This is when one has to be clear when one is leading [the communities] that there will always be someone that will come to try to divide. In the face of this, we have to discern what is behind this effort to divide us, what is the interest behind... is it an individual interest? Is it the interest of the capital? Is it a political interest? Because interests are what divide the whole world.”

The prevailing water injustice generates resistance to the status quo of water governance. This status quo is the Salvadorean water anarchy that has been exploited and reinforced by the neoliberal context of the country and it is the key problem identified by all the resistance social actors interviewed. For them, it is this highly political issue that would dictate the new future rules of water governance where the power conflicts now arise. According to the interviewees in the resistance network, this is a local/global battlefield in its own right. For instance, at the local stage the battle for the human right to water is informed by the successes and failures of other countries in the region and the way this theme is handled in the world water forums. Many counterhegemonic forces at play connect across all of these scales and have direct presence in all of them. Examples of this are Friends of the Earth (FoE) and Oxfam, which have had direct connection across all different scales of governance in the water sector. Furthermore, local/global social relations are continuously reinforcing the conditions of hegemony and resistance in the governance of water. As in Steven Lukes' three faces of power the undercurrents of the axis of power are local/global, material/ideational and agency/social structure. We can allocate the coordinates of their operations. The ways the different power networks clash and try to influence power is the objective of the following interplay at work. The lack of institutional frameworks to deduct responsibilities, freedoms and rights in the use of water by everyone is what affects everyone.

The resistance network has oriented their efforts towards a local/global practice: the campaign for a human right to water in El Salvador which would be created in: a) the National Constitution of the Republic; b) the creation of a General Water Law compliant with this right; and c) the creation of the Sub-sector Potable Drinking Water Law. Chiefly among these local/global efforts has been the holistic practice of making alliances with political ecologists across borders, locally, nationally and internationally to enrich their strategies and support relating to the environmental justice and sustainable development.

Equally, through its main funding partners such as Oxfam, Engineers without Borders, Geologists without Borders and others, it has an anchor of economic flows transnationally and also ideationally. Most importantly, starting from the case study itself, the seven communities show a significant degree of local/global connections, principally in relation to the transnational development aid sector. The leadership of the seven communities faced with the acute problems of clean water access have referred to organisations such as Oxfam, Engineers without Borders, Geologists without Borders, CARE, USAID, among others. [see table and figure 2]

Challenges to face counter-hegemonic water networks

L/G Power Relations

This chapter attempts to explain actions and inaction that have shaped the water struggles of poor people in the case study. Resistance networks in El Salvador have initiated their campaigns for change in a context of disadvantage. They have directed their efforts primarily towards building an institutional framework from the state that can help secure everyone's clean water access. However, the state has been reduced to a minimalistic expression due to two decades of neoliberal practices. In this context it is hard to understand how, suddenly the State in such a weak and flimsy condition can suddenly create rules and implement them in practice to govern water in a situation of such inequality.

People exert power towards and over others in a variety of ways. However, they also resist in equally varied ways. Not everyone subject to a hegemonic power resists of course. Water is a resource that was common and spiritual before but now the rules of the game changed. It is now defined as a commodity, or as the Dublin principles state, as an “economic good”. This definition is time and space contextual. Water was not an economic good thirty, fifty, a

hundred years ago. Yet this label now defines the way society approaches this vital liquid. Today, Salvadorean supermarkets are filled with a variety of water labels. “Agua pura”, “Agua Cristal”, “Aguita”. Water sold in Salvadorean supermarkets is offered in far better conditions than any other means to access clean and safe water in the country. Clean water now requires money.

Resistance networks have used the concept of the human right across the world as the preferred standard ‘toolkit’ to defend their interests in securing the sustainability and uses of water for life (Al Jayyousi, 2007; Bakker, 2007a, 2007b; Khadka, 2010; Miroso & Harris, 2012).

Previously, in El Salvador the media would exclusively portray the defence of water and the environment as something that was promoted by isolated groups of looneys, ignoring the wonders of progress.

It is safe to claim that the majority of resistance groups originate in civil society spaces. However, sectors of civil society illustrate important variability in the proportion and extent to which they operate in certain domains.

In terms of the State, the scenario is fragmented. Specific people within the Ministry of the Environment (MARN) endorse specific views of the resistance network, however they do not form part of, nor do they see themselves as part of, the resistance. Those now in the seats of power, former guerrilla members from the FMLN, similar to former sympathisers, allow an open doors policy, which create one to one spaces with those in the resistance.

This section examines the way people in El Salvador have resisted the governance of water from hegemonic elites and how they have done so transnationally. As we have seen in chapter 2, the context of water governance in El Salvador has been rife with political turmoil. The hands of the few have exerted too much power upon the many that have not been able to influence the rules of the game. The best alternative to power imbalances has been to create resistance in creative ways.

According to the resistance networks, the reasons are systemic. The elites govern covertly through political parties and with the help of different social actors married with the neoliberal ideology who have decided that the best way to govern water is at market-regulated prices.

Conclusions: Power Interactions & Outcomes

Counter-hegemonic Networks: Limited Accomplishments

This chapter has argued that:

Counter-hegemonic water networks have decelerated the hegemonic water network's push for 'pro-market' water schemes in El Salvador. However, despite their best efforts counter-hegemonic actors have failed to apply their alternative 'pro-poor' and anti-neoliberal water-justice model. This 'zero-sum' effect has created an impasse in El Salvador's water governance, which can be explained by social power dynamics, evidenced in the repeatedly aborted proceedings to create the country's first General Water Law (GWL). This situation in turn, has negatively affected poor people's clean water access as evidenced in the case study.

The inability of Counter-hegemonic social actors' to change the current water governance model is due to endogenous rather than exogenous factors. This is due to weaker individual and collective capabilities of the counter-hegemonic social actors in key areas necessary to create effective advocacy campaigns. Secondly, innovative ideas disseminate among its members at a much slower pace. Thirdly, counter-hegemonic water networks use less persuasive and holistic power strategies than those in the hegemony.

Counter-hegemonic networks display more scattered, reactive and repetitive water governance strategies across their power axes than their hegemonic peers did. In other words, water activists 'in-resistance' have yet to be at the vanguard of proactively setting the water agenda and still react to the hegemony's political agenda, rather than leading it.

At first sight, given the different niches of specialisation, capabilities and skills exhibited by the each of the organisations participating in the resistance network , it could be easy to conclude that the sum is bigger than the constituent parts. The synergy of these organisations efforts would be a formidable adversary to confront the challenge of hegemonic and neoliberal water networks operating in the country. As of September 2014, the objectives stated by the key organisations part of these networks and social movements have not yet been achieved. The General Water Law proposed in March 2014 has still not been ratified. However, across local and global scales, from the individual to the communitarian level, small successes have been achieved.

For instance, the different organisations participating in the National Water Forum have accomplished visibility and presence in various battles across different sectors of water use and management in the country.

Counter-hegemonic networks have strengthened and are increasingly able to represent themselves and challenge the existing status quo. Five examples illustrate this point:

Overall and in spite of the substantial success of hegemonic water networks (HWNs) in translating neoliberal edicts into practice, not everything has gone in favour of the hegemonic water networks. For instance, attempts since the 1990s to privatise water in El Salvador have so far failed. Indeed this inability to privatise has contradicted the HWNs' dominance. Even with strong funding made available in 2006 by the Inter-American Development Bank for a full scale 'modernisation'' process oriented to achieve this objective [see ch.5] full water privatisation revolution has yet to come to El Salvador. This must be due in part to the success of counter-hegemonic forces.

Similar protests such as the one described in the previous sections have occurred repeatedly throughout the last two decades in El Salvador, but have achieved limited success in changing the dominant trends in neoliberal water governance. They have happened so much in fact, that they have become a tradition; a set of rituals of resistance performed not just every World Water Day in El Salvador but in every activity related to water justice, the sustainability of water and the defence of the environment in the country. Indeed, campaigns, protests, letters and other forms of public pressure push for ways to implement the human right to water are now a staple of the Salvadorean water justice movement. However, their relative abundance holds no proportional relation to their effectiveness. The general aim has been to bring to life institutional and legal frameworks that would make the human right to water a reality for all for the first time in the history of El Salvador. To achieve this, they have set themselves four objectives: a) inserting the human right to water into the national Constitution, b) creating a General Water Law, c) creating a Sub-sector Drinking Water Law and d) creating a law to initiate Environmental Tribunals in the country. However, despite the tidal wave of political acts of resistance, the groups advocating for the human right to water have yet to achieve any of these key objectives.

Counter-hegemonic resistance does however appear to be effective in specific areas. For example, a growing amount of public protests have pressured Salvadorean governments especially during the period of 2006-2013 to create institutional frameworks capable of implementing the human right to water in the country. Recurring riots on this issue point to the failure of the government to provide clean water for all and its inability to regulate uses of water in a fair and sustainable way. In turn, this failure of good water governance has had

negative effects on poor people and a growing number of the marginalised are expressing their discontent about this.

In 2009, after a streak of more than 188 years of relentless waves of dictatorships, coup d'états and right wing governments³⁹ the FMLN, the first socially progressive left wing government in El Salvador came to power. This radical change in political context should in theory, mean that the opportunity to make a GWL a reality is greater than ever.

Moreover, previously held static ideological positions in water politics have also changed. Although still hegemonic, neoliberal water organisations started to reverse privatisation processes in Latin America throughout the second half of the 2000's. They stopped their unregulated 'business as usual' practices in the country. Some were even accepting the human right to water as 'vital'.

Additionally, at a global scale, winds blew in favour of counter-hegemonic networks and the United Nations ratified the Human Right to Water in 2010. With that, the commitment to clean water access became legally bonding at a global level. Hence, citizens all around the world can now hold their own governments to account to implement this right. Water activists were no longer isolated 'eco-warriors'. Their position was now stronger than ever on a global scale, political backed by the rights based framework of the United Nations. They

³⁹ Historians and other political observers may contest the opinion whether a leftist government has ever governed the country before 2009. The ex-Secretary General of the FMLN, Fabio Castillo expressed this idea as a given fact in a televised interview in the general elections of 2014.

could now become associated across different scales and sectors of society and present in new political spaces, institutions and events defending the human right to water across the world.

7. CONCLUSION: WATER INJUSTICE BUILT BY POLITICAL STALEMATE



Poor People's Odyssey for Water Access: A Journey of Power

This concluding chapter scrutinizes the key findings of the research in the light of its core question: *How do social power relations affect poor vulnerable people's access to clean and sustainable water in El Salvador?* The chapter evaluates the argument that power relations provide the most relevant lenses through which to explain poor people's water deprivation in El Salvador. To answer the question, the research needs to consider now how effective its theoretical and empirical underpinnings were. What sort of power relations has the case study of San José Villanueva revealed? What can we learn from the particular set of constraints, obstacles and battles that poor people have faced in order to access clean and sustainable water in El Salvador?

To unwrap the findings and critically examine them, this chapter is divided into three parts. First, the core findings are examined, which arise from people's power struggles for clean water access. Second, the chapter breaks down these findings and elucidates their wider theoretical and empirical significance and implications for today's water governance context in El Salvador and beyond. The analysis concludes by evaluating this research's strengths and limitations and proposes new and interesting future research efforts, which this study opens up in the field of water politics.

Going Upstream: What this Thesis Researched

Exploring Flows of Water, People and Power in El Salvador

This research explored the social web that ties people, power and water together into one complex 'hydro-social knot of power relations' in El Salvador. This hydro-social knot can in its best version secure and facilitate people's access to clean, sustainable water. At its worst, it can tangle up and strangle people's opportunities to access clean water while also eroding the future sustainability of water. This study aimed to explore and understand the

interwoven nature of such power relations in El Salvador and reflect how they might be promoting or limiting poor people's freedoms and rights to clean and sustainable water. To examine these issues the research used an in-depth paradigmatic case study, which highlighted the problems and conflicts affecting the sustainability and access to clean water of the rural poor in El Salvador. The research sampled seven poverty-stricken communities in rural areas of San José Villanueva, province of La Libertad.

In addition, the research created a new conceptual framework to tackle this empirical endeavour, using an 'axes of power approach' (Ch.3). This approach consisted in identifying and scrutinising the power strategies social actors use to achieve their water access interests along local and global, material and ideational, agency and social structure dimensions. The research applied this framework empirically in chapters 4, 5, and 6. By analysing the multiple sources of information along these axes, the research brought to light previously concealed strategies used by social actors to achieve their desired water access outcomes.

The communities of San José Villanueva showed how their quest for water access largely depended on power relations beyond traditional niche perceptions of local or global, material or ideational conceptions of water access, which for example rely heavily on economic, management or engineering disciplinary fields. The research studied how water actors connect beyond geographical and disciplinary boundaries and use strategies hinged on local and global, material and ideational, agency and social structure power relations to shape these communities' successes and failures in clean water access. This is important, because in the name of helping the poor, policy-makers have made key water governance decisions. The consequences of these decisions have cascaded down negatively impacting upon poor people's capabilities to access clean water. Key examples of water conflicts that emerged from the research were:

Local: Conflicts over the influence of public private partnerships on water provision in the region of La Libertad like FIHIDRO (see Hegemonic Water Actors' strategies in Ch.5);

National: Conflicts over the influence of the potential creation and negotiation process of the country's first General Water Law (see Ch. 2, 4 & 5);

Global: Conflicts over the principles and rules dominating the trends in water governance across the world: e.g. the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) approach disseminated and legitimised through global events such as the World Water Forum (see Ch.5) or the Human Right to Water and Sanitation legitimised in the United Nations Human Rights Council (see Ch.6).

As a whole, the research showed how groups of water actors use a variety of strategies to defend their interests in these key water conflicts. The research argued that the power relations between at least three key groups of water actors — categorised by their political standpoints as hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collectives— have produced El Salvador's current water governance structures. The analysis of the strategies, tactics and actions used by these three key groups to achieve their water governance interests, uncovered a system of engrained water injustice.

What the thesis argued

This research anchors itself on the idea that power relations illustrate water access outcomes for poor people in El Salvador better than any other factor. The study explored this claim in a number of ways.

First, the research identified the *key actors* in Salvadorean hydro-social relations. This included all those social actors whose agendas, strategies and actions have produced and reinforced the existing conditions of water injustice in the country (chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6). Furthermore, the key identifying factor of the three identified groups of water actors is their distinct political position towards the country's water governance. Such actors were categorised as hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collectives. Together, they constituted the analytical subjects of this research.

Second, the research argued that power interactions between water actors in El Salvador are best examined along three dimensions of power described as 'axes'. Each axis highlighted different but inter-related dimensions of power relations best suited to describe the ongoing battles to 'colonise and conquer' the rules of water governance.

Finally, the research argued that the outcomes generated by these struggles for power have had numerous consequences towards clean water access.

All of these arguments stem from a core hypothesis: a nuanced understanding of power relations enables a greater understanding of water politics at local, regional and national levels in El Salvador and beyond.

How this thesis tackled the question

The thesis combined conceptual innovations with a novel empirical case study, all of which was laid out in three interrelated steps. The first step was to establish the aims of the research and select a case-study methodology as the most appropriate means to empirically sample and study the genealogies of power relations present in El Salvador's system of water governance.

The second step drew upon contemporary research into the multifaceted nature of power in order to unpack the concept along the three 'axes' discussed in chapter three. Although, in the 'real' world such an exercise is impossible, for heuristic purposes this thesis attempted to operationalise it. The aim was to reveal the key power relations at work in Salvadorean water politics in ways, and at scales, often obscured in other comparable research.

The third step of the research involved undertaking a very detailed case study of water politics in El Salvador. (Chapters 2, 4, 5 & 6). Much of the added-value of the thesis is to be found in the case study. In addition to contextual work (narrative history and statistical evidence), the case study benefitted from in depth interviews with a wide range of

individuals either directly or indirectly involved in the water politics of El Salvador. The objective was to gain a rounded, first-hand experience not just of the local, but the supra-territorial expressions of power relations. The author visited El Salvador every year from 2010 to 2014, on average staying three months each time. This fieldwork enabled the author to conduct more than 85 interviews in total (see the detailed list in the appendix and bibliography). The interviews were designed as semi-structured dialogues but some were also intended as informal conversations (and as participant observations) in every day places and spaces. The interviews covered the three branches of social actors targeted in El Salvador: hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collective water actors. Several major events supplemented the information for the interviews. One such event was an action-research visit to the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium in 2012 to explore through advocacy in-action the effect of power on issues and questions of water governance in free trade agreements. In addition, the author was an observer-participant at two contrasting and opposed events of hegemony/counter-hegemony in water governance: assisting with the World Water Forum 2012, and attending the proceedings of the Alternative Water Forum 2012 in Marseille, France.

Reviewing the Findings: *Power Relations Dam Poor People's Water Access*

This research discovered some of the invisible patterns in which power relations of water access unfold in El Salvador. The legacy of the case study of San José Villanueva is the analysis extracted from it; ongoing real-time developments of decision-making processes, actions, behaviours and both intended and unintended outcomes. This section extracts at least three sets of key findings grounded on interdisciplinary forms of empirical evidence. The discoveries are interesting as they reveal several characteristics of El Salvador's web of water politics.

Findings Regarding the Profile of El Salvador's Social Water Actors

First, the research found that El Salvador's particular historical legacy has produced an environment of social inequality in which conditions of water injustice and unsustainability have thrived. In this context, asymmetries of power have translated into asymmetries of clean water access. Consequently, pre-existing streams of politically polarised people and institutions have become central to understand what happens to people's relationship with water in El Salvador. Political polarisation has fractured the country's water governance into diametrically opposed quarters. Between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic water actors, no handshakes seem possible or allowed. However, the research also suggests that even though the chasms separating hegemonic from counter-hegemonic actors are wide (cf. water actor networks maps in ch.5 & 6), marginal collectives have connected and interlinked to them in different degrees according to the 'stickiness' of their own political positions, beliefs and actions.

In the case of hegemonic water actors, the stickiness factor of their own ideological beliefs was stronger than its opposition due to three factors. First, hegemonic water actors had a crisp and clear message to offer: water is an economic good, which requires the 'efficiency' of market mechanisms to make it sustainable and accessible for all. Second, simultaneously packed with this ideology hegemonic water actors exhibited a dazzling clarity about how to make this happen materially speaking and why it works for everyone—including the poor and the sustainability of the environment—. For them, the recipe of good water governance was clear: people should follow policies, methods and tools based on worldwide-accepted 'best practices' like the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) framework of water governance. Based on the Dublin Principles, (see Ch.2 & 5) this persuasive framework builds the idea of water as an economic good and the value of participation, but critically excludes the role of power or notions of social justice from this equation. The hegemonic water actor network led by ANEP, ARENA and FUSADES made it possible to disseminate and

persuade others to embrace the contents of this water doctrine in El Salvador and across a variety of spaces and places (Chapters 2 and 5).

On another level, the research uncovered how hegemonic water actors' main interests fixated on achieving supremacy of water access control. They did so to shield and maintain their business models intact. Information gathered in this research suggests an attitude that nothing should block the upward momentum towards higher *competitiveness* and profit maximization. At least three iconic examples of hegemonic water governance practices emerged: First, the pre-emptive colonisation and blockage strategies of the proposed General Water Law in El Salvador. Second, corporations' use of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) such as FIHIDRO, to domesticate the state into harmonious cooperation and submission to their interests. And third, the inclusion of water in Free Trade Agreements like those El Salvador signed with the United States and the European Union (see ch.4). Correlated with this idea, the research found that *fear and risk* trigger the activity of hegemonic actors in water politics. This fear stems from long-term risk analyses they have made regarding El Salvador's dwindling water supplies. For hegemonic water actors the risk arises from greater economic costs of water extraction from the existing sources they control and which they need to secure to sustain future clean water supplies; as well as from the possible loss of privileges from the state which they need to maintain. These in turn will facilitate their ongoing investments and profit accumulation schemes. On the one hand, hegemonic water actors see the inevitable impacts of climate change on water availability, but on the other, the material, economic and even legal uncertainties this scarcity supposes for the viability of their existing business model in the future. These water actors cluster together as multifaceted organisations from civil society organisations, think tanks and media organisations operating across different social scales. However, most hegemonic water actors gravitated around the leadership of business associations and the big member corporations, e.g. see ANEP's role in pushing ahead the interests of corporations like Grupo Roble, ILC-SAB Miller, among others (ch.5).

In contrast, the research also showed how *counter-hegemonic water actors* exhibited distinctive capabilities and characteristics that have made them powerful enough to decelerate, stop or challenge various hegemonic water governance policies e.g. previous attempts to formally privatise the public water service provider, ANDA. In addition, the research highlighted a tight integration between its members with high local and global connections, a sharp clarity among their leaders about their ideas and discourses however, this clarity was found to a much lesser degree within their group of followers about the meaning of key ideas and how these are applied. For example, what does water governance based on the human right to water look like and which tools and methods can be applied in practice? What is the alternative 'management approach' to IWRM and what is it called? This lack of certainty and clarity became an Achilles heel for the counter-hegemonic water activists' in their battles for persuasion.

In addition, at the level of mobilising social movements, the case study displayed weaker individual capabilities from the poor to discern and contribute 'en-masse' to the counter-hegemonic resistance movement. Some elements indicated this could be due to lower levels of education, others suggested the influence of neutralising religious ideas such as 'Pray and God will sort this problem out' and women's own gendered patterns of exclusion in relation to water and society. These factors have hampered the agency capabilities of large sectors of the poor to defend key concepts like the idea that water is a human right and a public common good. Political parties of the left-wing (e.g. FMLN) have tended to defend positions framing water as a human right and as a public common good. Counter-hegemonic water movements have been indignant about what they see as '*water injustices*' in El Salvador. They blame corporations and economic elites for the patterns of water scarcity afflicting the country as well as the endemic water pollution present in the country's rivers. Consequently, their mission and vision frameworks have centred on ensuring the state officially recognises water as a human right and a public good regulated and provided by its own apparatus to all Salvadorean citizens and prioritising the poor. Their aims have focused on shifting the neoliberal model of water governance toward one geared on the human

right to water principles extending from the Constitution and General Water Law to national environmental laws (Ch.6).

Finally, on the issue of profile of water actors, the research found that poor people (see ch.4's Marginal Collectives) have not fully embraced either of these contested positions in El Salvador's water politics. They follow pragmatic ideas of survival and resilience regarding water. Water for them is quite simply a liquid meant for survival, a means to sustain and secure life. Salvadorean ideas about water no longer contain the normative power that spiritual water deities represented in the past across indigenous cultures. Today, water has become a flat, material resource necessary for life from the perspective of the poor. No shared remorse or moral guilt about the extended water pollution of Salvadorean rivers appears in the interviews either from the rich or from the poor today (Ch.4, 5 & 6). However, spiritual ideas about God's support on their good cause of accessing water and defending the environment are significantly present in Catholic churches and some of the Protestant branches like Baptists and Lutherans proved on their significant involvement in initiatives like the National Water Forum and (ch.4 & 6). Women and their particularly gendered relationships of social exclusion in El Salvador make them water slaves in practice. They anchor their existence around finding and securing access to clean water sources daily. This situation limits their own political engagement in El Salvador's water movements (ch.4). The table below summarised the findings relative to the profile of water actors in El Salvador.

Table 6: Summary of Findings Regarding the Profile of El Salvador's Social Water Actors

RESEARCH QUESTION: <i>How do social power relations affect poor people's access to clean and sustainable water in El Salvador?</i>				
	Key Social Actors	Marginal Collectives	Hegemonic Water Actors	Counter-Hegemonic Water Actors
Who is who? Who does what?	Local actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural communities, Key educated leaders Women NGOs: e.g. ACUA, CDC, UNES Grassroots associations: e.g. COPAMA, CORCULL Churches: Catholic & Protestant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporations: Grupo Roble, El Encanto Rich elite: e.g. La Hacienda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Leaders, Grassroots associations: e.g. COPAMA, CORCULL, Churches: Catholic & Protestant
	National actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs: .g. ACUA, CDC, UNES Environmentalist & Grassroots associations, e.g. COPAMA, CORCULL Churches: Catholic & Protestant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANEP ARENA FUSADES Networks: Water Circle Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networks: National Water Forum (NWF), Anti-Mining Forum, NGOs: ACUA, UNES, CDC Environmentalist associations Churches: Catholic & Protestant
	Global actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISF, Oxfam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GWP, IDB, WWC, AECID 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISF, Oxfam, Action Aid, AECID
What do they believe in and what do they want?	Mission, Vision, Ideals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Water is for life</u> Water is urgent to access any means possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Water is an economic good</u> regulated by market-based principles and may be used for profit Water is a human right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Water is a human right</u> Water is a public common good, not a commodity.
	Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean Water Access urgency Playing the short term game of 'survival' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Risk and fear</u> of losing clean water access control They focus on the <u>long term game</u> of profit accumulation goals Spread of IWRM based models as 'best practices' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Risk and fear</u> of losing clean water resources and Its environmental sustainability They focus on the short and long term game of defending the rights and sustainability of water & the environment

Findings regarding the Strategies by which water access is achieved

Overall, this research found evidence that key Salvadorean social groups today are fighting an invisible water war in El Salvador. Hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and marginal collective water actors have outlined the nature of the ongoing battles for water access and control across the nation and beyond. Unlike the country's civil war of the 1980s, this invisible water war has been less about bullets and use of force, and more about power relations, the colonisation of ideas and changing people's behaviour subtly and gradually without them noticing. In this sense, the research revealed that water actors based in the country have practiced relationships of power grounded in strategies, which have created 'gravitational fields' alternatively pulling or repelling other social actors toward their cause. Political polarisation at the social level has produced political magnets at the water governance level, which draw people, and organisations together to support policies and generate actions, which comply with how they normatively believe water should be governed (see figure below).



Figure 58: Findings on Water Actors and their Power Relations

The research also showed that power relations between water actors can be detected in real time by tracing the ongoing strategies people and organisations use to achieve their water governance objectives. Scanning these strategies using axes of power as explained in the conceptual framework (ch.3) proved useful for the research objective. In this way, the first local/global axis drew attention to the way all social actors used strategies, tactics and actions unfolding along multiple social scales concurrently. Hegemonic water actors showed highly blended and tight connections between the organisations forming part of their network. These hegemonic water networks feed on the way economic elites have already made business, family, and friendship ties from the past (see ch.2 & 6). El Salvador’s historical legacy features strongly as a key explicative factor in this trend. The General Water Law (GWL) highlighted the way water actors deploy a combination of strategies to achieve their objectives. For instance, it was striking to observe in real time how hegemonic water actors accelerated and quickly elaborated an alternative GWL to undermine and stop the existing proposal of GWL being pursued by counter-hegemonic water actors. The underlying

principle of *blitzkrieg* or *rapid reaction strategies* in water governance is that speed matters in the process of policy and rule making. Whoever colonises the rules of water governance *first*, wins control of water in the long term. These strategies include the use and adoption of a series of institutional programmes (e.g. Public-Private Partnerships like FIHIDRO), management tools, Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), and legal frameworks (ANEP's own version of the General Water Law and Free Trade Agreements with the USA and the EU). These instruments aim to achieve and lock-in corporations' control over water access. These instruments are today oriented to empower corporations in their respective market-spaces.

Similarly, *counter-hegemonic water actors* presented strong connections at local/global scales. The transnational cooperation aid chain heavily influenced these water actors. The cooperation chain imposes bureaucratic, material and ideational constraints in the organisations that participate in it. Most counter-hegemonic water actors showed limitations in their reaction speeds and political commitment to water governance goals. Their capabilities to react strongly correlated to the terms of the 'contract' with donors. These contracts appeared deployed in the logical frameworks most of these organisations use on the ground. Examples of these are present in cooperation chains like that seen in San José Villanueva; communities>ACUA, NWF>Oxfam, Action Aid.

The gravitational force or pull of the cooperation chain has also strong correlation with successes and failures of mobilisation presented by the National Water Forum (NWF). Those that have lead the NWF *in practice*, have been development NGOs funded by donors where each has its own particular rules and constraints on how they should act and spend their resources. Interviews and empirical documentation showed that key NWF members like ACUA, UNES, CDC, CÁRITAS, PROVIDA strongly depend on the programmes, projects and actions, supported by transnational NGOs and charities such as Oxfam, ISF, CARE, SHARE, CORDAID and others. The influence of these supra-territorial actors has many implications, one of which is that their interests may sometime be at odds with those of counter

hegemonic groups. One such an example is how Oxfam supports counter-hegemonic human right to water campaigns and the NWF, but at the same time has supported hegemonic water actors like Coca Cola/SAB Miller by collaborating in a consultancy funded by these corporations to study their poverty impacts in El Salvador. These corporations now use this study as part of its charm offensive and corporate social responsibility campaigns.

In contrast, *marginal collectives* proved to connect more weakly in local and global ways and more narrowly centred on short term planning and actions in the material and ideational dimensions.

Similarly, exploration of the second material/ideational axis showed how all water actors deployed material and ideational strategies helping to reinforce beliefs and forms of conduct in water governance. The dominance strategies of Hegemonic Water Actors (Ch.5) were the most successful in changing beliefs and behaviour. Their capabilities of persuasion were more robust. This was due to strategies and tactics based on colonisation of concepts and ideas used by counter-hegemonic water actors. Examples included the assimilation and adaptation by hegemonic water actors of the meanings of the ideas of 'participation', 'social activism' and 'human right to water' present in El Salvador. By changing their meaning, they changed outcomes and the outcome to date of the GWL negotiations has proved this point. Shielded by the 'best practice' idea that '*participation is for all*' in water governance, counter-hegemonic water actors made sure the GWL statutes required the coordinating institution of the GWL, CONAGUA, the inclusion of the corporate sector occupying four out of the six available seats in its chief executive committee.

Counter-hegemonic water actors in contrast, on the material and ideational axis exhibited a less successful array of tactics. They included extensive colourful, and creative campaigns that included social media, marches, visible protests and even theatre, music, visual arts and poetry. However, in terms of outcomes achieved counter-hegemonic water actors proved to be less effective than their peers in colonising the rules of the water governance game (see Ch.6). However, the research also showed they have achieved a few successful milestones

like the realisation of changes in the nation's environmental legal frameworks and setting the pace of the agenda of water governance in El Salvador by pushing ahead motions to include the human right to water in the Constitution and the GWL.

In the case of marginal collectives, the research found that the role played by education and religion in the water politics of Salvadoreans is highly significant. It is not just an overriding force materially and ideationally, but above all a significant explanatory factor in the empowering/disempowering processes of poor Salvadoreans' capabilities to become agents of change. God's perceived role in allowing them to live with so little water, gave them comfort and support to be resilient, but also the hope that things would get better. However, their ability or willingness to engage politically depended upon the particular branch of religion. Those branches of religion – catholic and protestant-evangelical – that convey messages of “*solo basta con rezar, Dios proveerá*”, that is, ‘*praying is enough, God will provide*’, tended to be present in the discourses of the most poor and vulnerable people within the communities of San José Villanueva. Finally, the role of education cannot be overstated. Understanding “the human right to water” is a highly complex task even for many educated people. For the poor, the idea that water should be hard-to-find, scarce and cost money has been ‘normalised’. Therefore, the privatisation of water *in practice* has already been internalised into their material and ideational practices. Finally, without access to the centres of power, poor people in the communities studied resorted to ‘swarm like’ strategies in order to secure access to water. This strategy was manifest in the form of local gossip and informal talks about where the best sources of non-contaminated water could be accessed, at what times, under what conditions, at what price and so on.

Finally, the third agency/social structure axis examined showed how these social actors' displayed abilities to tap into their own forms of agency and social structure arrangements in water governance to advance their interests. In this way, the research found that women's agency to change their socially unfair hydrosocial relations presented significant limitations. The Salvadorean social structure of machismo in water governance prevails. At

the same time, significantly lower levels of education reduced their capabilities to influence decision-making processes.

The following two tables summarise and compare the findings related to the strategies and power relations used by all the water actors studied.

Table 7: Summary of Findings Related to Power Relations of Water Actors

Key Social Actors		Marginal Collectives	Hegemonic Water Actors	Counter-Hegemonic Water Actors
How do they do it?	Grand Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience strategies: Finding quick, pragmatic, effective solutions to their urgent water access shortages e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finding clean, cheap alternative water sources ○ Knocking at the right doors and the right people: Municipality, ANDA, MARN, La Hacienda, FIHIDRO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominance strategies: Colonising water governance institutions and rules: e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PPPs: FIHIDRO ○ GWL ○ FTAs: EU, US, etc ○ Aid Cooperation: IDB, Think Tank Initiative, FOMILENIO 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance strategies: Opposing and de-colonising neoliberal water governance institutions and rules, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GWL ○ Opposing FIHIDRO, PPPs, FTAs, Mining
	Local/Global Axis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively disconnected • Slow connections between social actors • Community solidarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly networked • Rapid, fluid social connections • Fast reaction times (blietzkrieg tactics) • Small clusters of people: e.g. committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly networked • Fluid social connections • Medium to fast reaction times • Big clusters of people e.g. social movements
	Material/Ideational Axis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pragmatism • God helps those who help themselves • God helps those who resist whatever comes • Street-wise tactics: gossip & competition • Resilience and normalisation of pain: struggles for water access are normal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulation: Conceptual colonisation tactics (Chameleonic tactics): e.g. participation, human right to water, water is a public good, “we are social activists”. • Persuasion: Propaganda & Charm campaigns: Corporate Social Responsibility tactics • Coercion: Divide and Conquer tactics applied to opposition • Authority: scientific knowledge legitimisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuasion: Propaganda & Charm campaigns: e.g. “Water is Ours”, “We are All Water” • Popular theatre, music, pamphlets, media usage: Twitter, YouTube • Protests and campaigns in a “Make Noise!” logic
	Agency/Social Structure Axis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s resilience to adverse environment: machismo, class, gender barriers • Collective swarm tactics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonising Rules of Water Governance: GWL • Colonising ideas, discourses and actions • Colonising State institutions: Public Private Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charismatic leaders • Gains and trade-offs of the cooperation chain

Table 8: Summary of Findings Related to Outcomes & Implications

Key Social Actors		Marginal Collectives	Hegemonic Water Actors	Counter-Hegemonic Water Actors
What have they achieved?	Impacts & Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>For their own objectives:</u> achieved successful access to clean water from state provider ANDA in 2014 • Communities have won short term water access battles but not the long term war for water access & sustainability • <u>For the poor & vulnerable:</u> the organised poor have more resilience capabilities, but women, elderly, children, illiterate people suffer more exclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>For their own objectives:</u> achieved successful colonisation of water rules and institutions in El Salvador • <u>For the poor & vulnerable:</u> Long term negative impacts as water access & sustainability constrained by de-regulated investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>For their own objectives:</u> Achieved setting and making visible the GWL agenda, environmental tribunals, but failed to influence sufficiently the rules according to their water as a human right/sustainability • <u>For the poor & vulnerable:</u> Given boost to poor people’s agency capabilities to influence decision making processes
What does this mean?	Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Empirical implications</u> • Poor people’s water access locked in by a stalemate of power relations • Poor people’s water access depends on unlocking this stalemate of power relations, but also in making them visible through policy-making processes • <u>Theoretical implications</u> • Absence of facilitators to reach consensus in water governance structures • Making visible issues of responsibility, power dynamics and Make Peace Not War • Urgent need to reveal in detail the influence of power dynamics in poor people’s water access 		

How this research’s findings challenge pre-existing knowledge

Advancing Knowledge: Water Flows to the “Power Savvy” in El Salvador

This thesis shows that the pre-existing literature about El Salvador’s water governance problems have missed the mark in acknowledging and understanding the crucial role power plays. The key to understand poor people’s clean water access struggles does *not* centrally

lie on Malthusian demographic pressures, or technological and engineering achievements, lack of economic investments in water infrastructure or even poorly applied water management techniques (cf. Ch.2). The gates of clean water access open in El Salvador for those who drill more skilfully and persuasively into people's material and ideational conceptions about water; on those who glide through local and global spaces through tighter, faster and stronger social networks; and those who expand their people's and organisations' agency capabilities to tap into the key pulls and levers of their social structure. Thus, poor people's water access depends on them being capable of sailing across the ocean of power relations that engulfs them. For that, they need power to see not just the short term, but also the long term, not just access but sustainability, not just the urgency of water as a basic need but the important role water plays in multiple dimensions of El Salvador. The role of education as a power boosting mechanism as in Paolo Freire's *'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'* (Freire, 1970) cannot be understated as a core factor determining power relations in water governance.

In addition, this research has advanced specific knowledge about the power of water actors in El Salvador. The research partially challenges the notion that water only goes to the powerful. It shows it does go to the powerful, but it adds: water goes to those who best deploy power strategies in local and global, material and ideational, agency and social structure dimensions. The example of the communities of San José Villanueva's own success to achieve clean water access is a product of their own power savviness. However, despite this achievement, the findings of this research imply that whilst they may have won the battle they are losing the invisible water war in El Salvador. In this respect, the research argues that the colonisation and normalisation of neoliberal ideas of water governance are so far embedded in El Salvador that even when left-leaning political parties like FMLN rise to governmental power the possibility of imposing alternative styles of water governance are very limited. So far, initiatives which insert the human right to water and environmental sustainability in national governance rules in El Salvador are still wallowing in the quagmire of hidden power relations which render policies like the GWL impotent.

The research concludes that hegemonic water actors have already won the ongoing water war from a systemic, long-term perspective in El Salvador. Hegemonic water actors have effectively colonised and normalised their ideas of how water governance ought to be governed and locked it in with tools and methods, projects, institutions and laws that incorporate this vision. To do this, hegemonic water actors have been ‘power savvy’ in using strategies of local/global, material/ideational and agency/social structure dimensions. The success achieved means that hegemonic water actors can rest assured that even without them acting with direct use of force, pre-existing social arrangements, legal frameworks and ways of thinking are automatically helping them to control and frame how water is governed in El Salvador. The tools and methods that prevail today in the country are those of the Integrated Water Resources Management. At present, even the language used to refer to water uses utilitarian hegemonic pre-conceptions e.g. the ‘urgent’ need for water to be governed with ‘economic efficiency’ by way of public private partnerships where ‘everybody wins’. Another key example of this dominance is the pattern found in some of the interviews with marginal collectives: poor people in El Salvador today do not intuitively understand that water is *their human right*. They mostly care about what matters to them in the short term: that water flows to them regardless of the means, so long as they can afford it and it comes to them every day.

Lessons Learnt from the Research

Theoretical Lessons Learnt

Conceptually, there are three core lessons to be drawn from this research exercise;

First, analysing *power relations in water governance makes the researcher and the research plunge into a vast and complex, endeavour*. By almost any theoretical account, the concept of ‘power’ is by definition almost impossible to exhaust its infinite variants and iterations across human nature and social relations. Indeed, it seems that power affects everything and everything affects power. To break away and escape this circular chain of impossibility

to conceptualise and use power for any reasonable research inquiry, researchers need to weigh up, first, what sort of reality they are dealing with. In the case of El Salvador's water governance, it seemed logical to back build and synthesize a theoretical model based on an 'axes of power approach'. Thus, in its axes of local and global, material and ideational, and agency and social structure dimensions a researcher could map water actor's strategies, compare them, understand them and defend its usage hinged on the historical evidence as presented in ch.2 that a globalising, neoliberalising all-encompassing capitalist system *has permeated the patterns of social practices in El Salvador*. It seems to be a useful premise to hinge the conceptual framework of power (ch.3) on limited, yet empirically grounded foundations. After all, the historical context provides lessons for theory in its own way: El Salvador has in fact become a springboard for many neoliberal policies and quirky capitalist transformations, which even today still light up the hearts and minds of corporations and economic elites alike (see the PPPs revolution going on in El Salvador in present 2014).

Second, power emerges as both the illness and the remedy of water injustice. The concept of power applied in this research embraced the specific idea of 'power relations' between people. The idea was that in doing so 'power' hinges onto something alive and concrete. It does not wither away into abstract conceptual irrelevancy. On the contrary, by examining real people and their ongoing social practices a people-centred 'power relations' analysis can bring back the issue of water (in)justice into the discussion table. And this is a political practice in itself. Unpacking people's social practices and seeing their quests unfold to achieve personal and collective interests, leads the researcher to questions of responsibility. Who does what, for what purpose and how he/she achieves their aims using local and global, material and ideational, agency and social structure strategies are all questions that call for recognition about the consequences of people's actions and inactions. Even when the culprit of an outcome may be liquefied and diffused into an abstract social structure—see, for instance the gendered patterns of machismo and water injustice at the local level for the women in San José Villanueva's communities (ch.4)— real people and organisations are always related to it in some way or another. They may reproduce it inadvertently; it is

true, but they are still accomplices of such an outcome. In sum, using power relations to detect people's strategies to achieve their interests in water governance can lead to understand both what is the illness and the potential solutions for achieving water justice.

Third, *power shapes methods and methods shape power in water governance*. Governing water requires people's interactions with others who may be weaker or stronger in power across the three dimensions of the axes of power mentioned. But to be successful and dominant 'water rulers' people also require as part of the strategies used, effective tools and methods to disseminate their water governance style. The package of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) has worked so effectively in El Salvador as persuasive mechanisms of water governance that the IWRM method is now shaping new power relations in El Salvador. IWRM packages are legitimising water governance rationales that social actors have barely questioned in the country. This is not an issue to be overlooked, because it highlights the need to theoretically understand the impacts of these 'artefacts' of knowledge and governance.

Methodological Lessons Learnt

Deploying the *axes-of-power approach* in practice revealed some key strengths, but also a particular blend of weaknesses. For instance, the analytical strength of this conceptual framework is that it forces the researcher to think about dimensions in which power relations develop. It is also true that power relations can be hard to unpack and differentiate along these axes as carefully and neatly without overlapping characterisations about the profile of water actors, their strategies used and the outcomes they achieved. However, the analytical exercise was positive in itself as it gave a structure that guided the nature of the methods used to gather the information. For instance, the *local and global axis* inspired a major rethink about how to approach the 'field research'. To properly understand the local and global nature of water governance, should the field research be just made on a local case study, across the nation or include other relevant spaces and places around the world? In order to gain a global perspective it made it necessary to attend

the World Water Forum in Marseille 2012 and participate in advocacy sessions with social activists in the European Parliament in Brussels to oversee their water campaigns against FTAs such as the Association Agreement between the European Union and El Salvador as part of Central America.

On another level, the *material/ideational axis of power* required another important methodological challenge. The dialectical relationship between the ideological content with that of material practices in water governance required finding multidisciplinary sources to answer questions. This was in itself a strength of the methodological approach. However, it did represent an extra effort to overcome some of the interdisciplinary knowledge shortcomings of the author. Not being an expert in hydrological or engineering issues could dent parts of the analysis in power relations in material and ideational ways. Some the fields needed had to rely on contrasting data, expert opinions and other sources. A particularly difficult part of the endeavour fell on this fact. Similar dilemmas were faces on the agency and social structure axis collection of information process.

In considering the shortcomings of this axes-of-power approach, this research practice indicates the potential need to strengthen and simplify further the data collection methods. The focus would be geared towards combining elements so that they cluster together around the narrative of the whole phenomenon does not asphyxiate with too much detail the overall explanation. A teamwork of multidisciplinary writers would ideally suit this methodology best, as it would permit a collective discussion and underpinning of the many implications of power across disciplines and scales. This sort of multidisciplinary teamwork approach is now more and more in vogue in the social sciences research, so it is something that could be made into a strength of the approach.

Evaluating the Methods

The set of methods contained within the methodology have also been important sites of scrutiny in this academic exercise. The case study approach allowed an in-depth

conversation with communities of people experiencing clean water scarcity and gave an insight into their particular perspective. This also allowed tracking the social actors connecting with these communities and how their influence exerted outcomes for them in real-time. A particular difficulty experienced was the blockage of information from mistrustful organisations from different sectors, but especially within the government (e.g. ANDA) and corporations (leading corporations within the business association ANEP). Interestingly, and perhaps ironically too, it proved crucial for the author to deploy a personal approach to power relations in local and global, material and ideational, agency and social structure ways in order to access information. An example was the limits imposed by ANDA in the exploration of the PPP of FIHIDRO. Requests for an interview with the head of ANDA were repeatedly denied as well as requests for documentation. Hence, the learning curve part of the process was to understand that people and organisations involved in water governance are already nuanced and skew information to shape their own image and power. In other words, a research project of this nature necessarily obliges the researcher to flex his or her power relations skills as part of the research work itself. Related to this challenge and taking into account the nature of the concept of power used in this thesis, the issue of research in practice combining a case study with participant observations and interactions, requires also a high awareness of the own embedded biased standpoint of the researcher. Power spills over disciplinary boundaries and pushes the researcher into often muddy waters. The nature of the research required subjective interpretations of power relations and associated underpinning concepts. There is unavoidable bias in the fact that as a Salvadorean researcher with a background of working with Oxfam on the human right to water in El Salvador embeds particular prejudices, which the author has had to keep in check constantly. The only way to ensure this has been by presenting carefully is through the use of traceable methods and multiple and verifiable sources of information to replicate and test its content.

Suggestions for Future Research

This research outlines the urgency of looking at water governance in deeply unequal societies like El Salvador applying methodological perspectives that place people and power at the centre of the analysis on water access. The ongoing and yet mostly invisible ‘water war’ taking place in the country shows that poor people’s water access has become hostage to political stalemates driven by water actors stretching beyond the national boundaries. Transnational corporations (TNCs) are chief among these hegemonic water actors. The historical legacy of political polarisation, neoliberal reordering of society and class structure of the country has welcomed and expanded TNCs relative capabilities to influence outcomes in water governance. A crucial line of inquiry for future research would be to expand on how TNCs in the whole of Central America have built up a favourable set of structural conditions to facilitate their profit-making schemes in water governance. The case study in itself of the Central American countries would fit in with the findings encountered in this research that geographical boundaries no longer limit their influence.

Similarly, a further line of inquiry that this research has opened up lies in the field of Peace studies and development studies research. The argument is that if we recognise from this research that El Salvador has been experiencing *an ongoing water war with politically polarised social actors*, some sort of ‘Peace Agreements’ may be needed to reconcile these extreme positions of water politics. In fact, this idea came up during conversations with hegemonic and counter-hegemonic water actors themselves. These ‘peace agreements’ or ‘consensus reaching strategies’ and the conditions needed to facilitate it and start building bridges between politically entrenched parties may be a whole field of new research in Salvadorean water politics with potential implications elsewhere in Central America and around the world. El Salvador had a flurry of academic literature examining the negotiations that led to the end of the civil war and creation of the Peace Agreements of

1992. An equivalent process is urgent for El Salvador's water access and sustainability futures.

Potential Policy Implications

Finally, in terms of potential policy implications this research disseminates a distinct point. Power relations in water governance *must be approached* from a perspective of power. This is indeed, necessary if a government or set of social actors want to be effective and successful in bringing not just water access, but water justice for all. Such an approach implies shifting the focus to developing new methodologies, methods and tools in policy and decision-making processes that allocate people's power relations strategies at the centre of the analysis. A post IWRM era of water governance and management tools that place the focus on power relations to achieve water justice is not just possible but necessary. This is particularly true and relevant when critically assessing initiatives like the post Millennium Development Goals 2015 agenda at the level of the United Nations, the ongoing negotiations of the General Water Law and its future application in El Salvador among others.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Aguiluz, María Antonia, Member of the Community El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Alfaro, Sergio Elmer, President of the rural community of La Escalón, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 February 2013.

Álvarez, Marco Antonio, Director of Consejo Empresarial Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo Sostenible (CEDES), chapter of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 19 January 2013.

Anonymous Interview A, State Agent from La Hacienda Urban Development, interviewed in La Hacienda Residential Neighbourhood, San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 27 January 2013.

Anonymous Interview B, Young Girl from the rural community of El Cementerio, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 23 January 2013.

Anonymous Interview C, Officer from the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 5 February 2013.

Anonymous Interview D, Woman from the rural community of El Cementerio, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 10 February 2013.

Anonymous Interview E, Woman from the rural community of El Cementerio, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 10 February 2013.

Anonymous Interview G, Woman from the rural community of Sosa, interviewed in walk along river Aquiquisquillo, San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 10 February 2013.

Anonymous Interview H, Young Woman 19 year old from the rural community of Las Veraneras 1, interviewed in Walk along river Aquiquisquillo, San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 10 February 2013.

Anonymous Interview I, Woman 47 year old from the rural community of Caserío Santa Marta, Cantón Amaquilco, 11 children, interviewed in Walk along river Aquiquisquillo, San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 10 February 2013.

Anonymous Interview K, Young adult from the community of Escalón Norte, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 23 January 2013.

Artiga, Raúl, Coordinator of the Climate Change and Risk Management (CCAD) part of SICA, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 17 January 2013.

Avilés, María Juana, Member of the Community El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Beltrán, Ángel Ernesto, Coordinator of Projects at ACUA, interviewed in La Libertad, El Salvador, 16 January 2013.

Benítez, Frederick, Director of ANDA's headquarters in La Libertad Province interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 11 February 2013.

Bouteligier, Sofie, Policy Advisor, Unit Policy Innovation, European Policies at OVAM and Senior Research Fellow at UCL City Leadership Studio, interviewed on Skype Conference, 12 July 2012.

Burgos, José Mario, member of the rural community Espíritu Santo, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 17 January 2013.

Castellanos, Rafael, President of FIHIDRO and Owner of El Encanto Golf Club & Villas interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 13 February 2013.

Castro, Lourdes, Lead Representative from Grupo Sur Network, interviewed in Brussels, Belgium, 23 March 2012.

Castro, Zoilo, Chief Coordinator of Programmes in ANDA, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 6 February 2013.

Chavarría, Mauricio, Corporate Relations & Sustainable Development Director from Industrias La Constancia/SAB Miller in El Salvador, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 18 January 2013.

Chávez, Luis, General Director, Asociación de Industriales del Agua (ASIAGUA) interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 31 January 2013.

Collado, Bárbara, Director of Engineers Without Borders in El Salvador (ISF), interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 13 February 2013.

Cordero, Carlos, Man from the community of El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Cruz, Blanca Delmy, President of the rural community of Las Veraneras 2, San José Villanueva, , interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Dimas, Leopoldo, Lead Researcher on Water Governance from FUSADES, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 29 January 2013.

Dreikorn, Carolina, Coordinator from the Sustainable Development and Environment Area of the UNDP, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 2 February 2013.

Durán, Pedro, Mayor of the Municipality of San José Villanueva, Province of La Libertad, El Salvador, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 14 February 2014.

Erazo, César, Managerial Officer from ACUA, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 29 November 2011.

Escobar, José Palacios, Elderly man from the community of El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Estrada, Nelson, Lead Coordinator of Programmes and Projects at the Interamerican Development Bank in El Salvador, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 12 February 2013.

Flores, Carlos, Technical Officer on Water Basins from UNES, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 22 December 2011.

Flores Pérez, Jessica Patricia, Community member from the rural community of El Cementerio, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 14 February 2013.

Gómez, Ana Ella, Director of ACUA (2010-2011), interviewed in La Libertad, El Salvador, 18 February 2011.

González, Esperanza, Community member from the rural community of Las Veraneras 2, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

González, Walter, Former Director of ACUA interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 17 November 2011.

Goitia, Alfonso, Coordinator of the Economic Analysis Unit of the Technical, Presidential Secretariat, Government of El Salvador (2009-2014), interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 13 January 2011.

Granados, Milagro, Woman from the Community El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Guzmán, José Efraín, Man from the community of El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Ibarra, Ángel, Coordinator of Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña (UNES) interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 11 January 2011.

Jiménez, Claudia, Woman, 26 year old, from the rural community of Las Veraneras 1, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 10 February 2013.

Jiménez, Waldo, Director of Economic and Social Affairs in ANEP, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 24 January 2013.

Larios, Silvia, Coordinator of Water Governance, Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 29 January 2013.

Leyva, Yanira, Woman from the rural community of Las Veraneras 1, interviewed in Walk along river Aquiquisquillo, San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 10 February 2013.

López, Luis, Legal Advisor for the political party FMLN at the National Legislative Assembly, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 5 March 2014.

Márquez Ortiz, María Magdalena, Member from a rural community of Escalón Centro, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 23 January 2013.

Marroquín, Xenia, Programmes and Projects Coordinator in ASPRODE, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 11 May 2013.

Martínez, Irma, Community member from a rural community of San José Villanueva, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

McKinley, Andrés, Regional Policy Coordinator GWI at Catholic Relief Services in El Salvador, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 11 February 2013.

Medrano, Nayda, Director of Centre for the Defence of Consumer (CDC), interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 9 December 2011.

Melara, Gabriela, Journalist on Environmental Issues from the Newspaper La Prensa Gráfica interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 6 February 2013.

Menjivar Chacón, Julio, President of the National Association for the Defence, Development and Ecological Distribution of Water at the Rural Level (ANDAR) of El Salvador, interviewed in Marseille, France at the World Water Forum 2012, 16 March 2012.

Merlos, Enrique, Programme Coordinator at FUNDE and representative of Global Water Partnership in El Salvador interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 14 December 2011, 12 February 2012.

Mira, Edgardo, Member of the Board of Directors at CEICOM, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 23 February 2011.

Mora, Jorge, Regional Coordinator of the Red Centroamericana De Acción Del Agua (FANCA) [Central American Water Action Network], interviewed in Marseille, France at the World Water Forum 2012, 16 March 2012.

Morales, Donatella, Coordinator of Communications and Coordinator of Radio Bálsamo at ACUA interviewed in La Libertad, El Salvador, 11 March 2014.

Munguía, Xiomara, Employee from Customer Service ANDA and member of ANDA's labour union, interviewed in Brussels, Belgium, 9 March 2013.

Orellana, Claudia, Member from the rural community of Las Veraneras 2 interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Ortiz, Claudia Researcher and Project Coordinator from FUNDE, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 24 February 2013.

Palacios Escobar, José, Member of the community El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Palacios, Lourdes, Fifth Parliamentarian Deputy of San Salvador for the Political Party FMLN and Secretary of the Environment and Climate Change Commission at the Legislative Assembly, interviewed in San Salvador, 17 December 2011.

Quiróz de Martínez, Rosa Cándida, Member of the Community El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Ramírez, Karen, Manager of the Water and Sanitation Programme at PROVIDA, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 8 February 2013.

Ramírez, María Alejandra, President of the rural community of El Cementerio, interviewed in Walk along River Aquisquillo, San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 10 February 2013.

Ramos, René, Chief of the International Cooperation Unit, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 8 February 2013.

San Juan, Marcos, Former Member of ISF and Representative of Alianza por el Agua (Water Alliance) in El Salvador, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 4 February 2013.

Tejada, Edy, Social Facilitator in ACUA, interviewed in La Libertad, El Salvador, 21 February 2013, 3 March 2014, 11 May 2014

Tejada, Mónica, Representative of Alianza por el Agua (Water Alliance), interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 11 December 2011.

Tejada, María Julia, Community member from the community of El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 17 January 2013.

Torres, Miguel Ángel, Leader from the rural community of Escalón Centro, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 23 January 2013.

Torres, Ovidio, Member of the Community El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Vargas, Carlos, Project coordinator in ACUA, interviewed in La Libertad, El Salvador, 26 November 2011.

Velásquez, Martín Marino, Member of the Community El Amate, interviewed in San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 3 March 2014.

Villalona, César, Economist, University lecturer and writer of Equipo Maíz in San Salvador, El Salvador, interviewed on Skype conference, 3 June 2013.

Yarza, Beatriz, Officer in Charge of Water and Sanitation Projects at the Spanish Agency Cooperation (AECID) Office, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 13 January 2011.

Zaira, Marisol, Woman from the rural community of Las Veraneras 1, interviewed in Walk along river Aquiquisquillo, San José Villanueva, La Libertad, El Salvador, 10 February 2013.

Zamora, Mauricio, Environmentalist Media Presenter and representative of ECOVEG, interviewed in San Salvador, El Salvador, 9 March 2014.

APPENDIX 1: Interviews and Workshops Methodology

Interview structure for Exploratory Field Visit in El Salvador

Objective of the Exploratory Interviews

The following questions intend to build a more refined picture of the current problem of water access in El Salvador, its nature, and its significant players. It is the explicit objective of these questions to gain valuable knowledge about what could be a relevant case study in the water politics of the country and how to go about it. The exploratory interview also intends to build a special rapport with key social actors in the governance of water in El Salvador from the civil society, state and private sectors. Finally, some of the questions included in these interviews aim to gain a first insight on some of the unknown parts of the puzzle of water governance in El Salvador. In other words, the interview intends to ask the political players open-ended questions about what they see have been the strategies social actors in water governance have used to influence outcomes in their favour. Getting to know the political landscape of water governance players in El Salvador would be crucial for further *in-depth interviews*.

Introduction

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you. My name is Carlos Zepeda. I am a PhD student from the Politics and International Studies Department of the University of Warwick, UK. I am conducting a research exploring the politics of poor people's water access in El Salvador. This interview intends to ask questions designed to help give some first key insights about what is the water access situation in El Salvador, who are its key players and what sort of actions these social actors have done to influence and shape the water governance of El Salvador.

Ethical responsibility (to be read aloud to the interviewed)

It is my responsibility to conduct this interview following the ethical guidelines and rules dictated by the University of Warwick. I would like you to know that you may give the information in this interview with complete anonymity if you wish it to be so.

Please see the enclosed ethical clearance form I have signed from the University of Warwick committing to use this information for the sole purposes of the research. I would also like to ask you if you give me permission to record this interview. If so, I will translate any citations from this interview against the original recording and I will refer to it respecting the regulations of the University of Warwick. Your name will figure in my own records for the purposes of the research and it will not be undisclosed if you wish to remain anonymous. All of the information discussed with you I shall only use for the purposes of this research.

Questions

1. Thank you for agreeing to do this interview with me. Would you authorise me to reference your name and position in your institution or would you like this interview me to reference it as anonymous?
2. Would you allow me to record this interview for the sole purposes of evidence of this interview and to make a more detailed annotation of the information here discussed?
3. What is your name, your position and what do you and your institution do in relation to water governance in El Salvador?
4. What do you think about what is the nature of poor people's water access in El Salvador?
5. How would you define the governance of water in El Salvador?
6. What are the key problems of water governance, access and control for people in El Salvador?
7. What are in your view the key problems or obstacles that exist preventing poor people from experiencing clean and sustainable water access in El Salvador on a daily basis?
8. What in your opinion are key examples and therefore potential case studies about poor Salvadorean's lack of water clean water access?

9. Why do you think these examples have come to be like this in El Salvador?
10. Who in your opinion are the key social actors responsible for poor people's lack of clean water access?
11. What do you think are the political differences between these social actors?
12. What kind of ideas, behaviours and actions do the key groups of social actors in El Salvador's water governance have?
13. What do you think differentiates the key water governance actors you mentioned from the rest so that we could identify and classify them?
14. What are in your view, the key decision-making processes in which these groups of social actors participate and collide?
15. What do you think have been the consequences for the governance of water in El Salvador that these political players have had?
16. How has your organisation contributed in these political tensions and over what themes?
17. Do you think there is any hidden agenda from some of the political players in the governance of water in El Salvador? If so, why?
18. What are the key water governance events that will shape the future water governance of El Salvador for the period 2009-2014?

Interview structure for Field Visits to the World Water Forum and Alternative Water Forum (Marseille 2012)

Objective of the Interviews

The following interview questions intend to explore the politics of water governance across social scales and specifically in relation to how these water forum events can influence or shape El Salvador's water access model of governance. The aim of these questions is to gain valuable knowledge about what are the relevant forces shaping the water politics of El Salvador, its key social actors and how they do it. The interview is open-ended and intends to build a special rapport with key social actors in the governance of water outside the geographical realm of El Salvador. This interview structure can facilitate a dialogue with social actors from civil society, state and private sectors. Finally, some of the questions included in these interviews aim to gain a first insight on some of the unknown parts of the puzzle of water governance in El Salvador.

Introduction

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you. My name is Carlos Zepeda. I am a PhD student from the Politics and International Studies Department of the University of Warwick, UK. I am conducting a research exploring the politics of poor people's water access in El Salvador. This interview intends be a conversation with you about your perspective on how key events like the World Water Forum (and/or Alternative Water Forum) can have an impact in the water governance model of El Salvador. I am interested in knowing more about who are the key players or social actors leading the World Water Forum and what sort of ideologies, behaviours and actions these social actors have in relation to water governance.

Ethical responsibility (to be read aloud to the interviewed)

It is my responsibility to conduct this interview following the ethical guidelines and rules dictated by the University of Warwick. I would like you to know that you may give the information in this interview with complete anonymity if you wish it to be so.

Please see the enclosed ethical clearance form I have signed from the University of Warwick committing to use this information for the sole purposes of the research. I would also like to ask you if you give me permission to record this interview. If so, I will translate any citations from this interview against the original recording and I will refer to it respecting the regulations of the University of Warwick. Your name will figure in my own records for the purposes of the research and it will not be undisclosed if you wish to remain anonymous. All of the information discussed with you I shall only use for the purposes of this research.

Questions

1. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview with me. Would you authorise me to reference your name and position in your institution or would you like this interview me to reference it as anonymous?
2. Would you allow me to record this interview for the sole purposes of evidence of this interview and to make a more detailed annotation of the information here discussed?
3. What is your name, your position and what do you and your institution do in relation to water governance in El Salvador?
4. Why are you and your organisation participating in this World Water Forum [Alternative Water Forum]?
5. What is so important about this water forum and what sort of impact do you think it has in the governance of water around the world?
6. What sort of impact do you think it has in El Salvador?
7. Who do you see as the key players or social actors leading this World Water Forum?
8. Why do you think a parallel forum is being held at the same time and in opposition to this forum, called the Alternative Water Forum?
9. Do you think there is a political division about how water governance ought to be conducted around the world or do you think there is a broad global agreement?
10. Do you agree with the human right to water? Why?
11. Do you agree that water is an economic good? Why?
12. Do you agree with the privatisation of water services? Why?
13. How do you think countries like El Salvador can apply the human right to water for all?
14. What do you think about the Integrated Water Resources Management approach?
15. Can this framework be a solution to poor people's water access problems in El Salvador?
16. This World Water Forum has discussed solutions for water governance crises around the world, what do you think apply for El Salvador?
17. What do you think is the point of coming to this World Water Forum event?
18. What does your organisation contribute to this forum's thought on water governance? What key principles or ideas do you and your organisation pursue for water governance?

Interview Structure for Field Visits to El Salvador- In-Depth Analysis

Objective

The following questions intend to build a more refined picture of the current problem of water access in El Salvador, its nature, and its significant players. It is the explicit objective of these questions to gain valuable knowledge about what could be a relevant case study in the water politics of the country and how to go about it. The exploratory interview also intends to build a special rapport with key social actors in the governance of water in El Salvador from the civil society, state and private sectors. Finally, some of the questions included in these interviews aim to gain a first insight on some of the unknown parts of the puzzle of water governance in El Salvador. In other words, the interview intends to ask the political players open-ended questions about what they see have been the strategies social actors in water governance have used to influence outcomes in their favour. Getting to know the political landscape of water governance players in El Salvador would be crucial for further *in-depth interviews*.

Introduction

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you. My name is Carlos Zepeda. I am a PhD student from the Politics and International Studies Department of the University of Warwick, UK. I am conducting a research exploring the politics of poor people's water access in El Salvador. This interview intends to be an open-ended conversation with you about your perspective on what is the water access situation in El Salvador, who are its key players and what sort of actions these social actors have done to influence and shape the water governance of El Salvador.

Ethical responsibility (to be read aloud to the interviewed)

It is my responsibility to conduct this interview following the ethical guidelines and rules dictated by the University of Warwick. I would like you to know that you may give the information in this interview with complete anonymity if you wish it to be so.

Please see the enclosed ethical clearance form I have signed from the University of Warwick committing to use this information for the sole purposes of the research. I would also like to ask you if you give me permission to record this interview. If so, I will translate any citations from this interview against the original recording and I will refer to it respecting the regulations of the University of Warwick. Your name will figure in my own records for the purposes of the research and it will not be undisclosed if you wish to remain anonymous. All of the information discussed with you I shall only use for the purposes of this research.

Questions

1. Thank you for agreeing to do this interview with me. Would you authorise me to reference your name and position in your institution or would you like this interview me to reference it as anonymous?
2. Would you allow me to record this interview for the sole purposes of evidence of this interview and to make a more detailed annotation of the information here discussed?
3. What is your name, your position and what do you and your institution do in relation to water governance in El Salvador?
1. What do you think about what is the nature of poor people's water access in El Salvador?
2. How would you define the governance of water in El Salvador? Is there a problem?
3. What is the key problem in your view exists for water access in El Salvador?
4. I am interested in getting to know more in-depth a specific example of poor people's lack of clean water access in El Salvador and I have selected the case of seven communities living in San José Villanueva, La Libertad.
5. What do you know about this case and why do think it is important?

6. These communities in the case study have for long suffered from lack of clean water access, what do you think this is so?
7. What in your opinion are key examples and therefore potential case studies about Salvadorean's lack of water clean water access?
8. Why do you think these examples have come to be like this in El Salvador?
9. Who in your opinion are the key social actors responsible for this situation in which the poor suffer from lack of clean water access?
10. What do you think are the political differences between these social actors?
11. What kind of ideas, behaviours, actions do these groups of social actors do that differentiate them from the rest so that we could identify and classify them?
12. What in your view, are the key decision making processes in which they take part and collide?
13. What do you think have been the consequences for the governance of water in El Salvador that these political players have had?
14. How has your organisation contributed in these political tensions and over what themes?
15. Do you think there is any hidden agenda from some of the political players in the governance of water in El Salvador? If so, why?
16. What examples do you have of these hidden agenda outcomes?

On Key National Decision-Making Processes: the General Water Law

17. In your view why is the main institutional instrument of water governance in El Salvador, the General Water Law and an institution to apply and safeguard it still non-existent in the country?
18. How does this inexistence of institutional frameworks affect poor people's water access in El Salvador?
19. How does this inexistence of institutional frameworks affect the lack of clean water access that the poor people of the communities of San José Villanueva experience?
20. What is the main solution proposed for the communities' access to water?

On Key Local Decision-Making Processes: the case of FIHIDRO

21. What are the key components of FIHIDRO?
22. Is the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in water access for the province of La Libertad, FIHIDRO, the solution? If so, why?
23. Who are the key players that designed and joined FIHIDRO?

24. Why has there been support from private corporations to FIHIDRO and resistance to it by social activists?
25. What are the key components of FIHIDRO?

On the communities themselves

26. What is your community's water access problem?
27. Who are the key players, social actors that have shaped the way you access your clean water today
28. What have you and your community done to solve this lack of access to clean water scarcity?
29. What have women in your community done solve this lack of access to clean water scarcity?

Workshops Structure

Objective of the Workshop

This workshop is to collect information from the communities of San José Villanueva in participatory fashion in order to enrich the analysis and perspective of the research. The objective is to gather a collage of ideas from the communities themselves about three key issues:

- a. The general situation of clean water access in the communities of San José Villanueva,
- b. The key water actors shaping the communities' water access from the perspective of the communities themselves by doing a collective power map
- c. The key power struggles, strategies, tactics and actions deployed by these actors from the communities themselves to secure their water access.

The workshop divides in three parts.

The first part deals with a collective participatory view about the water access situation in each of the communities.

The second part intends to examine what have the communities done to give solutions to their own water access problems. What have they done? Why? As part of the methodology applied in this second part, a 'participatory mind-map' will be built on a broad poster sized A3 sheets of paper with their collaborations drawing collectively a picture about the key power relations and social actors influencing their water access outcomes.

The third and final part, summarises and reviews what has worked and what has failed in challenging the key barriers to clean water access they face. How effective have their strategies, behaviours and actions been in making social change in their water governance possible?

The questions discussed throughout the workshop aim to recreate a strategic power analysis map on the clean water access challenges of the communities of San José Villanueva. It is the explicit objective of these questions to gain significant knowledge about what poor people's views on power relations are. This exercise can help reveal how their own interpretations about their relative water scarcity problem can expand or limit the way they engage in the resolution of their own water access problems. The point of the whole exercise is to listen to poor people's own views, their insights about what they have done to make change possible or what have they missed or avoided doing. The exchange of ideas with the communities themselves goes beyond the individual interviews with the community leaders or other representatives. It helps to hear the voices of those who in practice have been excluded not just from water access, but from expressing their knowledge in media outlets.

An explicit effort will be done to make women's voices heard, by making a deliberate attempt to include them in the discussion, taking into account the prevalent machismo structures in rural communities of El Salvador.

Workshop Introduction

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share your time and attention to participate with me in this workshop. My name is Carlos Zepeda. I am a PhD student from the Politics and International Studies Department of the University of Warwick, in the United Kingdom. I am conducting a research on the water politics of El Salvador and I would like to listen, understand and learn from you about what have been your experiences and challenges in your quest to ensure that you and your families enjoy clean water access every day.

This workshop divides in three parts. In the first part, we will introduce ourselves, who we are, what we do and talk about what have been in your view the key elements that describe the water access situation you live in each of your communities.

The second part intends to examine what have you and your community done to give solutions the water access problems that we already heard. What have been the key actions and strategies used by your community? Why?

We will also make a 'participatory mind-map' with your ideas. The objective is to make a collective picture about who is who, and who does what in the key power relations influencing how you and your community get access to clean water. The social actors power map can help make our conversation even more interesting.

The third and final part, concludes with your views about what has worked and what has failed in challenging the key barriers to clean water access they face. How effective have the strategies, behaviours and actions that your community has used in helping you solve your urgent water access problems?

Ethical responsibility (to be read aloud to the interviewed)

I am making a visual and sound recording of the workshop, taking pictures and making a list of the participants of this workshop. However, if any of you consider you would like to

express yourself in complete anonymity please do let me know as you speak as it will also be recorded. Please see the enclosed ethical clearance form I have signed from the University of Warwick committing to use this information for the sole purposes of the research. I am performing this workshop in strict accordance to the regulations of the University of Warwick. Your name will figure in my own private records and will not be used for purposes unrelated to this research.

Workshop Methodology

The community leaders of the seven communities of San José Villanueva call for an afternoon session to the usual meeting place for community matters. The invitation is described as a talk with the community leaders and a university researcher about the current situation of water access and the strategies to tackle this situation. The community leaders introduce the researcher. Seating places are distributed in a circular fashion.

The workshop starts with a brief introduction from the participants: name, community that they represent, and in the case of the researcher a full statement of introduction (name, organisation, objective of the research, mention of the ethical commitment and that the session is to be recorded only for purposes of the research and that if anyone wants to remain anonymous for their views this shall be respected.

The workshop is simple and done in a common time and place just as they usually do when they hold their community meetings so it is a procedure known by everyone. A specific effort has to be made to make women's participation a priority. This is talked previously with the community leaders so that they collaborate in this effort of giving them consistently more opportunities to express their contributions to the discussion.

Using A3 sheets of blank paper, the researcher generates a collective mindmap of the different ideas drawn from the different participations to the questions posed to the members of the communities.

Workshop Questions of Context

1. What is the water access situation in your community?
2. What was it like before? Five, ten, twenty years ago?
3. What was the general situation of the main natural fresh water bodies your community has enjoyed in the past and what is it now?
4. For example, River Aquiquisquillo, how do you remember it was? [Encouragement for the elderly members of the community to participate]
5. What has happened in your communities that has changed (improved, maintained or worsened) your capabilities to access clean water?

Workshop Questions on Power Relations

1. Who have been the key social actors involved in your communities' lack of clean water access? [Encouragement of building a collective map of social actors shaping the communities' key water governance decision-making processes]
2. What have been the main obstacles, challenges, people or institutions that have hindered or slowed down your clean water access?
3. What have been your strategies in your community, and in your family to secure water access?
4. Does everyone in your community participate in the marches and meetings to solve this problem?
5. Who causes this problem of water access?
6. What is FIHIDRO?
7. What is the human right to water and who enforces it in El Salvador?

Workshop Questions on Water Relations

1. What are the key institutions that should be supplying you with clean water access and why have they not been delivered?
2. How has ANDA not delivered? How has the local major not delivered?
3. Is FIHIDRO the solution?

APPENDIX 2: National Water Forum Organisations



ENTITY NAME	SECTOR	TYPE	LEADERSHIP POSITION	SCOPE
Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña (UNES)	Civil Society	NGO	Primary	National
Asociación Comunitaria por la Agricultura y el Agua (ACUA)	Civil Society	NGO	Primary	Departmental
ABAZORTO	Civil Society	Committee	Tertiary	Local
Junta de Aguas de San Antonio del Monte (ACASAM)	Civil Society	Committee	Tertiary	Local
ACAPB'S	Civil Society	Committee	Tertiary	Local
A.C.E.I.S.	Civil Society	Committee	Tertiary	Local
ACUS Cuscatancingo	Civil Society	Committee	Tertiary	Local
ADESCO Sta.. Isabel Ishuatan	Civil Society	Association	Tertiary	Local
ADESCOPLA	Civil Society	Association	Tertiary	Local
ADESCO LAS DELICIAS, LA LAGUNA (Montañona)	Civil Society	Association	Tertiary	Local
Asoc. Agropecuaria Salvadoreña (AGROSAL)	Civil Society	Association	Tertiary	Local
Alcaldía Municipal de Cuscatancingo	Civil Society	Municipality		Local
Alcaldía de Cuscatlán	Civil Society	Municipality		Local
Alcaldía de San Salvador	Civil Society	Municipality	Primary	Local
AMACH	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	National
ANDES 21 de Junio	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	National
Asociación Nacional de Trabajo Agropecuario (ANTA)	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
Asociación de Comunidades para la Protección y Restauración de los Recursos Naturales de río Sapó (APROCORNM)	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	Local
APROCSAL	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
APRODAE - Asociación programa de desarrollo de Áreas Elim	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	Local
APSIES	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	Local
ASAPROC	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	Local
Asociación ADESCOMUT	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	Local
Asociación el Bálsamo	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	Local
ATRAMEC CAC - ADES	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	Local
CARITAS	Civil Society	NGO	Primary	National
CARITAS Chalatenango	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	Local
CARITAS - Secretariado Social	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	National
CARITAS San Vicente	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
Carmelitas Misioneras	Civil Society	Religious group	Secondary	National

CAT – Comité Ambientalista de Tonacatepeque	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	Local
Catholic Relief Services (CRS/SV)	Civil Society	INGO	Primary	
C.C.A- Apopa	Civil Society		Secondary	
C.C.C	Civil Society		Secondary	
Centro para la Defensa del Consumidor (CDC)	Civil Society	NGO	Primary	National
CCR Chalatenango	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	Municipal
CCUS (Comité de consumidores y usuarios de Soyapango)	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	Municipal
CDCSE	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
CEICOM	Civil Society	NGO	Primary	National
CEIPES	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	Municipal
CEPROCOME Mejicanos	Civil Society	Municipality	Secondary	Municipal
CIS	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
CISPES	Civil Society	INGO	Secondary	
CODA	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
Comité de Concertación Ambiental de Juayúa	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	Local
Comité de Defensa Sta. Elena Usulután	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	Local
Comité Divina Providencia	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	Local
Comité Gestor de la sub-cuenca del Río San Simón	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	Local
Comité Lirios del Norte - Cuscatancingo	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	Local
Comité de Vigilancia en defensa de los consumidores Ilopango - COVIDECON.	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	Local
Comunidad Brisas del Norte de Casas Desmanteladas	Civil Society	Committee	Tertiary	Local
Conacción Santa Ana	Civil Society	Committee		Municipal
CONFRAS	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	
Congregación de la Misión	Civil Society	Religious group	Secondary	
Consejo Coordinador de Comunidades	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	
CORDES San Vicente	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
CREDHO	Civil Society		Primary	
CRIPDES	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
CRISPAZ	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
Diócesis Escuela Obrera Campesina	Civil Society	Religious group	Tertiary	
Fundación ABA	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
Facultad. Ciencias Agronómicas, Gestión Integral del Agua, Universidad Nacional (UES)	Civil Society		Secondary	

Fe y Alegría	Civil Society		Secondary	
FEDECOOPADES	Civil Society		Secondary	
FES	Civil Society		Secondary	
FESTRASPES	Civil Society		Secondary	
FFF - Familia Franciscana Unida. Comisión Justicia, Paz y Ecología	Civil Society		Secondary	
FLACSO	Civil Society		Secondary	
FLM/ACT-ES	Civil Society		Secondary	
Foro Agropecuario de El Salvador	Civil Society		Secondary	
Asociación de Comunidades Unidas de Usulután	Civil Society		Secondary	
Asoc. Salvadoreña de Desarrollo Campesino, ASDEC	Civil Society		Secondary	
CRC	Civil Society		Secondary	
Grupo de productores San Jerónimo.	Civil Society		Secondary	
Grupo de Productores, Ayuda de Dios	Civil Society		Secondary	
Proyecto Agua Potable Col. Santa Eduvigis	Civil Society		Secondary	
Proyecto Agua Potable Cantón Primavera	Civil Society		Secondary	
Proyecto Agua Potable Cantón el Coco	Civil Society		Secondary	
Proyecto Agua Potable Cantón la Magdalena	Civil Society		Secondary	
Proyecto Agua Potable Cantón la Joya	Civil Society		Secondary	
proyecto de agua potable de Mercedes Umaña, Berlín, MERLIN.	Civil Society		Secondary	
FUMA	Civil Society		Secondary	
Fundación Centroamericana de Desarrollo Humano Sostenible.	Civil Society		Secondary	
Fundación de Mujeres Ita Ford FUNDAITA	Civil Society		Secondary	
Fundación SHARE	Civil Society	INGO	Secondary	Transnational
FUNDALEMPA	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
FUNDASAL	Civil Society	NGO	Primary	National
Fundaspad	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	National
Herencia Natural	Civil Society	Education Institution	Secondary	
ICMARES-UES	Civil Society	Education Institution	Secondary	
Iglesia Episcopal Anglicana	Civil Society	Religious group	Secondary	
Iglesia Luterana	Civil Society	Religious group	Secondary	
IMU	Civil Society		Primary	
Las Dignas	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
Las Melidas	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	

MCS	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
Médicos por el derecho a la Salud MDS.	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
MIBERLIN	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
Nueve Estrellas (Dep. Auachapan)	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
OIKOS Solidaridad	Civil Society	INGO	Secondary	
Paz y Solidaridad Euskadi	Civil Society	INGO	Secondary	
PRO-AGUA	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
PROCOMES	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
PRO-VIDA	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
Red de Ambientalistas en Accion	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
Red Comunitaria de Riesgos Mil Cumbres – Panchimalco	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
Red Frente a los Transgenicos	Civil Society		Secondary	
Red Sintu Techan	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
REDES	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
SABES	Civil Society		Secondary	
SETA	Civil Society		Secondary	
Siglo XXI	Civil Society		Secondary	
SIMETRISSE	Civil Society	Association	Secondary	
SITRAFOSVI	Civil Society		Secondary	
TABU-SEPROCOME	Civil Society		Secondary	
UNES	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
CODITOS	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
FUNDAHMER	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
Patronato Ligia Cogiola	Civil Society	NGO	Secondary	
Mesa del Agua de Suchitoto	Civil Society	Committee	Secondary	Municipal
CEBES	Civil Society		Secondary	

APPENDIX 3: ANDA's FIHIDRO information denial



Y los documentos vinculantes a la normativa Legal se encuentran disponibles en el Item de **MARCO NORMATIVO- Documentos vinculantes a la normativa Legal**, al siguiente link:


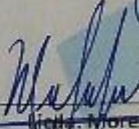
http://www.anda.gob.sv/index.php?option=com_docestandar&view=docestandar&categoria=4&showview=0&Itemid=317

En cuanto a la cobertura del servicio de agua potable, el boletín estadístico más reciente se encuentra disponible en el portal de Transparencia de ANDA, ubicado en el Item **OIR- Estadísticas** en el siguiente link:

http://www.anda.gob.sv/index.php?option=com_docestandar&view=docestandar&categoria=28&showview=0&Itemid=332, el documento es descargable.

En relación al tercer punto, dicha información se encuentra contemplada entre las excepciones que cita el Art. 24 de la Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública y en el art. 39 del Reglamento de la misma Ley como información **confidencial**, y que dicha información tendrá ese carácter por tiempo indefinido, el Convenio sobre el proyecto solicitado encierra derechos y obligaciones que son competentes exclusivamente para las partes comparecientes a la firma del mismo.

Y en cumplimiento al derecho de acceso a la información Pública, se extiende la presente.



Licda. Morena Guadalupe Juárez
Oficial de Información Pública

INFORMACION RECEPCIONADA POR: Licda. Morena Guadalupe Juárez

Oficina de Información y Respuesta

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