



# Expert Perspectives on Science, Politics, and Water Management in Phoenix

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## Improving Communication

The challenges of water resource management in Phoenix require a fine balance of science, politics, and social values in decision making. With the ultimate goal of **improving the interface between scientists, managers, policymakers, and citizens**, our research seeks to understand expert perspectives on problems and solutions.

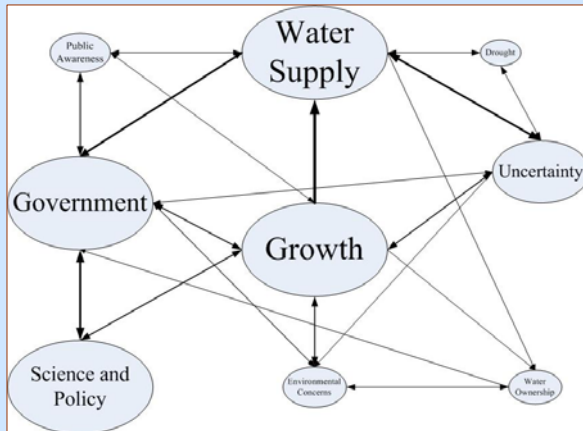


Figure 1. Concept map of one interview. Size of concepts illustrate the prominence of theme and arrows show strength of the relationships between these themes.

We conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with twelve water managers from the greater Phoenix area. Using qualitative analysis, we constructed **conceptual maps** (see **Figure 1**) illustrating water managers' perceptions of key themes.

## Common Concerns

Most of those interviewed cited **growth as a challenge to Arizona's water future**, but believed that the Phoenix area was well-equipped to sustain further growth and tolerate potential droughts.

*"Water is not going to be a major brake on growth in the next 30,40,50 years, but in the distant future water could start to be a mess. I'm afraid that we're going to keep growing until we get into that sort of unsustainable, unsupportable situation."*

(interview 10, 20:35)

Uncertainty factored highly in experts' opinions, with most mentioning **incomplete or inaccurate data on environmental variability as a key concern**. Our respondents differed in their views of policy, with some calling the political process a hindrance to their work and others who were actively involved in policymaking.

*"Often you realize you don't want to invest a lot in developing the science because it's not politically doable."*

(interview 6, 17:34)

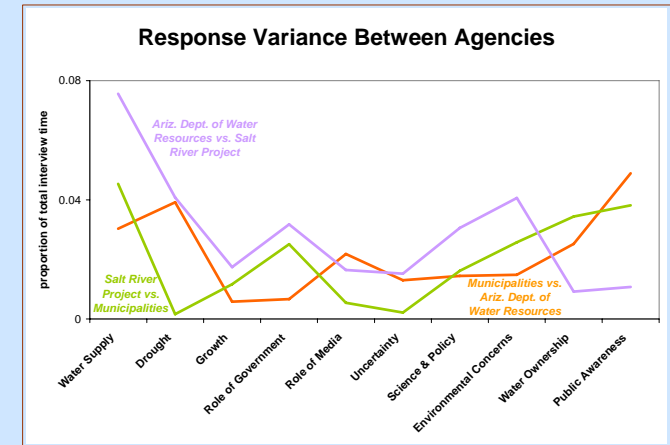
Nearly all expressed **frustration with the difficulty of conveying comprehensive information to an indifferent public**, though few of them mentioned using the media as a public education tool.

*"So many people are moving to this valley, and they're coming here with different values ... They don't probably have that allegiance or commitment or loyalty to the state, so how do you get that when it comes to utilizing this water supply?"*

(interview 7, 5:47)

## Diverse Perspectives

Our findings suggest that the greatest variation in perspectives occurs between management organizations rather than between individual perceptions within those organizations.



The goal of our research is to understand how water managers view these relationships and how their perspectives differ both individually and between their respective organizations, we will be able help the ASU Decision Center for a Desert City **promote better relationships between all stakeholders in the Phoenix water arena.**

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