

The Dark Side of Governance

An introduction to the Special Issue

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Anarchy and the ‘dark side’ in the water sector

This special issue on ‘the dark side of governance’ seeks to increase knowledge and reveal new understanding of governance in two meanings: its unknown, hidden side, as well as its darker, obscured side: apparent corruption, deviance, mismanagement, unaccountability and apparent anarchy, and what these do for whom: in the end, ‘who gets what, where, why and how’ (Lasswell, 1936).

What do we mean by the ‘dark side’? The first connotation is the dark side of the moon: the hemisphere of the Moon that is permanently turned away and not visible from the surface of the Earth—dark to the existing knowledge, as the hidden side of the moon is only dark from an Earth perspective. Metaphorically, it refers to what we cannot see or know, but also the ‘darkness (or different ideas) that can destroy all of the positive emotions and ideas that are a part of humanity’ (<http://music-and-art-45.hubpages.com/hub/The-Meaning-of-Pink-Floyds-Dark-Side-of-the-Moon>). The dark side can therefore also be a force for change. The final connotation of the ‘dark side’ is the downside of a grand scheme (e.g. http://tajikwater.net/docs/turkmenistan_lake.pdf).

In the field of water, the ‘dark side’ refers to what happens outside the control, or purview, of the formal governance arrangement. Contrary to ‘common knowledge’ in the water sector on large scale irrigation and the bulk of its governance literature, many areas still escape central planning and control (Lebel et al. 2005, Conrad 2006, Warner 2012), still lacking the ‘soft’ coordination of collaborative networks. This may bring violence

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