

# ***Do river basin committees contribute to the transition from centralized management to adaptive governance? Reflections from Uruguay***

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# Water management and governance in Uruguay

## 2004 – Referendum for a Constitutional Reform

Article 47 after the reform:

- Access to drinking water and sanitation as fundamental human rights
- State provision of water for human consumption and sanitation services
- Social participation and user participation in planning, management and control
- Water basins as management units

## 2009 - National Water Policy (Law 18.610)

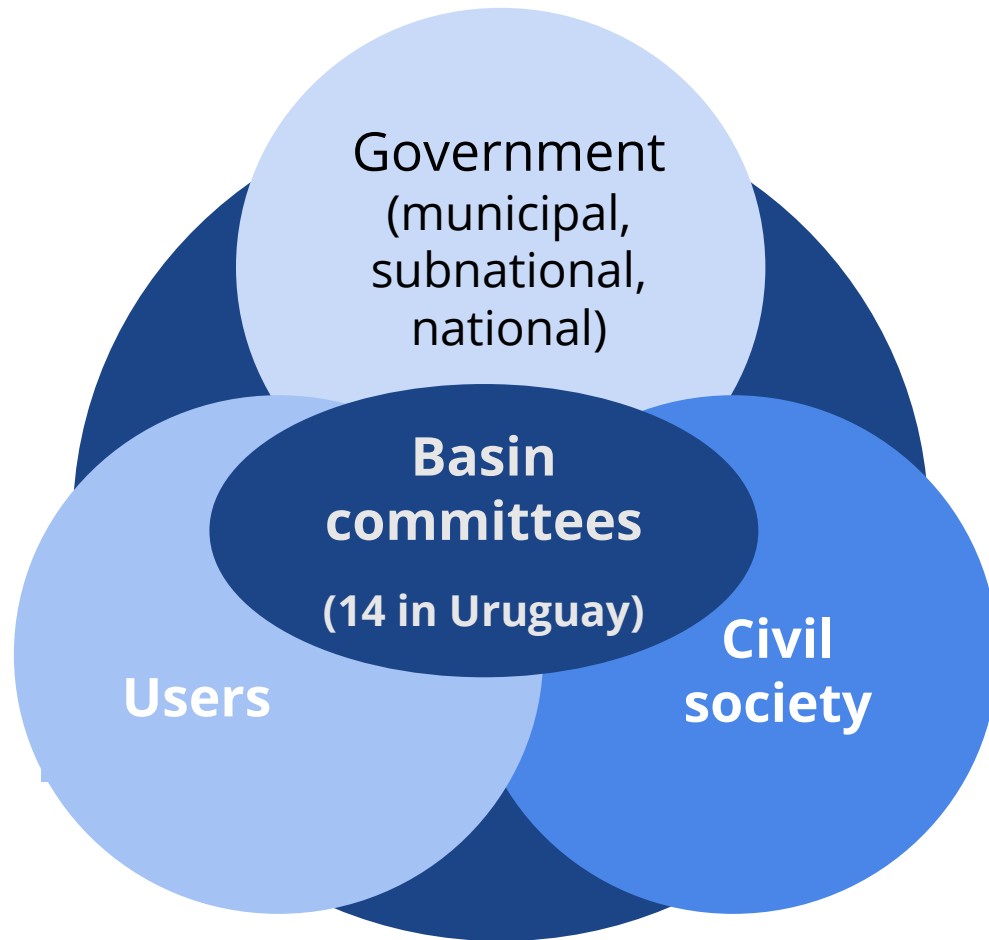
Proposes a sustainable, integrated and participatory management of water resources



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## ***Basin committees (participatory boards)***



Consultative, deliberative, and advisory boards, supporting water management and planning.

### **Duties:**

- Contributions to the creation and implementation of the basin management plan
- Bring together multiple actors
- Strengthen citizen participation
- Give advice for conflict management
- Provide considerations regarding water use projects and initiatives that could impact the territory.

(Decree N° 258, 2013)



## Objective

To assess the contributions of basin committees in Uruguay to different dimensions of adaptive water governance, such as collaboration/coordination, participation, and flexibility.







# Research design

Multiple case study approach (qualitative), focusing on three basin committees in Uruguay:

- Laguna del Sauce Lake (formed in 2010),
- Laguna del Cisne Lake (formed in 2014),
- Santa Lucía River (formed in 2013).



	Cisne basin (Canelones)	Sauce basin (Maldonado)	Santa Lucía basin (Florida, San José, Canelones, Lavalleja, Flores, Montevideo)
Size (km <sup>2</sup> )	50	722	13,480
Inhabitants (No. people)	3,000	10,000	396,250
Users (No. people)	70,000	300,000	2 millions (approx.)
Water uses	Human consumption, agriculture, livestock	Human consumption, agriculture, livestock	Human consumption, agriculture, livestock



# Methods



Research period: 2019 – 2022  
(GovernAgua and GobHidro research projects)



## Results - Descriptive information

	Sauce committee	Cisne committee	Santa Lucía committee
Year of creation	2010 ( <i>first in the country</i> )	2014	2013
Number of meetings	58	13	17
Convener (Ministry of Environment)	National Environment Directorate	National Water Directorate	National Water Directorate
Member organizations	Government (national, subnational, municipal), farmers' organizations, social organizations, academic sector	Government (national, subnational, municipal), farmers' organizations, social organizations, academic sector	Government (national, subnational, municipal), farmers' organizations, <u>industries</u> , social organizations, academic sector
Administration of financial resources	No	No	No



## Results – Collaboration and Coordination

	<b>Sauce committee</b>	<b>Cisne committee</b>	<b>Santa Lucía committee</b>
Inter-institutional Coordination (government)	Mainly between national ministries (Agriculture & Environment)	Mainly between national and subnational governments	Mainly between national institutions
Collaboration initiatives (government and non-government actors)	Monitoring; Action Plan; Basin Plan; control of invasive species	Monitoring; Land-Use Plan	Action Plan (partly); Basin Plan (government-led)
Conflicts	National vs. Subnational government	Government vs. Social organizations and academic sector	Government vs. Social organizations and academic sector
Collaboration for the operation of the committee	Agenda and roadmap prepared in consultation	Limited	None





## Results – Participation

	<b>Sauce committee</b>	<b>Cisne committee</b>	<b>Santa Lucía committee</b>
Under-represented members	Subnational government	Farmers’ sector	Subnational and municipal governments; small-scale farmers
Influence (political impact)	Action Plan; Basin Plan (Integrated Management)	Land-Use Plan	Action Plan (partly); Basin Plan (Integrated Management) (partly)
Participants’ satisfaction with the power of the committee	Medium	Low-Medium	Low (“it’s informative, consultative”)
Lack of involvement of the committee in initiatives impacting the basin	-	Water transposition to the lake from a nearby basin	Irrigation Law; Neptuno Project involving a new purification plant



## Results – Flexibility

	<b>Sauce committee</b>	<b>Cisne committee</b>	<b>Santa Lucía committee</b>
Formation of Task Forces to address relevant issues	Enforcement, communications, invasive species, etc.	Agricultural transition, baseline & monitoring, communications, etc.	Buffer zones, Basin Plan
Responses in face of water crises or unexpected events	Algal blooms – Action Plan, monitoring programs	Failure in water treatment – committee meeting, communications plan	River floods – resistance to include the topic in the agenda; inaction
Rigidity	Low	Medium	High



## ***Discussion & Final remarks***

Each basin committee is context specific. But scale does matter (as found by Meijerink & Huitema 2017).

Although to different extents, basin committees in Uruguay allow for interinstitutional coordination, collaboration among actors, social participation, and flexibility.

However, basin committees appear to complement rather than replace the existing centralized management approach (e.g. committees are bypassed) (Meijerink & Huitema 2017).

Concentration of power in upper government levels negatively affects all the dimensions which were analyzed, hindering a real transition towards adaptive water governance.



***Thank you!***

***¡Gracias!***

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