Is it one Nile? Civic engagement and hydropolitics in the Eastern Nile Basin: the case of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia

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Chapter Five

Networked Nile Politics: Actors and Structure

5.1 Introduction

The actors involved in Eastern Nile politics are in constant motion and their positions across scales are regularly reconfigured as they respond to historical, political and social dynamics. Sneddon et al. (2002) elucidate that domestic interactions are connected with global dynamics; thus, the local, national and regional frameworks entail historical relations as well as social reciprocal perspectives that define each framework's boundaries.

Departing from this view, some of the actors I encountered in the course of the fieldwork conducted for this dissertation had been established in the early 2000s, while others only recently became engaged in Nile politics; additionally, some actors represent global organisations at regional or national levels.

On the other hand, the notions of participatory development, governance, and multi-stakeholders management have been entrenched in Nile policies. Hence, the riparian governments have not been the only actors in the politics of the Nile. Development organisations, international NGOs, scientific associations and local CSOs have been present in Nile politics and engaged in its affairs through various approaches and capacities. Moreover, governmental entities, either the state apparatus or intergovernmental organisations, have developed their organisations to keep contact with civil society in addition to partnering with them to conduct activities. Therefore, the scales of Nile politics are not discretely defined units; instead, they are structurally entangled.

This chapter aims to describe the entire structure of the network and the actors/nodes involved, mainly their capabilities and positions. The first part focuses on the actors by explaining the interests and capabilities of these actors that enable them to take part in the network. The second part depicts SNA maps of the network with the main features.

5.2 Actors' capabilities and positions in the Eastern Nile Basin

Civil society organisations, initiatives and groups are the key actors as illustrated in the methodology chapter of this dissertation, the collected data was produced from civic entities who have transnational connections and belong to both the civil and primordial public realms.

Nevertheless, Nile politics is in the hand of the national ministries of irrigation and water resources. These governmental bodies constitute the principal actors who establish water policies according to the Nile water shares. Furthermore, the Nile is a transboundary resource which implies that the ministries of foreign affairs are involved. Above that, the heads of state and intelligence bodies delineate interstate relations, particularly since water is a factor of national security (as discussed in chapter four). All of these governmental actors occupy overt positions in the Eastern Nile network. Although they are not the focus of this research, their inclusion is warranted in combination with civil society.

Between the two significant poles (governmental entities and civil society), other actors who have relations with international donor agencies matter at the international level, with grassroots organisations on the local level. Additionally, research entities play significant role by providing advanced water technology and capacity building trainings. For these ample relations, Nile hydropolitics resemble an open network. For analytical purposes, the geographical locations are the base from which to describe the engagement of CSOs and other initiatives in addition to main organisations they are interconnected with and how these connections define their position. Hence, this section explains the capabilities of actors at the international, regional, and national levels.

5.2.1 The international level

The international actors that I encountered in this research were diverse. They included international and regional intergovernmental organisations; bilateral donor agencies; international non-governmental organisations, and diaspora groups.

5.2.1.1 The World Bank

The central intergovernmental organisation involved in Nile politics is the World Bank (WB). Its involvement coincided with the founding of NBI and NBD to endorse regional cooperation. Founding intergovernmental and civil society organisations reflected the liberal thought that institutions are venues where sovereign states can negotiate their interests for collective governance of the Nile Basin.

For the NBI, the riparian countries believed in the WB as an international intergovernmental entity which could manage donors' disbursements allocated to establish this regional organisation (NBI). Therefore, in 2001, the Nile Council of Ministers (Nile-COM) concluded their meeting of the International Consortium for Cooperation on the Nile (ICCON) by requesting the WB to manage and supervise the foreign funds channelled for Nile cooperation. As a result, the Nile Basin Trust Fund (NBTF) was tailored in 2003 to manage US$140 million[23] allocated from ten governmental aid agencies, including those from Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, in addition to the EU and the WB. Then, in 2014, the NBTF closed, but the WB duplicated the idea of a collective trust fund to cover water development on the entire African continent. Hence, the Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA) program was established in 2011 and the Nile water funds integrated into it (World Bank[WB], 2019; WB, 2015). The CIWA program's mission is to provide funds for projects and programs related to transboundary water challenges with the ultimate purpose of increasing economic productivity and growth. This trust fund combines contributions from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the EU and the WB itself (WB, 2017).

In other words, the mandate of CIWA is based on the global discourse of water scarcity explained in chapter four. The population growth in African countries is increasing rapidly and is combined with urbanization processes, which increases the demands on water, food and energy. CIWA interventions have been introduced to mitigate these challenges through: 1) water cooperation that focuses on institutional capacity for transboundary water organisation; 2) water management that

[23] Another number of total amount of disbursements on 2001 is US$203 million channelled to the trust fund (World Bank, 2016).

works to generate accurate data and information on the basin's attributes and to share among riparian countries; 3) water investment which endorses constructing transboundary infrastructure; and 4) stakeholder engagement that provides a space for non-state actors (civil society, private sector and academia) in the process of decision making in transboundary water organisations (WB, 2014; WB, n.d.).

The CIWA funded projects have contributed to articulate the capabilities of actors in Nile politics, mainly for the river basin organisation (NBI), researchers and civil society. In the pillar of water management, the main objective is to build, organise, and share information to enable the prediction of water and climate disasters. In addition, the collection and sharing of data and tools will allow to take appropriate and timely decisions besides formulating strategic plans for the Nile Basin. The institutional capacity focuses on improving the capabilities of the Nile organisations to be able to manage climate and water disasters effectively, besides enhancing the capacity of the NBI to mobilise financial and technical resources for its sustainability as a regional intergovernmental organisation. Under the infrastructure pillar, CIWA aims to assist the NBI and the sub-regional organisations (ENTRO and NELSAP) in generating funds for water infrastructure. In addition, CIWA provides them with tools to link the national investment plans with transboundary strategic investment (WB, 2018; Metawie, 2004).

Concerning stakeholder engagement, civil society does not have a particular focus. On the contrary, it is one actor among other private sector actors and academics. Its engagement has been designed under the frame of communication and dialogue amongst stakeholders of water projects. In other words, the riparian civil society and citizens can be informed of the Nile Basin's investments in addition to exchanging information about designed plans with decision makers and the private sector (WB, 2018). According to this vision the NBD was created, and CIWA became its leading donor. This relation will be covered under the regional level section (section 5.2.3.1).

There are other intergovernmental organisations that have been funding different projects of the NBI besides channelling disbursements to the NBTF and then to CIWA. For instance, UN agencies, mainly UNDP, UNEP and the FAO, have intervened in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the aim of food security. Another significant donor is the African

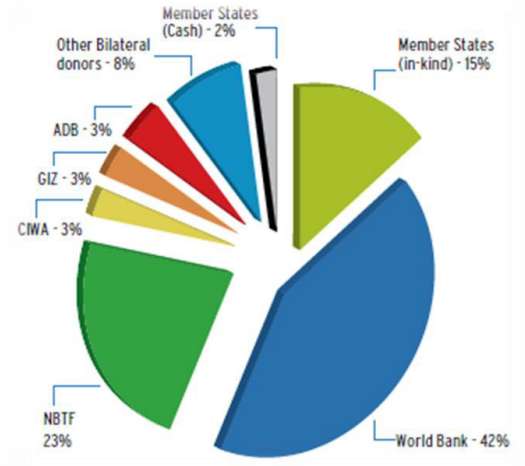
Development Bank which has been providing funds for water and energy infrastructures in the Nile Basin (WB, 2015).

5.2.1.2 Bilateral donor agencies: the German activities

Governmental donor agencies are active in Nile politics under the water development mandate. Many governmental aid agencies have channelled technical and financial assistance on a bilateral level. However, from the trust funds managed by the WB, the USA and Germany are not part of these collective arrangements. Nevertheless, they have offered bilateral assistance either with the NBI or with the riparian countries. For instance, the USA, through USAID in 2016, has funded the electricity project in the NELSAP region under the Power Africa Initiative (Sunderland, 2016). Furthermore, the Corporate Reports of NBI do not indicate that non- Western donors such as China and the Arab Gulf countries are part of the international partners (NBI, 2018, NBI, 2019, NBI, 2020). However, China and the Gulf countries have investments in water and agriculture sectors in the Eastern Nile Basin on a bilateral basis. China has been involved in constructing hydropower projects (i.e. the Merowe Dam in Sudan and the Tana Beles hydropower Dam in Ethiopia). Unlike Western donors, the Chinese investments do not put prior conditions to invest in water projects and the impacts of these hydropower projects on the basin-wide cooperation are not a concern for the Chinese actors (Swain, 2011). Similarly, the Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab of Emirates, have land investments in Egypt and Sudan that benefit from the availability of water and a low-cost of agri-production to cultivate staple food for their consumption (Henderson, 2020). Accordingly, the involvement of non-Western actors in Nile politics aims to obtain profits and is not concerned with the global discourse of sustainability or water governance.

Among the Western donors to the NBI, Germany retains a significant interest in the Nile River. According to figure 5.1 below, the German International Cooperation (The Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)) is the only national donor to have contributed up to 3% of the total fund to the NBI from 1999 to 2017 on a bilateral base.

Figure 5.1 Donors' financial disbursements to the NBI



Source: Adopted from NBI (2019a:32)

The intervention in the transboundary basin is derived from overarching economic and development policies overseas. The policy assumptions reiterate the discourse of water scarcity as a factor that increases the probability of conflict and therefore, the activities aim at maintaining negotiation among riparian countries and governance of transboundary institutions. As is stated in the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) water strategy:

> '(…) focus particularly on supporting the establishment and harmonisation of legal and political foundations for international cooperation, for instance in the form of water agreements or water charters, dialogue and mediation processes, and basin commissions.' (Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development [BMZ], 2017:17)

Through the financial support to the NBI, GIZ has been implementing the BMZ vision of boosting cooperation by investing in the river basin organisations. Significantly, the disbursements to the

NBI have been channelled to policy and capacity building aspects. For instance, GIZ has financed dialogue meetings, capacity building programs and the building of policy analysis tools (GIZ, 2014). These activities enable NBI to attain its mandate of collecting and sharing data that in turn will mobilise investments for water projects.

The German financial contribution has been illuminated recently because the WB support has been altered as a result of contestation over GERD. Additionally, the Ethiopian Government claims that the WB is inclined towards the Egyptian position, while the European actors are more understanding of the Ethiopian position (Crisis Group, 2019). In this regard, one of the Egyptian governmental respondents contended that Germany reinvigorated the NBI after Egypt froze its membership. The absence of Egypt deteriorated the principle of riparian consensus to implement hydraulic projects and activities in the Nile Basin. Since then, NBI activities have declined due to the shortage of international disbursements. However, German support has kept the transboundary organisation alive (Interview 37).

Moreover, Germany has a special envoy for Nile Affairs who works towards attaining cooperation over the Nile Basin. The main project, entitled Transboundary Water Cooperation in the Nile Basin, falls under the auspices of the BMZ and has been running for 20 years. It started in 2002 and the projected end-date is 2021. The German activities in the Nile underpin the soft objectives, meaning that technical and financial assistance are channelled to promote trust-building among the riparian countries and to increase institutional capacity building for the NBI and its sub-regional offices to design strategic plans and policies (GIZ, n.d. (a)).

Additionally, under the German Federal Foreign Office, there is the project of Supporting Hydro Diplomacy in the Nile Basin that started in 2016 after the confrontation in the Nile Basin had been accelerated due to the disagreement on CFA and then the construction of GERD. Accordingly, this Project aimed to restore cooperation among the riparian countries through providing negotiators with crucial skills that can take negotiations forward; and through public diplomacy involving members of civil society. The official website of GIZ states that:

> 'Non-governmental and public diplomacy is strengthened to give the negotiation processes more impetus from civil society, and public opinion is formed by promoting peace-oriented, evidence-based reporting in the media.' (GIZ, n.d.(b): para.5)

Furthermore, the annual report of ENTRO (2017-2018) demonstrated that hydrodiplomacy activities, besides capacity-building trainings, were conducted as a result of the signing of an agreement with GIZ to finance these activities. Importantly, similar to the NBI case, the report demonstrated that the GIZ is the only national donor, besides the WB-CIWA, AFDB, and country contributions (ENTRO, 2018).

In 2017, the EU adopted the project of Supporting Hydro Diplomacy under the Programme for Transboundary Water Management in the Nile River Basin and allocated funds towards it alongside Germany. The European Commission's mandate of intervention in the Nile is to restore consensus among the riparian countries regarding Nile Basin management and to support the NBI. Additionally, water, food and energy security are one of the integrated objectives in the overall purpose of maintaining peace in the Nile region. Nevertheless, Germany has demonstrated leadership in organisational and implementation arrangements in the Nile Basin (European Commission, 2017).

Compatible with a vision that aims to promote cooperation in the Nile Basin, the civil society component can be traced through the special objective of creating the Nile Media component which strives for

> 'Supporting efforts to positively influence public opinion in member states to encourage cooperative water resource management. This opens up the scope for political decision-makers. The media team for the Nile Basin Secretariat is receiving support in responding more effectively to issues currently being discussed in the Nile Basin' (GIZ, n.d.(a): para.14).

The implication of this objective was demonstrated in the publishing of the first Nile Basin media outlet (The Niles) which covers various water issues across the eleven riparian countries (The

Niles, 2019). These different projects and programs have enhanced the position of GIZ in the Nile politics network.

5.2.1.3 International research centres and CSOs

Parallel to international governmental intervention in the Nile, various international NGOs have played significant roles in the Nile Basin for different purposes. However, the prevalent mission is to provide technical and financial assistance for water-related projects and programs. Many international NGOs have targeted their actions at development projects on national or local scales, not covering the whole Nile Basin. Conversely, the research-based organisations and think tanks have had a remarkable influence on the Nile as a basin; particularly through their implementation of projects on both levels: the Nile Basin and riparian countries.

The noteworthy international research centres mentioned by different civil society entities are the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). These think tanks play a significant role in shaping the discussions and policies by providing technical assistance and sponsoring conferences, offering training courses and workshops in addition to the funding of research projects. The next chapter will demonstrate their presence and engagement in the Nile.

Their significant position in the Nile network departs from the technical vision to the Nile Basin cooperation. As stated in chapter four, the regional arrangement had endeavoured to promote information sharing in order to control the Nile flows. With the NBI, although cooperation was broadened, information is still the foundation of collaboration. The research programs and projects endorse data creation and sharing which supposedly refines Nile regional policy. Therefore, the governmental entities endorse the engagement of a think tank, such as in the CIWA objectives, that defined academia as a significant stakeholder.

In the Eastern Nile Basin, these organisations have got a clear position in the SNA because they have sub-regional and national offices which empower their role; for example, the regional offices and national chapters of the GWP and IWMI in Ethiopia and Egypt.

The Egyptian GWP was established in 2012 to promote integrated water resource management (IWRM) knowledge and practices in Egypt on a national level. Additionally, it conducts activities to diffuse SDGs. Moreover, the Egyptian GWP has utilised the global discourse of water security to defend Egypt's historical rights in Nile water shares in the GWP meetings (Interview 7). On the other hand, the East Africa office of GWP is located in the same building as the NBI in Entebbe. Hence the geographical proximity has facilitated cooperation and harmonization of activities.

While the IWMI is a global research organisation that is proactive in the Nile region, the East Africa office is located in Ethiopia and conducts scientific studies and publishes policy briefs on all issues related to land, water and environment. Egypt hosts the regional office of the IWMI for the Middle East and North Africa. Incubating the regional offices intensifies the mutual relations between the national level and international organisations. Nevertheless, this regional division between East Africa and North Africa confines the harmonization across the Eastern Nile Basin, as will be explained in the next chapter.

International development NGOs such as Care International, Water Aid Federation and Caritas are found at the periphery of the network. Their interventions are on the local scale as they implement water-related development projects such as drinking water and sanitation infrastructures in rural areas, food provision at disaster times, and women's participation in water management. In doing so, some international NGOs in Ethiopia, for example, formulated community structures to manage, distribute and monitor the established water projects after providing training to farmers. Accordingly, the community is empowered and the trained community leaders become enabled to challenge the local authority in issues related to water services (Interview 21).

5.2.1.4 Diaspora groups

Besides these structured international NGOs, diaspora groups have a direct involvement in Eastern Nile politics. Their collective action embarks in the primordial sphere of civil society because their engagement relies on their close relations to their homeland and relatives and ties are based on common ethnic/religious attributes.

The fieldwork conducted in the course of this dissertation highlighted two methods of diaspora groups' direct involvement in Nile politics. One is aligned with the poverty alleviation discourse which aims to provide water accessibility to less privileged people. The second method has a political face when diaspora groups mobilise their finance and knowledge to support or resist the implementation of giant dams.

The Sadagaat and Takaful organisations in Sudan play the role of intermediate NGOs which receive money and materials from the Sudanese diaspora around the globe. These organisations include, for example, the Sudanese American, Sadagaat-USA, and Sudanese American Medical Association (SAMA). Global diaspora donations are complemented by charitable donations from locals or private companies, to support activities in four sectors: health, food, water and education. In the water sector, their intervention includes drilling wells, the extension of water pipelines, the distribution of water coolers as well as the cleaning and upgrading of water stations by providing lifting pumps (Sadagaat, 2020). Similarly, the Takaful Organisation for Development has the same mandate and implements water projects funded from alms or zakat collections.

Apart from this development vision, diaspora groups play a noteworthy role in mobilizing the international community for or against national water projects in addition to providing financial support to anti-dam movements in their home communities. For instance, the contested Kajar dam in Sudan got public support in the 1980s as a small dam to assist farmers to regulate water and expand their plantations. As a result, Sudanese diaspora groups sent remittances and shared their technical experience to construct this dam. However, when the state converted the dam into a mega-dam that required displacement, the diaspora started supporting the anti-dam movement that

formed on the local level (Interview 28; Abdelkareem, 2018). Likewise, the resistance to the Merowe dam was challenged by some local people (the Manasir, Hamdab, and Amri) who refused to be resettled and compensated. Their resistance strategies and movements had been supported by Sudanese diaspora groups who also mobilised the international community (human rights organisations and the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing). They claim to advocate for the voice of local peoples to be heard by informing about the injustice inflicted by the Sudanese Government and the negative impacts of the Dam (Dirar et al., 2015).

Similarly, in Ethiopia, diaspora groups' involvement in economic development is welcomed by communities and society at large because their donations or remittances are considered a sign of solidarity. Diaspora support in villages is based on ethnic ties. However, in cities, diaspora remittances are used to garner social solidarity (Nega and Milofsky, 2011).

In the Amhara region, the Save Lake Tana campaign exemplifies the relationship between the diaspora groups and their home area. Diaspora groups in Europe and the USA fundraised and purchased machines to remove water hyacinth from the Lake (Interview 32). Furthermore, the Global Coalition for Lake Tana Restoration was established in Washington DC to afford scientific and technical support to conserve the environment of the Lake (Global Coalition for Lake Tana Restoration, 2020).

Nevertheless, the diaspora groups' engagement reflects the relation with the political regime, whether it is a supportive or contested relation. The GERD project has demonstrated the position of Ethiopia as a nation and ethnic groups toward a giant dam, a factor that is explored in chapter seven.

5.2.2 Eastern Nile intergovernmental level

The regional level here takes account of actors that conduct activities in the Nile Basin besides general African actors that include the Nile Basin in their activities.

5.2.2.1 The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI)[24]

Regarding the Eastern Nile intergovernmental organisations, the NBI with its sub-regional offices, ENTRO and NELSAP, embody regional cooperation in the Nile Basin, as explained in chapter four. What makes NBI unique compared to previous arrangements is the scope of cooperation that has been widened to cover non-water issues. Therefore, the NBI designs studies and mobilises resources for transnational projects. Moreover, it has acknowledged the role of stakeholders in water management rather than considering only technocrats' voices on the Nile issue.

In the beginning of NBI, the stakeholder involvement was framed in the NBI governance on the project level. From 2004 to 2009, the Confidence Building and Stakeholder Involvement (CBSI) Project was under operation as part of the overarching Shared Vision Program (SVP),[25] after which the NBI developed the Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy in 2013 to become a part of the NBI Strategic Plan (2012-2016).

The titles of the Project and Strategy connote how the NBI has rationalized its relations with stakeholders. The CBSI Project was an initial regional arrangement that interacted with other non-state actors in the Nile. To be consistent with the NBI's inclusive vision, the Project treated relations with stakeholders under the mandate of confidence-building as a necessary step to attain effective cooperative management among all riparian countries. However, the Strategy was formulated after the NBI had been consolidated in the Nile countries and therefore it focuses on reaching stakeholders and maintaining constant communication with them. Both the Project and the Strategy catalysed the importance of stakeholder involvement to disseminate accurate

[24] The earlier version of this section was published as policy brief by the author (Abazeed, 2018).
[25] Shared Vision Program (SVP) was a founding program of the NBI which included Nile Basin investments, projects and institutional aspects. Through implementing SVP, the policy makers and donors assumed wide-basin cooperation and trust building would be achieved. The Program consisted of 8 main projects (Applied Training Project, Water Resources Management and Planning Project, Efficient Water Use for Agricultural Production Project, Regional Power Trade Project, Socio-economic Development and Benefits-Sharing Project, Confidence-Building and Stakeholder Involvement Project, Transboundary Environmental Action Project and Shared Vision Coordination Project). The first application of the Program started in 2003 and the Program was concluded in 2009. See for example: Morbach et al. (2014); NBI (2019b); WB (2010).

information on the Nile, to provide a platform for engagement with stakeholders and to connect the NBI as a regional organisation with the public (NBI, 2009).

Under the SVP, stakeholder involvement in the CBSI Project (2004-2009) was defined by four components: 1) Regional, sub-regional and national implementation and facilitation; 2) Public information and development communication; 3) Stakeholder involvement and 4) Confidence building. The first component emphasises the structural aspect of the NBI as a regional organisation; therefore, the Project has established regional offices at the NBI headquarters in Entebbe, sub-regional offices in Addis Ababa (ENTRO) and Kigali (NELSAP), in addition to national offices in nine countries (Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, D.R. Congo and Rwanda). The second component aimed to disseminate information on projects and activities conducted by the NBI programs, which would result in a better understanding of the role of the NBI. The stakeholder involvement in the third component was framed mainly in terms of building the capacity of stakeholders and channelling their concerns in project designs, particularly in the framework of investment projects. The fourth component was designed to combine the two elements of information dissemination and stakeholder involvement at a regional level. It was assumed that mutual trust and confidence would be genuinely created among the riparian countries when the information was shared and different actors involved in the NBI activities (NBI, 2009).

Apparently, the NBI considers civil society as one of the stakeholders, but without a particular emphasis on interactions with them. The circle of stakeholders has been limited at the beginning of the CBSI Project: it included decision makers, public-opinion leaders and local riparian users. These three main categories were identified as direct stakeholders of the other SVP projects. Then, after a mid-term assessment, the groups were expanded to include all potential actors of the NBI and the actors its programs or projects could interact with on all levels. Therefore, the targeted stakeholders incorporated: governmental stakeholders; private business; community and faith-based organisations; local communities; development partners and international civil society organisations. Moreover, some representatives of civil society were invited to the CBSI Project Steering Committee in 2007 (NBI, 2009).

After the SVP closure, its projects including the CBSI transferred to the NBI secretariat and the SAPs: ENTRO and NELSAP. The result report of the SVP highlighted the lack of harmonisation between the SAPs and the SVP. The SAPs achieved institutional development that enabled them to take a lead in the proposed projects (i.e. power trade studies) (WB, 2010). Additionally, the report recommended that '…the relationship with NBD was less productive than it might have been. A new relationship with NBD should be formed, linked to independent capacity building efforts for NBD.' (WB, 2010:49).

Therefore, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the NBD was singed in 2010 outlining the scope of relations. The interview respondent from the NBI demonstrated that there are two channels to reach citizens and attain these objectives. The first is through communication with the NBD[26] and the second is through direct contact with the community where the proposed projects will be implemented (Interview 5).

Regarding the Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, because it is part of the general strategic plan of the NBI, the main objective was articulated to inform the different stakeholders of the NBI's projects and plans (NBI, n.d.). The Strategy's main goal was contained in four objectives: the first one focused on governments and their vision of the Nile development as a shared resource, affirming the role of the NBI as a regional platform to sustain dialogues among governments on the one side and with others stakeholders on the other. The second one targeted the national level through promoting the benefit of cooperation in Nile water management. The third and fourth objectives were related to the organisation itself, by building the capacity of staff so that they could communicate with stakeholders by providing a clear message about the organisation's identity and roles in the Nile Basin (NBI, n.d.).

In a like manner, the current Strategic plan of the NBI (2017-2027) framed stakeholder involvement on the levels of dialogue and information sharing over the Nile development. These prospective interactions were planned to be achieved through 'multi-stakeholder dialogue events'

[26] The role of NBD will be demonstrated in this chapter under section 5.2.3.1 and the relation with NBI will be discussed in chapter 6 under section 6.2.2.

and the ultimate goal of this involvement is to 'build consensus among the countries public and stakeholders' regarding cooperative development in the Nile (NBI, 2017a:5, 22).

The Strategy conformed with the CBSI categories and added others, mainly media, academics and research institutions, because the focus of the Strategy was to strengthen communication and outreach. Furthermore, the Strategy demonstrated the subcategories, e.g. the opinion leaders which encompass parliamentarians, artists, sportsmen, women and diplomats (NBI, n.d.). In line with the rationale of stakeholder involvement at project level, the Strategy demonstrated that each Project should distinguish between the primary and secondary stakeholders who would be affected by the planned projects. Accordingly, the categories of the NBI's stakeholders are fluid in nature.

In the institiuational level, the NBI secretariat and its sub-regional offices incorporated the positions of Public Participation Specialist, besides two Public Information Specialists, which were then renamed to Social Development Officer and Development Communication Officer (NBI, 2009). This department is in charge of communicating with society to get their feedback regarding the projects.

This role is explained in the brochure about regional cooperation projects in the Eastern Nile Basin[27]. As is stated under the principle of 'eco-system/environmental, social and intergenerational sustainability':

> 'The preparation of ENSAP projects should involve and be owned by relevant primary and secondary stakeholders who will be the ultimate beneficiaries (if well designed and implemented) or victims (if otherwise) of ENSAP projects. Such an orientation is also deemed critical to ensure that ENSAP projects are reasons for social peace and stability at any level, and not causes of instability and 'conflict'. (Fekade, 2011:4).

[27] The mandate of ENTRO is to foster joint water projects across its countries through collecting technical data, creating planning and assessment models, preparing feasibility studies, designing water management systems, putting guidelines for projects' implementation, and mobilizing investments to the proposed projects. The main projects under ENTRO mandate are: the Baro-Akobo-Sobat Multipurpose Water Resources Study, the Eastern Nile First Joint Multipurpose Program Identification, the Eastern Nile Regional Power Trade Investment Program, The Eastern Nile Watershed Management Project, the Ethiopia Sudan Transmission Interconnection Project, the Eastern Nile Planning Model, the Eastern Nile Irrigation and Drainage, Flood Preparedness and Early Warning (ENTRO, 2016).

Obviously, the NBI's connection with civil society or citizens is a condition for water projects prepared by it instead of being an integral actor in the governing of the Basin. In effect, the NBI approaches them as receivers (beneficiaries/victims), which has reframed the CBSI vision. Moreover, the ENTRO respondent during the fieldwork for this dissertation argued that the professional CSOs which have highly educated members are the target stakeholder to be invited to the project's assessment meetings. By comparison, including grassroots organisations is not helpful for discussion in these meetings because it is difficult for their members to absorb the technical language of the project's documents, particularly hydraulic data (Interview 18). From this perspective, asymmetric power relations are constituted because the participating stakeholders represent their interests and priorities, while the grassroots associations have become disadvantaged and excluded actors (White, 1996).

Overall, civil society engagement was found to be more strongly associated with the proposed projects than with the Basin's policies. On the other side, according to CIWA's vision, there is an assumption that civil society capabilities are equal to that of the private sector and of academics.

5.2.2.2 Peripheral intergovernmental organisations

The interviewees and publications of organisations I encountered during the fieldwork for this dissertation mentioned the number of regional intergovernmental organisations. Their involvement can be divided into two groups: one includes other intergovernmental organisations in the Nile Basin which interact with civil society organisations; the second constitutes those organisations financing water projects.

The distinct intergovernmental organisation in the first group is the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC). It was established in 2003 under the East Africa Community that includes the riparian countries of the Lake: Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in addition to Rwanda and Burundi. Unlike the NBI mandate, the LVBC is built on the development needs of the geographic area of the Lake. Therefore, its objectives cover all development prospects such as health and

education improvement, poverty reduction, and climate change mitigation, besides water challenges (Interview 4).

In its relation with the Eastern Nile Basin, LVBC is connected with the NBI and NELSAP as they are counterpart intergovernmental organisations. But LVBC has a different sphere of civil society connections under the structural arrangement. However, the NBD representative has been invited to meetings at LVBC in the context of discussing the Lake's issues.

It is worth mentioning here that the interview respondent from LVBC perceives the Eastern Nile Basin to be distinct as the interests, concerns and water development priorities are different from that of Lake Victoria. Because of that, the interactions are not constant and occur notably at the formal level (Interview 4).

The NBD respondents pointed out in interviews that their connection with the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW). This is the assembly of ministers of water resources, and it is the African Union arm of water development on the continent. AMCOW performs as a sponsor of collaborative activities in the Nile, conducted by the NBI[28]. The NBD interview respondents mentioned that the organisation had been invited to their conferences, but the connection between them is not constant.

The second group entails the other African intergovernmental organisations; mainly, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). They are involved in the Nile Basin development projects by providing technical and financial assistance to the NBI projects within their scope of work. Yet, the presence of these intergovernmental

[28] AMCOW founded the African Water Facility in 2004, which is managed by the AfDB. The Facility conducts investments in the water and sanitation sectors. It receives funds from Western donors as well as African countries (e.g. Senegal and Nigeria) (AfDB, 2019). In the Eastern Nile Basin, the African Water Facility with NEPAD have provided funds to the proposed projects; for example, the Baro-Akobo-Sobat (BAS) Multipurpose Water Resources Development Study Project through the AfDB (AfDB, 2020). The involvement of African intergovernmental organisations shows overlapping in terms of their financial support to water projects.

organisations in the Nile Basin is in terms of their role in funding infrastructure projects through the NBI. Their interactions with civil society in the Nile Basin, by comparison, are not significant.

5.2.3 Regional civil society

The visibility of intergovernmental organisations in Nile Basin politics does not mean the absence of civil society at the regional scale. Conversely, many actors have established sound activities and networks. Besides the NBD, the first wide-basin civil society organisation, there are youth-based initiatives, public diplomacy delegations, and the African and Arab networks.

5.2.3.1 The Nile Basin Discourse (NBD)

The NBD is a regional civil society organisation operating in the whole Nile Basin and cooperating with a huge number of national NGOs through the National Discourse Forums (NDFs).

The NBD in fact is the only regional organisation in the Nile Basin. Its establishment, however, was driven by the WB and donors after the founding of the NBI. The objective was to create an organisation that could channel the voices of the Nile communities to decision makers in the NBI. In other words, the ultimate aspiration was for riparian citizens to participate in Nile Basin development.

The rationale for the involvement of the WB and other development banks, such as the African Development Bank, in founding river basin organisations is presented by Alaerts (1999) as follows:

> 'The banks have a particular interest in support to regional initiatives for basin-wide water management. In many instances, such [a] cooperation platform contributes to regional stability which in turn facilitates economic growth.' (Alaerts, 1999: 6)

Official aid agencies undoubtedly espoused this global water discourse and therefore financed the participation of stakeholders in water management with the purpose of promoting efficient economic development (Priscoli and Wolf, 2009). Accordingly, the NBD received funds first from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), then from the British Department for International Development (DFID) for a long time, and currently through a WB program (CIWA).

However, establishing a regional civil society organisation led to conflict caused by its top-down creation: throughout the founding phase there was dissonance among the visions of governments, civil society activists and donors. According to the network perspective, these three distinct actors each had their own levels of authority, financial strength and representativity, and their capabilities have been entangled leading to the establishment of the NBD.

Representatives of NGOs had been invited to ICCON in 2001. Besides framing the structure of donors' disbursements to the NBI, as explained before (section 5.2.1.1), civil society attendees issued the NGO's Civil Society Discourse Statement. It affirmed the importance of civil society engagement in the Nile Basin development projects and programs that would be designed by the NBI. Moreover, the rationale of civic engagement was forged to yield confidence in the NBI mission (Foulds, 2002). Thus civil society representatives linked their transboundary activism with the NBI; the Statement stated 'the concern to develop a way to ensure that NGOs and Civil Society play their proper roles as partners in the Nile Basin Initiative has been growing as the NBI process has developed' (the NGO and Civil Society Discourse,2001:2). Nevertheless, governmental actors resisted the idea of establishing a civil society organisation at this stage. They demonstrated apathy towards the political disagreement between the riparian countries on water shares, which discouraged regional cooperation (Foulds, 2002; Kameri-Mbote, 2004).

However, a workshop was held in 2001 in Entebbe, aiming to discuss the establishment process. The result was the formation of the Nile Basin Discourse Desk Project in November 2002, which was hosted by the office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Uganda. The involvement of IUCN was generated by its sponsorship of the ICCON meeting in Switzerland and subsequent provision of financial and logistical coverage to the new entity. Additionally,

selecting Entebbe to be the host country of the Desk, and later the NBD, was to interlink it with the NBI (Foulds, 2002; Kameri-Mbote, 2004).

The Canadian donor (CIDA), however, was the primary funder of the Nile Basin Discourse Desk until 2004. Its support was caused by the lack of a civil society component in NBI prospective activities. CIDA thus aimed to establish the Desk to be a conduit between the NBI and respective communities, and international CSOs (Pearmain Partners, 2004).

The environmental activist Nabil El-Khodari was based in Canada and founded the Nile Basin Society organisation. Its main goal was aligned with the global discourse of integrating people's voices in water management. Accordingly, the organisation defined its objectives to facilitate accessibility to Nile Basin information which was under government control, and to promote dialogue and connections with CSOs across the Nile Basin (Nile Basin Society, n.d.).

Actually, the organisation's activities relied on virtual connections. So, the website included the details of interactions between members, in addition to the minutes of board meetings. Importantly, the founder utilised the Access Information Act in Canada[29] to publish a couple of documents about CIDA funds to the Nile Basin Discourse Desk.

The founder, Nabil El-Khodari, had a dyadic connection at international and regional levels with peer Nile-based activists. His presence in international platforms and his publications enabled him to raise awareness of the Nile Basin Society among donor agencies. On the other hand, the organisation included members from Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Egypt, whose names appear in the online documents of the organisation (Nile Basin Society, n.d.).

This representation power of El-Khodari, however, was challenged by counter civil society activists from the Nile Basin at the 3rd World Water Forum in 2003. The Nile Basin Society delivered a presentation about civil society engagement in the NBI that discussed the challenges

[29] Access to the Information Act enables Canadian citizens to access documents and records issued bygovernmental federal institutions, after filing a formal request.

of relations between NGOs and riparian countries (Barinda, 2003). The report of the session mentioned that the Ugandan minister of water resources had promised to discuss the methods of civil society involvement in the NBI with the Nile Basin Society. Furthermore, the final report of the Forum underlined the role of the Nile Basin Discourse Desk as one of the commitments that the participants had raised in the Forum and would work to achieve (World Water Council, 2003).

At the same venue, however, another civil society activist (Dr. Emad Adly)[30] attended the Forum for the same purpose. Similarly, he had connections with international donors and he mobilised these to uphold the newly established entity of the Nile Basin Discourse Desk. Thus, donors and international actors in the Forum encountered two different civil society groups who claimed representation of the Nile civil society.

After the Forum, CIDA funding was terminated in 2004. The evaluation report stated that the fund was planned for the course of one year (April 2002 – March 2003) but that other donors such as the WB and DFID should join and channel their disbursements to strengthen the new entity. As a result of a lack of funds from the other donors, CIDA extended the Project for one more year, ending in April 2004.

The disinclination and limit of international funds to the NBD, compared to the constant and vigorous support to the NBI, demonstrates the power of governmental actors in Nile politics and the boundaries to civil society engagement.

The donors' actions toward the Nile Basin Discourse Desk had been framed differently by the civil society activists in a way to demonstrate their capabilities and presence in Nile politics. In the documents of the Nile Basin Society, El-Khodari framed the end of CIDA funding as a result of the concerns he raised about the effectiveness of the Desk (Nile Basin Society, n.d.). To justify his position, he published CIDA evaluation and audit reports. The evaluation report highlighted that

[30] Dr. Emad Adly is active in civil society mainly in the field of environment and sustainability. He occupies leading positions in civil society organisations and networks including: general coordinator of the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED); co-founder and chairperson of the Arab Office of Youth and Environment (AOYE) and chairperson of the Egyptian Sustainable Development Forum (ESDF).

the main challenges were financial expenditures and internal governance matters. For instance, the report contended that the participation of the Desk coordinator in the 3rd World Water Forum in 2003 was a misallocation of CIDA funds. In response, the IUCN, the incubator of the Desk, stated that 'This organisation [Nile Basin Society] is hardly "a rival to IUCN". Perhaps a competitor with the NBD for networking with Nile Basin riparians.' (Project Services International and Microde Consult, 2004: 36).

The conflict on the civil society level over who could claim representation of the Nile Basin civil society demonstrated the power that is held by donors. Civil society's involvement was framed under the discourse of development, mainly the NBI proposed projects. The civil society participants in the ICCON meeting accepted this role and capitalised on their activities accordingly. Therefore, donors tended to boost civil society activists working in the field of development and poverty reduction, which aligned with NBI mandates. Furthermore, the donor agencies preferred channelling funds to established and structured CSOs. These donors' requirements did not apply, however, to the Nile Basin Society: the organisation was based on online communication and located in Canada, away from the Nile. The founder clearly documented how the organisation's General Assembly had not been completed because of poor internet connection and the ineffectiveness of virtual discussions. Importantly, the founder had critical insights into the relationship between civil society and governments. In one of his papers, he criticized the NBI and the role of the WB because the environmental and food organisations were not invited to be part of the NBI. Additionally, he had a sceptical view of the WB and donors' commitments to develop the Nile Basin. Over and above this, he condemned the independence of civil society activists who were involved in the Nile Basin Discourse Desk. He claimed

> 'The rest are members (or rather heads) of what can be termed as GONGOs (Governmental NGOs) that only act as 'contractors' to the governments in projects that the donors insist to be handled by NGOs. They never oppose the Government and never act on behalf of the people.' (El-Khodari,2004:150)

Seemingly, his position against the governmental actors and CSOs caused donors and the NBI to reject the Nile Basin Society as a representative of the Nile CSOs. A former consultant in the NBI pointed out in the interview that the WB did not want to build connections with El-Khodari and

the respondent attempted to manage his criticism of the NBI by explaining activities transparently, besides inviting him to these activities (Interview 23). Ultimately, the founder and his organisation were not aligned with the vision and requirements of donors and governments and therefore, the Nile Basin Society disappeared from current Nile politics.

After the ending of the CIDA funds, the DFID intervened in 2004 with an emphasis on accelerating the transition from an incubating project by IUCN to an independent organisation. The British funds covered designing governance issues, financial arrangements and the relation with NBI projects (Department for International Development [DFID], 2013). It was the principal funder to the NBD until 2013, and its ample funding caused NBD respondents to remember its support as the golden age of the NBD.

The NBD has national representatives named the National Discourse Forums (NDFs). There is a CSO in each riparian country that plays a connecting role between the regional level (NBD) and local communities.

The Egyptian national discourse forum was one of the founders of the regional NBI. Dr. Adly attended the ICCON in 2001 and in 2002, he hosted one of the preparatory meetings of the Nile Basin Discourse Desk in Cairo. Furthermore, he was able to communicate with donors in the World Water Forum in 2003 while the Ethiopian and Sudanese national forums were launched later, in 2005 and 2007, respectively.

The Ethiopian civil society activists participated in the discussion workshops organised by DFID in 2004. The national Forum was founded in 2005 under the supervision of a Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Associations (CCRDA), and yet it has not been legally registered. The Forum includes 77 NGOs and ten individuals as members (NBD, 2015a).

By comparison, the Sudanese NDF is incubated by the Sudanese Environment Conservation Society (SECS) which was established in 1975 with the mandate of sustainable development and environmental conservation in Sudan through awareness and natural resource management. The

Sudanese NBD contains 83 NGOs and 166 individuals. Additionally, 6 civil society networks are affiliated to the Forum (NBD, 2015a; Sudanese Environment Conservation Society [SECS], n.d.).

The national forums are professional CSOs, or hosted by a well-established organisation in the case of Ethiopia. Embodying the required organisational attributes, this appealed to donors' support. It enhanced the position of these national forums in the Eastern Nile Basin network, as is analysed in chapter seven of this dissertation, with a discussion of the Egyptian National Discourse Forum.

5.2.3.2 Youth-based initiatives

In addition to the NBD and its professional NGOs, there are examples of organisations initiated by independent founders. The political contestation over the GERD has galvanized the interest of young independent activists advocating for transboundary cooperation.

The Nile Project is one such example of youth activism. The founder is Egyptian and is based in the USA. He studied ethnomusicology, a factor that shaped his approach to the Nile. The 25 January 2011 revolution, when the public sphere was open, facilitated the development of his idea which he then implemented as a structured initiative in Egypt. His main idea is music as a tool to start a conversation and to foster communication among the Nile peoples. The continuing interactions through underlining cultural bonds will be evolving into mutual understanding, empathy and trust among the 'engaged Nile citizens' (Interview 1; The Nile Project). In this view, the Nile is perceived as a cultural unit rather than a political one. Thus, the Nile consists of three main sub-regions representing the musical traditions across the Nile: Ethiopia and Eretria; Egypt and Sudan; then the other Nile Basin countries, including South Sudan, because its culture is closer to that of the Equatorial Lakes countries (Interview 1).

The Nile Forum is another initiative that started in 2016 and attempts to remove non-political obstacles to cooperation in the Nile Basin. It aims to facilitate collaborative interactions among civil society activists in the riparian countries. To attain this vision, the Nile Forum held a

preliminary camp in Egypt where activists from different fields across the Nile Basin countries discussed the root causes of latent conflict. During the camp, the participants had the opportunity to initiate alternative ways to boost cooperation in their Nile communities (The Nile Forum, 2016).

Another form of youth engagement in the Nile is found in the World Youth Parliament for Water (WYPW). This global organisation was founded in 2002 with the mission of endorsing youth voices in water decision making processes through building their capacity for dialogue on water issues and advocacy. The International Secretariat for Water (ISW) and Solidarity Water Europe (SWE) support it (World Youth Parliament for Water [WYPW], 2020). The organisation has focal points in different countries. Creating a national chapter does not require a fixed place and structure because the relation is to provide technical support and to proliferate the mission through ad-hoc activities. The national chapter relies on the commitment and activism of the head of the branch to mobilise fellows and to conduct activities on a regular basis. Sudan and Egypt have chapters, while Ethiopia does not, although their activities are infrequent. This will be explained by referring to the case of the Sudanese Youth Parliament for Water (SYPW) in chapter seven.

Egypt's Youth Parliament for Water (EYPW) was officially launched in November 2018 with Government support during the World Youth Forum. This Forum is one of the political tools of the Egyptian regime to interact with young people. In the second version of the Forum, the political regime included the aspect of water to illustrate Egypt’s suffering from water stress to the world. In this context, the EYPW was announced with support from the MWRI. This Egyptian chapter has an indefinite objective which is 'to boost water awareness through diverse projects and awareness campaigns.' (Egypt's Youth Parliament for Water [EYPW], 2018).

Still these youth-based initiatives are clustered around their participants' affiliations and funding agencies. They might exchange ideas and participants, such as in the case of the two Egyptian examples (Nile Project and Nile Forum). While the global organisation of WYPW associates the Egyptian and Sudanese chapters vertically, the regional interaction between Egyptian and Sudanese chapters is absent.

5.2.3.3 Public diplomacy

Public diplomacy is a manifestation of collective action that has entered the Nile politics network. During fieldwork, I encountered two illustrations of public diplomacy: one is based on official and structured deployment, and the second consists of an intuitive reaction to the GERD issue.

The first example is the Friendship Organisations and respective delegations on a bilateral level among the Eastern Nile Basin countries. In Sudan, there is the umbrella organisation of the Sudanese Peoples' Friendship that was established in 1990 under the mandate of promoting transnational communications, which could play the role of mediator with traditional leaders. Its objectives align with the policies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The organisation contains 70 member organisations that have a geographic distribution covering Arabic, African and European countries (Faqeeri, 2014). The Sudanese-Egyptian Friendship Organisation is one of these member organisations: It arranges mutual visits of delegations which consist of artists, sports people, musicians and public figures who are exchanged from a delegation to another. The mandate of these visits is to promote cultural bonds that will lead to trust-building (Interview 26).

The second example is the Egyptian independent public diplomacy delegation that formed after the Ethiopian announcement of GERD. The delegation utilised the momentum of the revolution in 2011 and the openness of the public sphere. The members of the delegation established strong relations and bonds during their struggle together in Tahrir Square. At the same time, the media depicted the negative impacts of the dam on the Egyptian water share (Interview 9). A group of the political elite and intelligentsia in Egypt constituted an informal delegation to convince the Ethiopian Prime Minister (Meles Zenawi) to halt the dam construction until the Egyptian election had been conducted and the political system was restored (Interviews 9 and 13). The initiator of the delegation urged that the role of civil society is to pressure governments or to remedy failed policies (Interview 13). Thus, he coordinated the delegation to undertake and resolve the drastic results of the Mubarak regime in Africa that led to a lack of sympathy for the Egyptian water needs. Through this he deliberately conveyed the message that the Nile is 'life right' for all riparian peoples and they have to share its benefits (Interview 13).

This Egyptian delegation was followed by the Ethiopian delegation to Cairo in December 2014 and this was reiterated in December 2015. By comparison, the Sudanese–Ethiopian public diplomacy delegation in May 2015 and 2016 was framed under a general collaboration and not underpinned by the GERD issue as was the case for the Egyptian delegation in 2011 (Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019; Sudan Tribune, 2015; Sudan Tribune, 2016).

Except for the Egyptian delegation in 2011, in general, the public diplomacy and friendship mutual delegations consisted of political and public figures who were closely associated with decision makers, and their messages did not diverge from official national claims. Thus, governments capitalised on these delegations as a manifestation of civil society interaction across the Nile countries.

5.2.3.4 African and Arab water networks

Beyond the direct dynamics of Eastern Nile politics, there are other examples of civil society networks which have connections with the aforementioned CSOs, but on a meetings and information exchange level. Therefore, their position in the network is that of being an outlier. Nevertheless, these civil society networks reflect the difference between the Arab and African regions.

African networks that are endorsed by AMCOW are the Africa Civil Society Network for Water (ANEW) and the African Water Association (AfWA). Both organisations approach water as a public service and thus their activities focus on improving the water and sanitation sector. ANEW programs aim to strengthen the capacity of the CSOs in its network to advocate for people's engagement in the process of formulating water and sanitation policy (Africa Civil Society Network for Water [ANEW], n.d.). AFWA activities focus on knowledge dissemination and capacity building of actors in the water sector.

Regarding Nile politics, the position of AFWA can be detected from the speech of the president at the 16th Congress of the organisation in 2012, where she stated:

> 'we also need to recognise the historical imbalances in the allocation of water in Africa, such as the division of the waters of the Nile by the British in 1929 and 1959, which completely ignored the rights of the people in the Upper Nile countries.' (Myeni, 2017: para. 13)

Such a claim reveals how this African organisation understands the conflict between Egypt and the upstream countries. The African vision challenges the Nile treaties in pursuit of goals related to decolonization and development.

Opposite to the vision of these African networks, there are also the Arab-based organisations. They have connection with the Egyptian Office of the GWP and the Egyptian Nile Discourse Forum (Eg-NDF).

For example, the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) is funded by the UNDP and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe [Cedare], 2020). Its membership consists of ministers, civil society, scholars and members from the private sector and has the aim to influence environmental policies in the region, including water resource development. Moreover, the Centre incubates the Egyptian chapter of the Global Water Partnership (Interview 7).

Additionally, the Arab Water Council is a regional organisation aiming to tackle water challenges in the Arab regions based on the IWRM vision, which is compatible with that of the global discourse. Therefore, the Council's activities are driven by 'a multi-disciplinary, non-political, professional and scientific approach'. The council was founded and chaired by Mahmoud Abu-Zeid, the former Egyptian Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources, who had pushed to establish the NBI and the World Water Council (Arab Water Council, 2018).

Unlike the African vision to Nile politics, as represented by the AFWA president, the Arab vision affirms the necessity of treaties to regulate transboundary rivers. The Arab argument is established on two main dimensions: the severe water scarcity in the Arab countries because they are arid or

semi-arid countries, and the fact that sources of transboundary water are located outside the Arab region (The Arab Water Ministerial Council and ACSAD, n.d.).

Accordingly, the dominant narrative among Arab policy makers is that the non-Arab countries could threaten regional stability by controlling the sources of transboundary rivers. Accordingly, the Arab organisations urge to abide by the rules of international law and treaties to maintain the water rights for Arab countries (President of the Arab Parliament, 2020).

In compatibility with the Arab vision, the Arab Water Council has the scientific and financial capabilities to support various water activities in Egypt and work towards creating awareness of Egyptian water share claims and water stress in the respective Mediterranean and Arab platforms.

5.2.4 The national level

Many water-sector CSOs perform their activities across the riparian countries, addressing the Nile as water resource for household and economic activities besides advocating environmental conservation. However, the nationally confined scope does not fall within the focus of this research. Nevertheless, some cases demonstrate a variety of activities that transcend the local and national levels, in addition to exemplifying a kind of networked state. This is displayed in the activities of governmental actors and the formulation of water users' associations (WUAs).

5.2.4.1 Governmental partners

On the side of the government apparatus, the centrality of the Nile water in national policies - as explained in chapter four - authorizes the ministries of water resources, with their affiliated research centres and municipalities, to focus on grassroots organisations. They conduct activities comparable to that of civil society organisations, such as awareness campaigns or capacity building workshops, in addition to liaising with NGOs.

A prominent example is that of the Office of the National Council for the Coordination of Popular Participation on the Construction of GERD. This Office was established in 2011 as a response to the evasion of international financial organisations to fund the dam. Therefore, the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi mobilised the public and envisioned the dam as a national dam.

As a result of this mobilization from the top, the interview respondent in the Office claimed:

> 'everybody needs to support the dam, even opposition political parties, religious leaders, every citizen and elders, everybody unless who is in his mother's womb or the ground tomb support the dam' (Interview 19).

To coordinate this public enthusiasm, the Office was founded to organise the dam's bonds and to collect money from locals and diaspora groups, along with facilitating public diplomacy visits to the other Nile countries. The Office consists of around 75 members of which about 40 members representing civil society organisations from different fields, such as artists, musicians, athletic federations, the media, cinema associations, professional associations, merchants, students' unions and celebrities (Interviews 19 and 20).

Accordingly, the GERD is framed as an Ethiopian national mega project supported by public fundraising, with 'national' being crucial. Therefore, the council is affiliated with the cabinet to make it look independent from the dominance of the ruling party or other influential entities such as the church (Interviews 19 and 20). The GERD office addresses the conduit from the national to the international level via communicating with diaspora groups and the public in the other riparian countries. The involvement of the diaspora will be illustrated in chapter seven.

In Egypt, the Regional Centre for Studies and Research on Water Ethics inside the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation connotes a recursive interaction between the international and national levels. The Centre was founded under the frame of 'UNESCO's World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology' (COMEST), mainly under the coordination of the Sub-Commission on Water Ethics. The Centre represents Egypt and the Nile Basin in the

Research and Ethical Network Embracing Water (RENEW), which encompasses two other Centres. These Centres endorse the principles of sustainability, equity, solidarity and inclusiveness in water usage as well as in disaster cases (Hefny, 2009). Despite these overarching objectives around water governance, the Centre is employed to communicate with and train African students who are based in Egypt, instead of discussing water issues. The Centre delivers workshops to the African students on topics of life skills, such as presentation, communication and time management. The reason behind conducting activities that are irrelevant to water governance is to build bonds and trust with the Nile countries via students who study in Egypt (Interview 36; Regional Centre for Water Ethics, 2018). The Egyptian MWRI, however, is not only an executive governmental body; it also plays a role in mobilizing civil society, like its support to Egypt's Youth Parliament for Water to deliberate the Egyptian position in Nile politics.

5.2.4.2 Water users' associations

Next to CSOs, there are 'self-benefiting' organisations that represent and defend the interests of its members (Yaziji and Doh, 2009). These include farmers' unions, agriculture cooperatives and water users' associations. Being an agriculture-based economy, societies in the three countries developed their community organisations a long time ago and have entrenched traditional norms. Nevertheless, these community organisations were reshaped by governments after independence in Egypt and Sudan, or were disrupted by changing political regimes in Ethiopia. The WB then endorsed the creation of distinct 'self-benefiting' organisations (WUAs) and donor agencies, and international NGOs channelled their disbursements to them.

In Egypt, agriculture cooperatives have been restructured due to the Agrarian Reform Program and its amendments in the 1950s by Gamal Abdel Nasser. Under the applied social policies, the state intervened in distributing seeds, fertilizers and controlled the process of agriculture. Therefore, cooperatives became para-governmental organisations and were not fully independent. Then, in 1986, in the process of liberating agriculture policies, the number of cooperatives supposedly increased, as they were no longer obliged to link their operations with the state. However, state intervention is still extensive, and these organisations cannot restore their autonomy (Ghonem, 2019). The revolution in 2011 contributed to giving space for farmers to

organise themselves independently and to establish several farmers' organisations. El-Nour (2014) counted four of these organisations that were formulated on the central level with connection to villages which had protested because of the dysfunction of irrigation canals besides their disagreement with the land tenure system and fertilizer shortage. However, these organisations were at the central level and not well-organised, dissolved consequently.[31]

In Sudan, the Gezira Farmers' Union played a considerable role in shaping the agriculture cooperatives in Sudan because the Gezira scheme was the most prominent irrigation-based system, not a rain-fed one. Furthermore, since its establishment in 1948, it has been playing a negotiator role with the authorities of the Gezira scheme regarding the land tenure system, credits and irrigation plans.[32]

In Ethiopia, under the imperial regime (1930-1974), the state encouraged the establishment of cooperatives in different sectors, but they were ineffective in practice. While under the Derg regime (1974-1987), when socialist central plans were implemented like in Egypt under Nasser, many cooperatives were founded, and farmers had to join these or else they could not get seeds and fertilizers or market their crops. In such a top-down state foundation, cooperatives have been a political tool to control communities. Nevertheless, the Government under EPRDF, that seized power in 1991, set the Co-operatives Societies Proclamation 147 in 1998 to regulate the formation and operation of cooperatives in different sectors. While the Government's emphasis was on rural development and agricultural sectors in the national economy, the Government since 2005 had set up frameworks for agriculture cooperatives in different services such as planting, exporting and marketing, and expanded it in order to include farmers of smallholdings (Tefera et al., 2017).

What is crucially important is that the WUAs were formed based on the support of the WB as part of a global strategy to liberate the agriculture sector. Establishing WUAs as distinct from the established organisations, mainly the agriculture cooperatives, has been defended by neoliberal

[31] For more information on the history of agriculture cooperatives, see for example: Ghonem (2019); El Nour (2014); Nawar (2006).
[32] For more information on the role of Gezira farmers' union, see for example: Niblock (1987); Ertsen (2016).

policy considerations. The significance of creating these associations is the realization that irrigation systems are interlocked with the productivity of agricultural schemes (Anderson, 2008).

WUAs are defined as

> 'A user-based organisation that aims to manage the irrigation system for its members mostly on a nonprofit basis. Its main tasks include the allocation of water within the irrigation system, operation and maintenance (O&M) of the system and the cost recovery of O&M through the collection of irrigation fees from its members.' (Aarnoudse et al., 2018:3)

These associations have been introduced and supported by influential and powerful actors such as banks and governmental enterprises who operate large-scale schemes as models of an agricultural economy. Due to inefficiency and pitfalls in managing the large-scale schemes, however, the reforming vision in the 1970s was to decentralize the management system. Accordingly, farmers or agricultural workers and tenants could participate in managing the scheme, including the irrigation system. Then, by the 1980s, WUAs became the mainstream model that has been espoused and implemented by companies and donor organisations, particularly in the context of neoliberal policies where the state abdicates public service provisions. Meanwhile, the WB has proliferated this model into developing countries, founding the International Network on Participatory Irrigation Management to provide support and encourage governments and companies to endorse WUAs (Aarnoudse et al., 2018).

In the Nile Basin countries, the creation of WUAs was framed as water sector reform that includes founding river basin organisations such as the Abbay Basin Organisation in Ethiopia and decentralization of water services in terms of provision and maintenance. Accordingly, the governments had to facilitate establishing and setting the regulations of these organisations. Given that, WUAs are structured top-down, and thus are not voluntary associations because of the necessity to manage the scheme in an inclusive vision instead of as separate plots (Anderson, 2008).

In Egypt, WUAs have been developed as part of the USAID-funded Project the Egyptian Water Use and Management and one of its objectives was to involve farmers in water management. Since then, WUAs have been endorsed by the WB and other donors and grew to different scales mainly in the Delta area and newly proclaimed lands because of the shortage of water. With the pursuit of decentralizing water management, the MWRI in 1994, under law 12/1984, gave the legal framework to WUAs as 'private organisations for the members who use it', meaning that associations were formulated on the irrigation level (Messqa, branch, governorate). Another cause of the proliferating of WUAs was to manage water scarcity by incorporating farmers in establishing and maintaining irrigation infrastructures (Gouda, 2016; Abdel-Gawad, 2007).

In Sudan, WUAs were introduced through the improvement of the Gezira Scheme in order to develop and mitigate various problems that impeded its productivity. Therefore, in 2005, the Government issued a new law for the scheme aiming to liberate the production relations in terms of land tenure, crop selection and marketing (Salman, 2011). In this regard, WUAs were proposed to empower farmers to regulate and modernize the irrigation systems. The Abd Al-Hakam Block of the Gezira Scheme (which included around 700 farmers) was selected as a WUA pilot. It was formulated in 2002 by an official decree from the Minister of Agriculture and with support from the WB and FAO. Farmers accepted this model because they expected it could be responsive to challenges, compared with inaction from the Government or the scheme board (Abdelhadi et al., 2004; Salman, 2010).

Notwithstanding, the WUAs have not been effective, despite various endorsements from donors and governments. Anderson (2008) attributes the ineffectiveness of WUAs to the irrigation officials and leaders of WUAs who had been poorly prepared for such institutional changes. Another cause was the lack of sustainability to maintain the irrigation systems, as the government or donors were the providers of funds and technical support to improve irrigation; this meant that WUAs were not fully independent in operating their canals.

In Ethiopia, water distribution has been associated with land distribution and utilization, particularly under the socialist regime during the 1970s and 1980s. During this time, all lands were under state ownership. However, in the arid areas, rain harvesting communities were active

(Arsano, 2007). Yami (2013) explains how the community-based associations consolidated in Ethiopia, explaining an incompetence of WUAs. The traditional organisations, with donations from NGOs, have been able to maintain irrigation such as lifting water and preparing and cleaning canals. Furthermore, they have their community norms to distribute water under the supervision of 'water fathers' from the village. But, with the fatal threat of droughts, small land holders accepted the formulation of WUAs with the promises of modernizing irrigation systems that would show in better productivity and food security. However, the author found in her study that WUAs conduct the tasks of traditional irrigation committee 'water fathers'.[33]

The formulation of WUAs replacing the traditional local organisations constitutes another face of interaction between the global and local levels. Mainly, the global mainstream of liberalizing the agriculture sector with redesigning water management on the field gave space to international actors on the local level, but at the expense of communities' activism.

5.3 A clustered network

The first part of this chapter demonstrated the capabilities of different involved actors (nodes) in the Eastern Nile politics across international, regional, and national levels. This part illustrates actors' positions in their relationship to each other.

To demonstrate the Eastern Nile Basin network, the Gephi software program was used to produce illustrative maps showing actors' positions across levels and ties among them. As explained in chapter two (section 2.3.4.1), the Gephi program performs statistical calculations (i.e. gravity, repulsion, auto-stabilisation, ordering, and clustering) that demonstrates the magnitude of connections among nodes and the centrality of nodes' positions in the network (Bastian et al., 2009). These calculations help to visualise which node is powerful according to its position and connections; additionally, the bandwidth of power (resources and ideas) interchange among actors

[33] Water Fathers represent a community based committee which is in charge of managing the irrigation process, including resolving conflicts among farmers that erupted due to water distribution. The community elects the Fathers according to their social reputation and their experience in farming. See for example: Belay and Bewket (2013); Dessalegn and Merrey (2014).

and across levels. To assess the structure of the Eastern Nile Basin network, I focus on the degree of cohesiveness and centrality measurements.

The following SNA analysis was built on the basis of 379 nodes representing the interviewed actors and the connected nodes they mentioned during the interviews (or as cited on their websites and publications), ultimately creating 462 ties. The number of nodes and ties composed a graph which represented the structure of interactions in the Eastern Nile Basin between the actors mapped throughout this study.

Figure 5.2 Actors by type

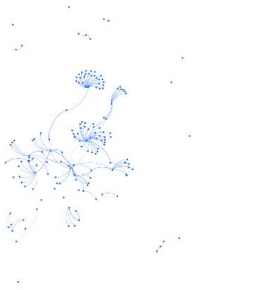
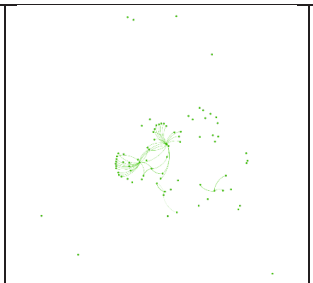
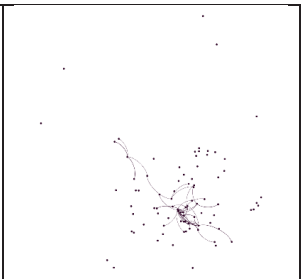
Source: own graphical representation produced by Gephi software. It is based on data collected from interviews and internet resources of civil society organisations, initiatives and research entities.

The Gephi software program has filter and partition options that enable to depict attributes of nodes according to selected criteria. The following maps highlight the position of actors according to their types and affiliated countries as well as the regional and global entities. Figure 5.2 below

shows the position of the main categories of actors: civil society, research organisations and governmental entities.

Figure 5.2 shows the interlinkages between different categories. The research (green) and governmental (black) entities are located in the middle of the plot where civil society actors (blue) conduct activities together with research organisations and governmental entities. Figure 5.3 explains the composition of each category in the entire network: civil society is the main actor and constitutes 52% of the network. The number of research organisations (84 nodes) is close to the governmental entities (85 nodes) number.[34]

Figure 5.3 The network composition

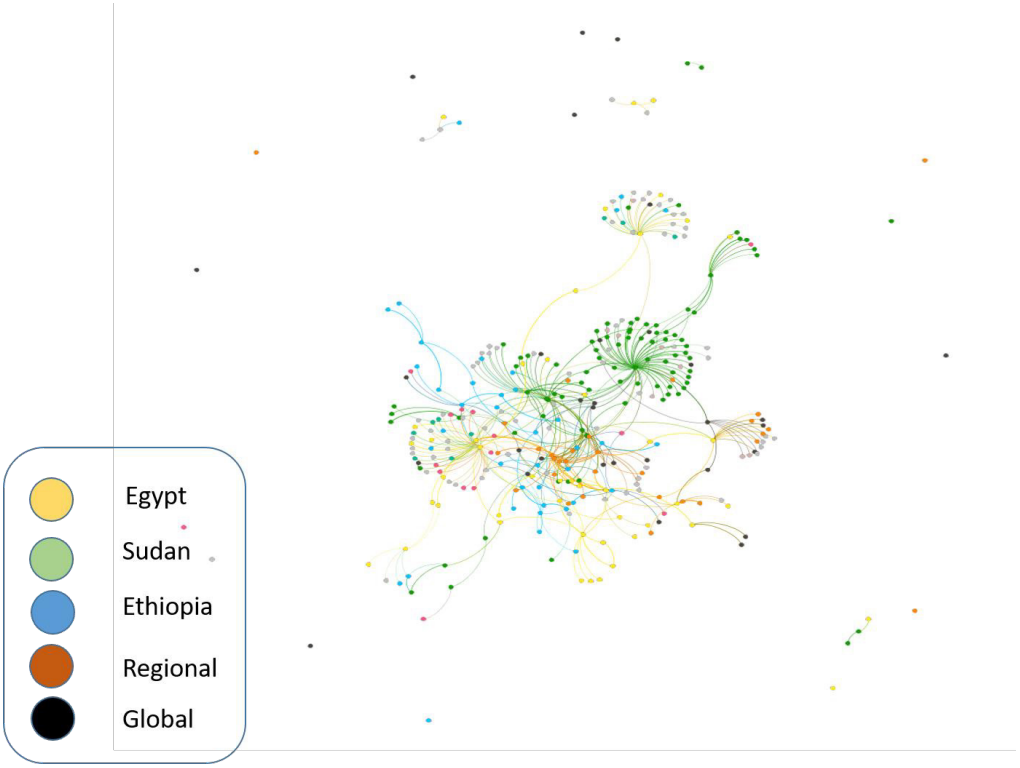
		
Civil society nodes	Research nodes	Governmental nodes
198 nodes	84 nodes	85 nodes
183 edges	50 edges	44 edges
constituted 52 % of the network	constituted 23% of the network	constituted 23% of the network

Source: own graphical representation produced by Gephi software. It is based on data collected from interviews and internet resources of civil society organisations, initiatives and research entities.

[34] The remaining number of nodes (12 nodes) represent private sector actors: some NGOs collaborated with companies to fund awareness campaigns or to donate for humanitarian relief activities and water service provision. However, the involvement of the private sector in the Nile Basin, i.e. investment in the large-scale irrigated agriculture, is significant. But private sector actors are outside the scope of this research. For information on water-related investment in the Nile Basin, see for instance, Sandstrom, et al. (2016).

The transnational interactions can be seen in figure 5.4. The national-based node has ties with other actors in the Eastern Nile Basin as well as with global entities.

Figure 5.4 Nodes by country

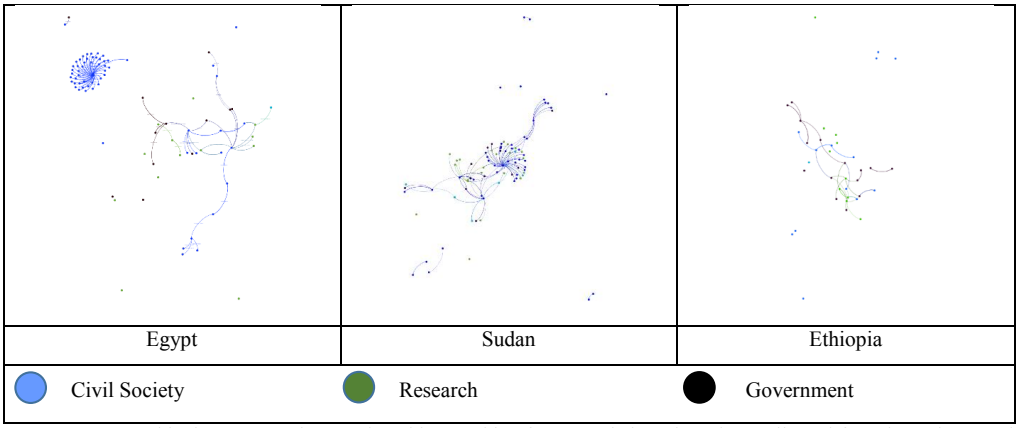


Source: own graphical representation produced by Gephi software. It is based on data collected from interviews and internet resources of civil society organisations, initiatives and research entities.

Figure 5.5 shows the composition of actors within each country. The plots display both the connected nodes and the scattered nodes located in the network's periphery. Given the research limitations, particularly the subjective definition of the network boundaries of civil society in this research by transboundary engagement (section 2.4 in chapter two), the nodes however do not

represent all connected entities. Moreover, among of the interviewed civil society actors, some entities provided a list of their partners; therefore, their clusters are visible in the network.

Figure 5.5 Type of actors in the three countries



Source: own graphical representation produced by Gephi software. It is based on data collected from interviews and internet resources of civil society organisations, initiatives and research entities.

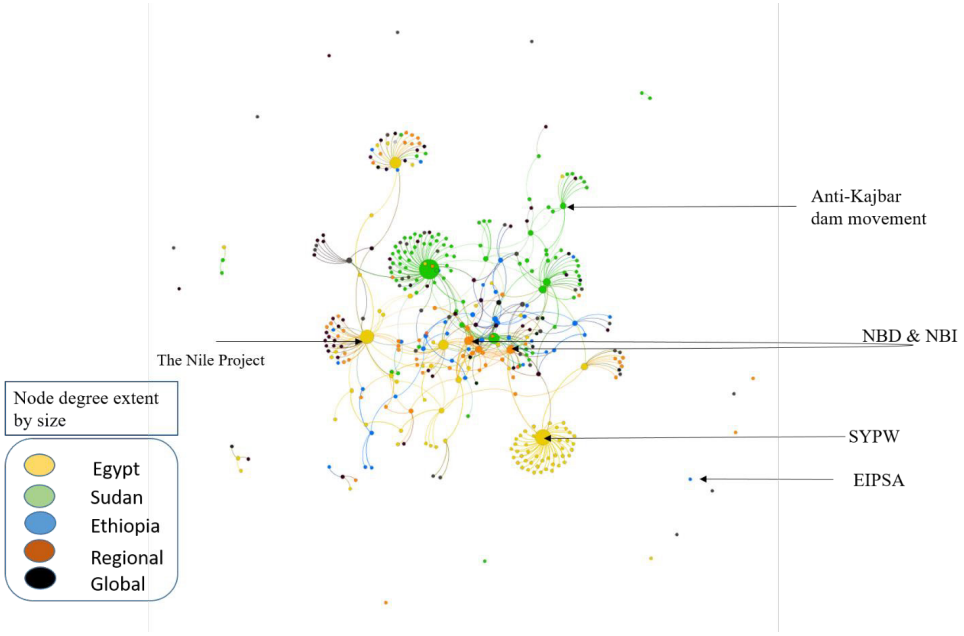
The aforementioned figures have demonstrated the attributes of nodes according to their types in the entire network and on the national level. However, the connections among actors are substantial indictors to understand the entire structure of the network, because actors' behaviours are interdependent. The general attributes of the network display that the structure is aggregated in clusters, and this indicates the network is less integrated. Gephi software performs different statistical calculations that interpret the structure's features (see chapter two, section 2.3.4.1). In other words, the network structure explains actors' behaviours in terms of their scope of activities, the norms they adopt, and visions of Nile cooperation. I will focus on the main calculated numbers to understand the features of the structure.

The first feature of the network is its cohesiveness, in order to show reciprocal interactions among actors analysed in this dissertation. This feature helps to understand whether actors recognise each other, conduct joint activities, share compatible interests and objectives in the area of governance of the Nile waters. To assess cohesiveness, Gephi computes the network degree which represents

how many ties the node has with the other nodes. The average number of connections in the network is explained by the average degree. It equals 2.438 in this analysis, which means each node on average is connected with two other nodes. The size of nodes in figure 5.6 reflects the degree of connections. Around this average number, the Nile Project and SYPW get a strong degree of connection, because they are the central nodes in their cluster. However, this high degree does not reflect a high density of transnational relations. For example, SYPW has a large node size, but the majority of its connections are with Sudan based entities (this feature will be explained in chapter seven, section 7.3.4). At the regional level, the NBI and the NBD are well connected with different other entities.

Similarly, Figure 5.6 shows that there are outliers that do not have frequent connections with civil society actors in the Eastern Nile Basin, such as the Ethiopian International Professional Support for Abay (EIPSA), the African Water Association (AWA) and the anti-Kajbar dam movement. Additionally, some national governmental entities (e.g. Abbay Basin Authority) and regional development institutions (NEPAD, IGAD) are outliers in the generated network.

Figure 5.6 Network average degree



Source: own graphical representation produced by Gephi software. It is based on data collected from interviews and internet resources of civil society organisations, initiatives and research entities.

The value of the Gephi network average node degree (2.438) reflects that this network is not well connected, which is compatible with another calculated feature, graph density, that equals 0.006. This number measures the ratio between how many ties the network could have and how many are existing. The ratio of the complete network is 1, according to Gephi statistical calculation; however, it is an unrealistic condition that all nodes interact with all nodes to form a complete network. Considering that, the small ratio (0.006) in the graph generated shows that the connections in the entire network are weak.

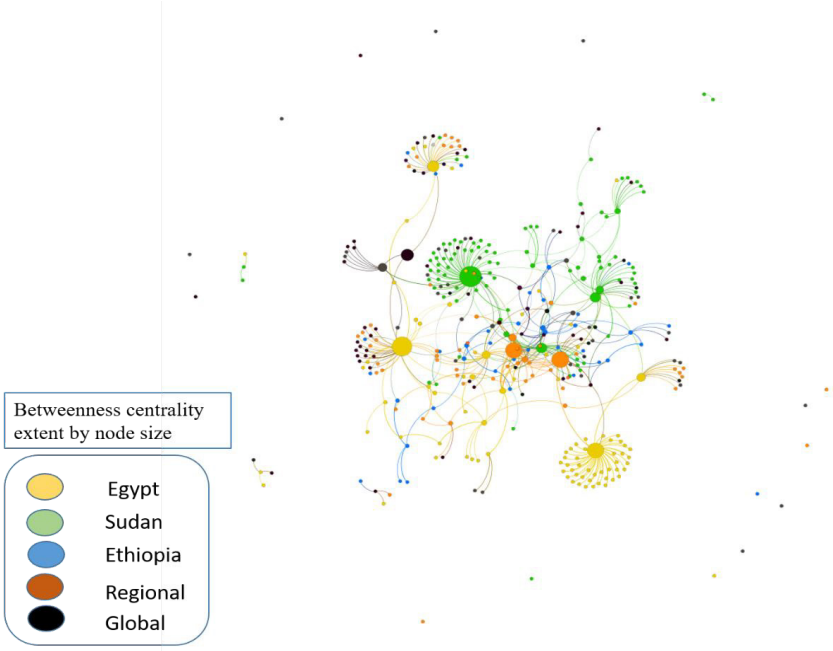
The second feature of the network structure is the centrality measurements that explain the motion of resources and information across the network through nodes' positions. The different measurements of centrality help to understand the flow of ideas, strategies as well as funds within

the network. The graph generated reveals that the network is scattered into clusters. The diameter number is 10. This number calculates the longest of the distances between all pairs of nodes. In other words, the node needs to pass by ten nodes to connect with the outlier nodes in the network. This also indicates the loose connection of the civil society network in the Eastern Nile Basin.

The dominance of clusters in the network challenges how to envision the central or broker actor relations that control the flow of resources within the network. Apparently, the sphere of power is clustered, bounded in a small group and not covering the whole network. Gephi calculates the number of small groups in the network by dividing it into tringles that indicate clusters. It has identified 31 clusters in the whole network. Comparably, the average clustering coefficient for the network ranges from 1 for a connected network to 0 for a disconnected network. In the Eastern Nile Basin graph, the score is 0.121. That means the network of the Eastern Basin is a sparse one.

The betweenness centrality demonstrates the significance of a node's position in the shortest path between nodes. The size of nodes in figure 5.7 shows the betweenness centrality of nodes.

Figure 5.7 Betweenness centrality

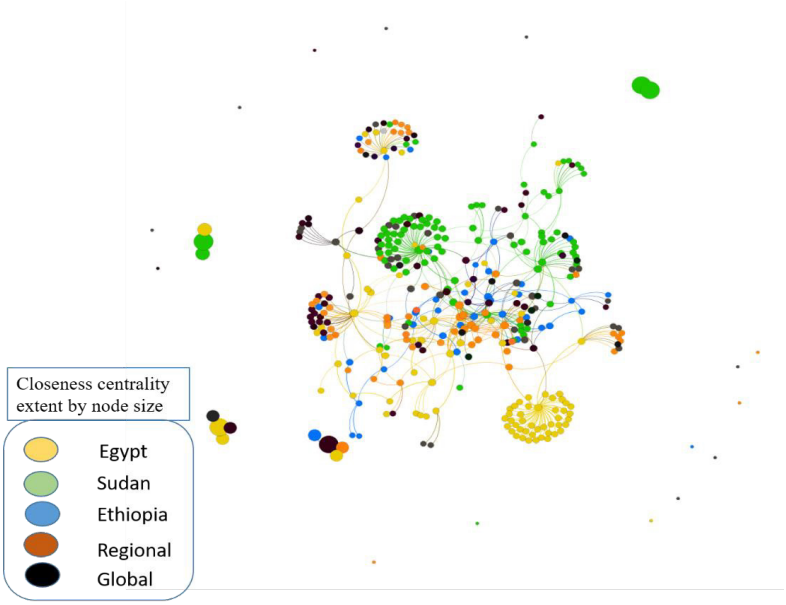


Source: own graphical representation produced by Gephi software. It is based on data collected from interviews and internet resources of civil society organisations, initiatives and research entities.

A node with high degree of betweenness centrality means its exclusion will disturb the motion of connections in the network. However, in the Eastern Nile Basin clustered network, this risk can only occur at the cluster level, not for the entire network. The reason behind this is that the connections among nodes have been built based on patterns of ad-hoc collaboration, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The closeness centrality demonstrates a node's position in terms of the length of the tie between nodes. As figure 5.8 shows, almost all nodes have close ties with the other nodes; namely, the central node in the cluster. Accordingly, information and resources could move quickly inside the cluster.

Figure 5.8 Closeness centrality



Source: own graphical representation produced by Gephi software. It is based on data collected from interviews and internet resources of civil society organisations, initiatives and research entities.

In sum, based on the data panel of this research, the overall structure of the Eastern Nile Basin network elucidates a fragmented network, as entities tend to build their narrow network instead of cover the entire Eastern Nile Basin. Accordingly, there is no dominant one actor in the entire network, instead, there are many actors that affect the motion of resources and ideas. Moreover, the influence occurs inside small clusters.

5.4 Preliminary conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to illustrate the network structure of the Eastern Nile Basin and describe the capabilities and positions of engaged actors.

As the SNA diagrams displayed, the types of entities, including civil society, research centres, donors and governmental apparatus, are entangled. Thus, clustering is the main feature of the network. The entities are not disconnected; the majority of actors interact on multi-scales bases.

There are various and changeable interactions between CSOs, state agencies and international and regional intergovernmental organisations. As Qin (2016:36) argues, from a relational theory perspective, 'actors are related to each other and also to the context, or the totality of their relational circles'. Therefore, behaviours and actions are fluid and adaptable as per the context(s) in which they participate. Importantly, the actor employs its tangible and intangible resources and capabilities in these interactions. Conversely, it pursues financial/technical gains or social/personal advantages which can empower its position in the network or strengthen and establish more interactions with the other actors (Qin, 2016).

The intergovernmental organisations, namely the WB and donor agencies, mobilised their funds and technical capabilities to create and empower civil society entities either on a regional level, like the case of the NBD, or on the local level, by imposing WUAs.

Nevertheless, the relations in the network are undirected. They are not always top-down as when the international-based actors enforce their perceptions of civil society's role in Nile politics. The confrontation between the two civil society activist organisations in the process of NBD establishment reflected such unidirectional relations. Importantly, there are examples of genuinely regional activism such as the Nile Project or the diaspora groups in supporting GERD or actors resisting the construction of dams in Sudan. These actors constitute reverse relations with a global reach.

The CSOs in the Nile network reveal multiple and complex interactions with other actors. Clark (2003) demonstrates that CSOs consider open communication channels with different actors, including policy makers, on the national governmental and global levels. Furthermore, CSOs tend to plan establishing joint activities with their peers in the same areas of work, particularly if they are like-minded and adopt the same tools for action. Thus, the network cluster is constituted by entities that approach Nile politics from the same angle, such as the clusters of research centres.

Another cause that propels CSOs to operate through the network(s) is the scarcity of financial resources and of influential support. They thus take part in a network or networks to fulfil their interests or attain their values. Additionally, being part of a highly connected network enables CSOs to be flexible in a move from a cluster format to another, according to their interests (Yaziji and Doh, 2009). The NBD provides financial resources and opens opportunities to connect with various international and regional partners of its national forums.

Despite the engagement of multiple actors on different levels in Nile politics, the whole network of the Eastern Nile Basin indicates a disintegrated structure. In reality, the actors perform in small groups and therefore, clustering is a palpable feature of the network. The next chapter will explain this feature by analysing the network's ties and modes of connection.