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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 Six

Networked Nile Politics: The Connections

6.1 Introduction

In the three Eastern Basin countries, civil society actors perform in network(s) where joint activities are implemented with the donor agencies, research centres, governmental bodies as well as peer CSOs. In the same vein, the multiple connections include material and immaterial components with varying degrees of strength.

As explained in chapter two (section 2.2.1), the Nile is an example of a public sphere issue that has provoked civil society activism. Moreover, the purpose of collaborative actions is to attain Nile development either as anticipated by the state or the community. On the other side, being part of a network provides opportunities for civil society actors to maximize their resources and positions besides achieving their objectives. However, the diversity of connected actors in the Nile sphere raises questions about how the relationship is established as well as about the power dynamics among actors.

To reveal the power dynamics in the network, this chapter demonstrates the base of ties and their strength, and then the modes of joint activities. The power of actors is revealed by showing how tangible and intangible capabilities are channeled and aggregated.

6.2 The scope of connections

Some actors' organisational characteristics include urban-based CSOs that are formulated by a group of activists in a particular field and legally registered. Additionally, other cases are still in the initial phase and are incubated by registered organisations. By comparison, many civic groups operate scattered water-related activities as a response to the context (e.g. flood or drought humanitarian relief).

Despite this difference, the ties could constitute formal representations (focal points) or could be a partner or be engaged as a volunteer. The dynamics of the ties reveal political aspects such as the Nile division between Arab and African sub-regions, the divergence of national priorities and the meaningfulness of partnership and community solidarity. The following section elucidates the three categories of established connections: the focal point, partnership, and volunteerism; then it visualises the strength of these connections.

6.2.1 Focal point organisation

The national offices or focal points epitomize the interactions between different levels: the global or regional levels at the national/local level. These offices are tools to employ global visions into national contexts and therefore, the offices contribute to the spread of global ideas and policies.

At the regional level, the national forums of the NBD represent regional organisation in the Nile Basin countries. These NDFs receive technical and financial support from the NBD to run the national offices (e.g. rent an office and contribute to paying staff salaries). The NBD headquarter in Entebbe plays the role of mediator (broker) between the national forums and the decision makers in the NBI.

The regional director of the NBD explained in an interview that this role is played in three ways: 1) the top-down channel when attending the technical meetings of the NBI and transmitting the planned projects of the NBI to the NDFs in order to get their feedback; 2) bottom-up communication, when the NDFs share their activities which are then disseminated by the regional office of the NBD; 3) the horizontal communication when national and local civil society are involved in the transboundary projects (Interview 6).

Thus, the NDFs implement activities that are prioritized and agreed at the regional level. For instance, the NBD channelled money to national offices to conduct activities that were ongoing at the time of considerable funding from DFID. Moreover, the NBD sends the proposed NBI water project to the NDFs in order to evaluate them, after which the NBD informs the NBI. On the other

hand, the NDFs report to the NBD about their activities on national and local levels. The dynamic of relations between the NBD and its national forums is clustered into three groups: the first one consists of the Eastern Nile Basin countries (Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan); the second cluster is for the Lake Victoria riparian countries (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania); and the last cluster includes the Equatorial Lakes countries (Rwanda, Burundi and DR Congo) (NBD, 2015a). Accordingly, clustering is not only a main feature of the Eastern Nile Basin network as shown in the previous chapter, but it is also a technique with which to manage activities in the NBD.

The broker role of the NBD is played in a reverse way when the NDFs articulate their positions concerning NBI projects collectively. The NBD has developed the tool of 'position statement' in which national offices voice their concerns or opposition to NBI proposed projects. For instance, in 2011, the NDFs of the Eastern Nile released a position document criticizing three programs/projects of the NBI (Regional Integrated Watershed Management Programme; Ethiopia-Sudan Power Interconnection Project; Regional Cooperation and the Institutional Strengthening Programme (ISP)) because of the lack of civil society involvement in terms of shared information, participation in the project cycle and the benefits of these projects to local communities (NBD, 2011). This concern was consistent with the results of a survey conducted by the NBD and the IUCN regarding Nile governance after the CFA confrontation. Although the sample size was small, the main finding of the survey was that civil society had not been integrated into the decision-making process concerning the Nile (Sanchez and Joshi, 2013).

On the global level, the GWP, IWMI and WYPW are organisations engaging in Nile hydropolitics through their sub-regional offices/chapters that aim to implement the global mandate at regional and national levels. However, this hierarchical structure of global active organisations in the water issue is not compatible with the Nile geography that runs from Sub-Saharan Africa to the North of Africa. For example, the Nile Basin in both the GWP and the IWMI is divided between two sub-regional offices.

In the GWP, the regions in Africa are divided into Central, East, Southern and West Africa in addition to the Mediterranean region where Egypt takes part together with European countries. This sub-regional structure presents a challenge to the Egyptian national office because the Egypt-

GWP strived to be registered as part of the East Africa network and not only part of the Mediterranean network. The founder of the Egyptian-GWP insisted on being close to the Ethiopian and Sudanese network and it took time to convince the East Africa network to include Egypt (Interview 7). The East Africa GWP includes all the Nile Basin countries, i.e. Burundi, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda, besides Somalia. This indicates how the global geographical categories split the Nile, which is reflected in policy priorities and harmonization efforts

Similar divisions are found in the IWMI sub-regional offices between West, Southern, East Africa and the Middle East and North African office. Egypt is affiliated to the sub-regional office of the Middle East and hosts the regional office for the Middle East and North African region. While Ethiopia hosts the regional office for East Africa, the office also includes the Nile Basin as a dimension of its scope of work.

In these examples of transnational organisation, items for the agenda are determined on the higher level, at the headquarters; while the role of the national focal points is to channel information and implement the agenda (Clark, 2003). However, the ranking of priority areas differs between the IWMI's sub-regions. In the case of Egypt, the priority areas are agricultural water productivity, water management and governance and the water-energy-food nexus (Russell, 2018), while for East Africa where the Nile Basin is involved, the priorities are water availability, landscapes and ecosystems, modernizing food production through value chain development, technological innovation, climate change and capacity building (IWMI, 2014).

For international organisations such as Care International or for governmental donor agencies, scopes and priorities are compatible with those on the national level. This is reflected in the lack of coordination in water and agriculture projects they implement in each country. The reason for this variation is that the governmental donor agencies abide by national policies. In this regard, they assist the national government to attain the national development strategies rather than looking for harmonization of policies across countries, even if this concerns the Nile water (Interview 14).

The Care International example also reveals the differences in approaching the water issue across the riparian countries. In Egypt, which is located under the Middle East and Eastern Europe sub-region, water is treated under the objective of 'more effective and equitable natural resource management to enhance rural livelihoods' besides projects that aim to empower women in the agriculture sector. In Ethiopia, however, water-related projects are framed under the scope of 'livelihoods and food security' as well as 'water and sanitation'. For Sudan, Care International focuses on the Darfur and Kordofan areas which are situated away from the Nile tributaries, but their projects include water and sanitation (Care International, n.d.).

Thus, the engagement of transnational organisations is fragmented in the Nile Basin because of the division of the continent between the North and Sub-Saharan parts of Africa, which results in differences in areas and scopes of work. Furthermore, interviewees from some of the transnational organisations claimed that there are no administrative arrangements through which they can share their experiences or harmonize projects with their counterparts' offices in the Nile Basin countries. Even though GIZ has a special envoy for the Nile Basin and deploys different programs to the Nile Basin as a whole entity, there is no coordination between its national offices in the riparian countries. The interviewees explained that their organisations' offices at the national level are aligned with national development priorities and scopes. Moreover, the regional meetings are usually held on technical and administrative levels and foreign employees in the organisations participate in such meetings (Interviews 12 and 15).

Nevertheless, in research organisations such as the IWMI, it is possible to transcend the national division when the scope of a research project requires this. Therefore, the Egyptian research organisations, for example, can join research projects managed by the East Africa regional office of the IWMI (Interview 17).

6.2.2 Partnership

The term partnership became a key word and strategy which replaced the recipient and giver terms in the development discourse. The notion of partnership was developed to regulate the relation

between donors and recipients on the base of reciprocity. Holden (2005:20) defines partnership as 'a co-operative relationship based on the principles of mutuality and equality'. According to this definition, foreign aid transactions from donors to recipients depend on mutual credibility, support and consensus on decision making and accountability. Furthermore, this notion is adopted by CSOs and the term partnership generally prevails in their strategies, websites and brochures to demonstrate the relations with donors who provide technical and financial assistance besides the joint activities with peer organisations in the region or nationally.

However, partnership is changeable because it is a project and/or program-based relation and is not a sustainable one such as the focal point relation. Clark (2003) demonstrates that partnership between CSOs and transnational networks can be an opportunity for national-based CSOs to demonstrate activities, methods, information and techniques from the transnational level that support their cause at a national level. Therefore, CSOs can engage in various partnerships as long as they draw benefits from this.

In the Eastern Nile Basin network, the partnership takes different forms subject to the nature of activities. For instance, in the Nile Project, the partners are diverse and include organisations that host music performances (e.g. PAYIMPA in Uganda), fund agencies (e.g. Hivos East Africa, Drosos Foundation), media platforms that grant coverage to activities (e.g. NPR, the guardians) and universities with which the participating students or scholars are affiliated (e.g. Addis Ababa University, Makerere University) (Nile Project, n.d.).

In the same way of building a partnership based on an activity, the Environmental Initiative for Sustainable Development in Sudan engages with different partners that include the corporate social responsibility of the private sector (e.g. Zein, Switch company) or being a member in global and regional networks that are active in the water sector, such as the Butterfly Effect (a Canadian based organisation) and ANEW (Interview 24).

In Ethiopia, for instance, the Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA) in the Amhara region emphasises food security through conducting projects in irrigation, water,

sanitation and agriculture.³⁵ In the context of these objectives, the organisation receives funds and technical assistance from different donors according to the scope of the project that includes governmental aid agencies (e.g. USAID), intergovernmental organisations (e.g. FAO, IFAD), and North-based CSOs such as American organisations like Water.org and Conservation International (Interview 33; Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara [ORDA], 2018).

In Egypt, the NGO Forum Egypt and Sudan for Population and Development was established under the mandate of South-South cooperation and the international conference of population and development held in Cairo in 1994. This conference was the driver of supporting CSOs in the field of development, mainly in the health sector. From this mandate, the NGO Forum had a partnership with the National Committee for Population and Development (NCPD) and the International Council on the Management of Population Programs and Population Concerns (a British organisation). The main objective of these actors was to foster cooperation between NGOs in the South through networking, information sharing and partnering in implementing the action plan which resulted from the Conference of Population (Hussein, 2003). Therefore, reproductive health was the core focus of the programs and projects adopted by the NGO Forum in addition to networking with peer NGOs to share successful national strategies in the field of population and health, and compiling a database of experts to share expertise and knowledge. Through the perspective of South-South cooperation, the NGO Forum in 2002 employed these objectives to partner with Sudanese NGOs and gatherings that were based in Egypt, besides establishing branches of the Forum in Sudanese regions, namely Darfur, Juba and Port Sudan. Furthermore, the documents of the NGO Forum also reveal the objective of establishing the 'Habitat NGOs network' which aimed to connect NGOs in the 'Nile Valley' in the field of urbanization to adopt the skills necessary to be productive regions (Interview 38). Although the mandate of this organisation departed from South-South cooperation in contrast to the other cases, it is not currently active and is situated on the periphery of the network.

³⁵ The organisation was founded as a response to the severe droughts in 1984, under the name of 'Ethiopian Relief Organization (ERO)'. During the Derg regime, it was a link between donor agencies and local communities, it provided suffering communities with cash to be able to purchase food from close market (ORDA, 2020).

International research centres promote partnership with the national-based research entities across the Eastern Nile Basin by funding joint activities. For example, the IWMI as a global research organisation has been coordinating and funding transnational research projects in the Eastern Nile Basin. These projects have established partnerships with the government-affiliated research centres across the riparian countries (e.g. Hydraulics Research Centre 'HRC-Sudan'; Ethiopian Institute of Water Resources and the Hydraulic Research Institute in Egypt) (Interview 22).

At the same time, global organisations have built partnerships with intergovernmental organisations. The case of the IWMI in East Africa reveals close relations with the NBI and particularly ENTRO, where it is located in Addis Ababa and the same neighbourhood. This closeness facilitates joint activities. The two entities are used to inviting each other to consultation meetings (e.g. the Strategic dialogue of the NBI in 2011), workshops and they also share ideas and the results of information-gathering efforts. Moreover, the NBI sometimes sub-contracts IWMI East Africa to conduct research projects (Interview 17). Similarly, the IWMI has close relations with the Ethiopian research centres that are affiliated to the Ministry of Water. As a result, the Ethiopian decision makers have pointed to the IWMI's 'influence reputation' in the process of water policy making or implementation (Luzi, 2007:176).

The relation between the NBD and the NBI is framed in official documents as a 'partnership' rather than in the form of the NBD being a monitoring organisation that observes the projects conducted by the NBI. This relation is institutionalized in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the NBD and the NBI. The first MoU was signed in 2010 and it is meant to be renewed every three years. The MoU of 2014 stated that

'The parties shall cooperate in all fields related to developments in the River Nile basin in order to enhance equitable and mutual benefits of the peoples of the river basin from its 'resources.' (NBD, 2014:4)

It is apparent from the narrative of the MoU that development discourse is prevalent in shaping the relationship between the two organisations, with words such as 'observation', 'assessment' or 'evaluation' not being mentioned in the MoU.

In other words, the NBD partnership with the NBI endeavours to bolster participatory development and stakeholder engagements. The renewed MoU of 2014 affirms that

'Recognizing that for the shared vision of the NBI to be achieved, it is essential that coherent, regional civil society perspectives are sought, heard and incorporated, to add value to the Nile cooperation and development processes in an open and structured manner'. (NBD, 2014:3)

A comparable scope of the partnership is documented in the MoU between the NBD and ENTRO, signed in 2015. The orientation of the relationship is

'to establish a strategic partnership between ENTRO and NBD on existing and potential projects, programmes and policies that improve community livelihoods and promote sustainable development in the Eastern Nile'. (NBD, 2015b:2)

Furthermore, these MoUs demonstrate areas of cooperation that include sharing data and information transparently, particularly after the closing of the Shared Vision Program (SVP). Therefore, it is intended that both organisations will share in the benefits of all their prospective projects and other activities in the Nile Basin.

On the other side, the MoUs emphasize the sharing of feedback about projects, wherever they are executed in the Nile Basin. In this regard, the MoU with NBI highlights harmonizing the institutional and governance processes in each organisation in order to coordinate activities and to receive feedback. For example, it is stated that the NBI shall give the NBD from one to three months' notice regarding activities, because the NBD takes time to reach, discuss and get feedback from its network at national and community levels (NBD, 2014).

Moreover, the interviewee from the NBI perceived the ideal relationship with NBD to be a two-way relation: one is to reach people in order to publicize the NBI projects, and the other is to bring people to the NBI by voicing their concerns about prospective projects. However, the respondent from NBI stated that this partnership is not very effective:

'In reality, [NBD] conducts their own activities, of course, related to NBI programs and projects, but I have not been seeing this kind of interaction where it is really engaging them to disseminate or receive their views whatever projects. I think that has not been really formalized, though we have the MoU. I think it is a matter of understanding' (Interview 5).

The interview respondent from the NBD interpreted the ineffectiveness of relations by referring to two factors: one is related to communication and organisational arrangements. Generally, the NBI needs the feedback of NDFs regarding the planning of projects on short notice. However, the NBD cannot guarantee a prompt response from NDFs who primarily communicate via email. Furthermore, the time of the general assembly, where NDFs can discuss the NBI documents intensely, does not coincide with the time of the NBI meetings. The second factor concerns the endeavour of both organisations. The NBI aims to construct the planned projects and it applies for funds before consulting the directly affected communities, so when the community representatives contest the project, this disturbs the project cycle and challenges the optimum relation aspired in the MoU (Interview 16).

Likewise, the relation between the NBD and ENTRO is structured in the framework of a MoU. However, the Eastern NDFs have not been critical to the ENTRO planned projects when compared to the those concerning the Equatorial Lakes. Evidently, the NBD endorsed political statements raised by the NDFs in the Equatorial Lakes clusters more than the Eastern Basin cluster. For instance, the project for 'the Interconnection of Electric Grids on Nile Equatorial Lakes Countries' was implemented in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya and the DRC by NELSAP. Some local people lost their lands and were displaced for the construction of the transmission lines of this project. Therefore, in 2011, the NBD supported the Uganda Nile Discourse Forum (UNDF) to invite the project's stakeholders for a one-day meeting to exchange their concerns. The UNDF explained how the local community had suffered from the implementation, which was a different outcome to what had been envisaged from the agreement with the locals: they invited a farmer whose land had been divided by the construction of transmission lines. The report ended by saying that although NELSAP had promised the farmer that they would compensate him, no action had been taken after eight months of raising the issue (NBD, 2012).

Recently, in 2018, the BWERA Declaration was released by the Ugandan NDF and the DRC NDF. It constituted a complaint by local peoples that they had not been involved in the steering committee of the project for Lakes Edward and Albert Integrated Fisheries and Water Resources Management (LEAF II). Additionally, they requested the project coordination office and the NELSAP and NBI to share information and update the community on the progress of the project besides consulting local communities in advance when conducting the required studies for the project (NBD, 2018). Ironically, the logo of the WB is on the declaration, although this may also be seen as evidence of implementing participatory development.

Such positions and political statements indicate closely contended interactions with the NBI; the Eastern Nile cluster has loose connections with the NBI, although there is an MoU containing an article on accountable relations, i.e. 'collaborate to promote public participation both at upstream project identification/preparation and downstream at project implementation phases' (NBD, 2015b:3). For example, the NBD website hitherto does not include position statements regarding the controversial Sudanese dams or GERD.³⁶

In a nutshell, employing the notion of partnership has rationalised the asymmetric relations between civil society actors on the one side and governmental entities and donors on the other side. The availability of funds by global research centres enables national water centres to connect and to share knowledge. This in turn fosters the role of these global research centres in Nile politics. Moreover, the partnership notion circumscribes the accountability role of the NBD concerning the NBI water projects. The emphasis on partnership renders the NBD and national civil society one of the stakeholders that includes investors and governmental entities.

³⁶ The Sudan National Discourse Forum with the participation of the NBI, the private sector, and government representatives released the 'Khartoum Statement on Future Dams and Development on the Nile' in January 2008. The statement affirms the importance of social and environmental assessments of constructing big dams on the Nile River. Additionally, the statement stresses the necessity to consult local communities and civil society in the process of planning dams; therefore, the statement suggests creating 'basin-wide consultation guidelines' considering the unity of the Nile Basin, climate change impacts, and sustainable development. The statement was released in the time of complementation of the Merowe Dam in Sudan (operated in 2009); the Dam was resisted by local communities. The Nile Basin Society organisation referred to this statement in its documents with a citation from the Sudan Vision Daily news website: <http://www.sudanvisiondaily.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=31227>. Similarly, Leturcq (2009) mentioned the statement in his blog.

6.2.3 Philanthropy and volunteerism

Faith-based relations are significant in the Nile because of the nature of water as an indispensable biological human need; therefore, ethical and religious virtue is to provide water to anyone who needs it. Similarly, humanitarian relief responses to natural disasters that are caused by water (droughts and floods) are socially valued actions.

From the religious perspective, namely the Islamic one, the interviewee from the Sadagaat organisation in Sudan explained that the donations they have received are cases of faith-based giving, which is Sadagaat in Arabic, hence the name of this organisation (Interview 30). In other words, Sadagaat is the act of voluntary giving and is not obligatory, like *Zakat*, because this form of donation seeks divine reward. Additionally, it implies a sense of responsibility to society, especially because water takes top priority among other human needs (e.g. food or shelter). The interviewee mentioned that donors, either individuals or diaspora groups or companies, are motivated by the belief that 'providing of drinking water is the best charity ever' (Interview 30, own translation). Therefore, donors prefer to allocate their donations to the establishment of watering places, to provide fresh water to the poor or thirsty people in the street (Interview 30). Furthermore, water provision is considered a sustainable form of giving '*sadaqah jariyah*' by Muslims because it continues after one has passed away and is a way to be remembered (Daly, 2012).

Alongside the religious standpoint, philanthropy is embedded in the African culture that entails

'(...) reciprocity and interdependence, disintermediation (absence of institutional intermediaries to filter giving), and the connectedness of individuals and groups to their places of origin, their kin, and ethnic groups.' (Atibil, 2014: 459)

In this African school of thought, community self-help is a value to be aspired to, particularly when combined with water, which is an indispensable human need. The philanthropy activities provide humanitarian aid either in the forms of in-kind assistance or direct disbursements to affected

people. Facing frequent Nile floods in Khartoum has amplified community actions and philanthropic relations.

Though Sudan is rich in water resources, as demonstrated in chapter four (section 4.2.2), floods have been causing severe damages to communities. The frequent floods in Khartoum are not a recent natural phenomenon: flood damage to the city is reported as far back as the nineteenth century. Floods could be caused by the rise of the Nile River level between July and September (the flooding season), or by rain storms that create ephemeral rivers and submerged streets (Walsh et al., 1994). The severe floods cause loss of humans, livestock, and crops in addition to the spread of disease and damage to infrastructure.³⁷

Regionally, the ENTRO designed the ‘Flood Preparedness and Early Warning (FPEW)’ Project to mitigate the disastrous impacts of floods in the Eastern Nile Basin (WB, 2015). Despite the frequency and damage generated by floods in Khartoum, however, some governmental mismanagement as well as dysfunctional infrastructure has failed to mitigate the consequences of this predictable natural phenomenon on the Nile (Davies and Walsh, 1997).

Therefore, community philanthropy in Khartoum has been significant to respond to and mitigate the severe impacts of floods. The following two examples demonstrate how voluntary engagement has been an effective response to the phenomenon of Nile floods.

The first example is from the Tuti island which is located in Khartoum and surrounded by the two Niles, the White and Blue. The island faced severe floods in 1946, 1988 and 1998, and many parts of the island are flooded every year. The community resilience in these three years of severe flooding was highly responsive and did not rely on government intervention. The island community was self-organised into groups with different functions: monitoring water levels, preparing sand barricades to stop the flow of water into homes, a group for medical assistance and

³⁷ Khartoum and many cities in Sudan have faced massive floods and heavy rains from July to September 2020. Homes and farms were destroyed and people were displaced. The unprecedented floods happened along with the peak of confrontation over filling the GERD reservoir, after the Ethiopian Government did the first filling (July 2020) without reaching agreement with Egypt and Sudan. Accordingly, a debate has been raised among supporters and opponents from the three countries on the feasible benefits of GERD to prevent future floods in Sudan.

a group for staple and food distribution. All community members were volunteers and engaged in the humanitarian responses to the Nile floods. Because of the high level of community solidarity at these moments, the island interviewees reported believing that the floods are not a crisis but instead a blessing for the community, because they renew their social integration and bonds. This community vision reverses to a certain extent the global discourse of flooding as an environmental challenge. For this community resilience, the UN Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) in 2015 announced the island to be the champions of best practice in natural disaster reduction (Interview 27; UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

The second example is Nafeer which is a humanitarian youth initiative based in Khartoum. It has been formulated during times of flooding to provide quick assistance to people who have been affected in areas surrounding Khartoum. To conduct humanitarian interventions, Nafeer established three different relationships: 1) with young people who volunteer to channel assistance and provide management coordination during the time of respective work; 2) with donors who are Sudanese people either based in Sudan or constitute diaspora groups, and Sudanese companies³⁸; and 3) with a registered CSO that hosts the initiative and provides them with administrative support. The working method of this initiative reflects the principle of instant help in Sudanese culture, because it is active at the time of floods and after that it gets dissolved (Interview 29). Nevertheless, for the duration of the activism, levels of conflict with the Government (Al-Bashir regime) increased, despite the fact that this work was not a political activity in nature. The initiative's ability to mobilise resources alerted the Government and the initiative's members were accused of receiving foreign funds without official approval, particularly since the initiative was not legally registered (Interview 29, Albahari and Schultz, 2017). Therefore, the executive committee of the initiative published the financial documents so that the Government could not manipulate their activities. In fact, the volunteer members were not apolitical actors. Conversely, they engaged in the political uprisings so that the Government impeached them for concealing

³⁸ The initiative shared on its social media pages the total amount of received donations and expenses. Additionally, to encourage people to donate, there are some posters on its social media pages that announce having received generous donations from Sudanese benefactors.

their political activism through the initiative. Due to the Government autocracy, the members decided to end the campaign (Interview 29).³⁹

In effect, the two examples demonstrate how forces constituted networks based on philanthropic motives to manage the ecological attributes of the Nile River. At the same time, they reveal the relation between the Government and society, i.e. the activities of communities aimed at mitigating what the Nile regional and national policies and arrangements (e.g. flood forecasting) failed to do on a community scale.

The donations and disbursements of migrants to their home towns constitute another manifestation of philanthropy, particularly for the African people, because they are connected to their relatives, and even more so, to the places they come from (Atibil, 2014). This diaspora philanthropy illustrates why the Ethiopian diaspora responded to the campaign of 'Save Lake Tana' and contributed financially to purchasing machines and sending them to the Amhara region to remove water hyacinth from the Lake, as demonstrated in diaspora groups' engagement in the previous chapter (section 5.2.1.4)⁴⁰.

Besides community philanthropy and volunteerism, there are formal volunteer relations that are formulated between CSOs and their members and supporters. In this regard, the global discourse through UN organisations and CSOs endorse volunteerism, targeting young people for many reasons: to integrate youth in development strategies, so they can be active citizens who strive to attain democracy; to invest the capabilities of young people while they are jobless; and to substitute public servants in affording and distributing public goods and services in remote and marginalized areas where the state is absent (Perold and Graham, 2014).

³⁹ Nafeer has played a significant humanitarian role in the recent Sudan floods (July-September 2020). Particularly after the toppling of the Al-Bashir regime, Nafeer has been a well-trusted and a focal youth initiative that has received donations from outside Sudan. Moreover, its efforts have been documented in international media outlets.

⁴⁰ The financial report of the Global Coalition for Lake Tana Restoration from September 2017 to April 2019 shows the fundraising items (e.g. selling tickets and Church cash donations) and the total amount of donations and expenses. The partner section on the website indicates that donors are Ethiopian diaspora in the USA, Europe, Israel, and Australia, whereas donor agencies are not mentioned on the website. Furthermore, many announcements of campaigns are in the Amharic language which indicates that the target partners are Ethiopians (Global Coalition for Lake Tana Restoration, 2019).

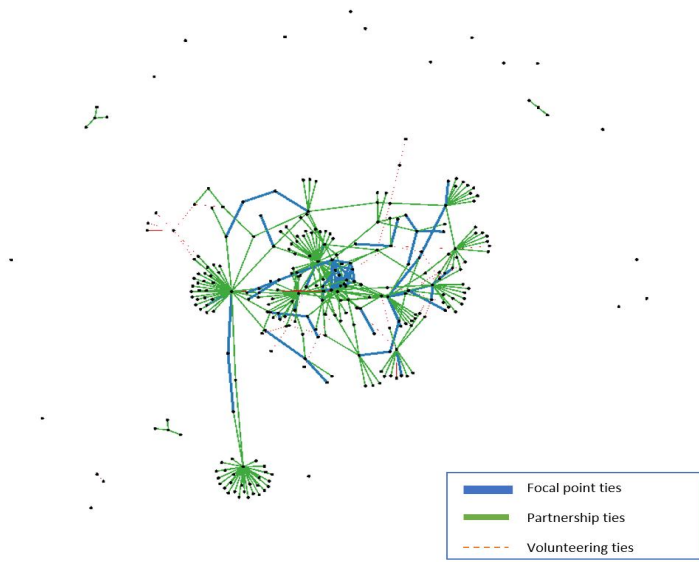
In the vein of these mandates, many CSOs in the Eastern Nile Basin engage young people in their activities as volunteers. For instance, the Environmental Initiative for Sustainable Development in Sudan asks university students in the departments of hydrology or ecology to volunteer in organizing relevant activities. The interview respondent of this organisation argued that students can prepare themselves for their prospective careers in water and environment sectors through this early engagement before graduation (Interview 24).

In sum, the organisational connections entail relatively tangible ties: national offices, resources, time and effort. However, activism is not static. Civil society and initiatives are in motion, and their behaviours become reconfigured within their contexts, like the relation of the NBD and NDFs with the NBI; the social value system (in time of floods) and the donors' opportunities (joint projects by research centres).

6.2.4 Weight of ties

The three categories of ties reflect the strength and stability of relations. As explained in chapter two (section 2.3.4), to give weight of ties, the relations between the focal point organisation and its offices get the higher degree of the scale (scale 3), then the partnership ties get scale 2 and the lowest score for the volunteer relationships (scale 1). Figure 6.1 below depicts the types and weight of ties among the actors in the Eastern Nile network. Apparently, the partnership-based ties (green lines) dominate the interactions in comparison to the focal point (blue/thick lines) and volunteering ties (red/dotted lines).

Figure 6.1 The types and weight of ties



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 dominance of partnership relations provides another explanation of fragmentation in the Eastern Nile Basin network. The actors connect with the other entities when there is an opportunity to conduct a project, meaning that the connections are based on the project's period. On the other hand, projects' objectives and scopes define the other actors in the clusters, hence transboundary interactions are not sustainable with the same actors. On the contrary, the relationship that is based on affiliation to a global or regional office created a stable sort of connection that enabled national and local offices to propagate policies aside from being merely project implementers, as is explained later on. The fact that philanthropy and volunteering ties are extremely changeable because they rely on individual capabilities and availability to conduct the activities means that it is difficult to trace individual engagement in the Eastern Nile Basin network.

6.3 Four civic engagement trajectories

The basic focus of this work is the mode of ties between relevant actors. The investigated research centres and think tanks have intensive connections with their peers across the main levels, besides those to policymakers; by comparison, CSOs providing water services rely on donations from diaspora groups or aid agencies. Simultaneously, capacity building and advocacy activities are significant in civil society interactions either on domestic or regional levels. Thus, civil society actors employ various activities that keep them active in the network.

6.3.1 Scientific/knowledge interactions

Scientists and experts are agents assessing the applied ideas and norms and producing new knowledge to replace or modify dominant policies. Haas (1992:3) defined an epistemic community as 'a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area'. Accordingly, a core characteristic of the epistemic community is based on the principle of sharing: members of the epistemic community share normative and causal beliefs that frame their analysis of the problem and design of the proposed actions and they share the validity of the knowledge they produced. This common belief leads to common policies that aim to mitigate problems (Haas, 1992). It is worth noting that although environmental problems are described and analysed on the basis of the natural sciences, Haas (1992) proposed that the scientist community consists of 'networks of knowledge-based experts'. As a community, the knowledge network is established on the basis of a shared belief or 'faith in the verity and applicability of particular forms of knowledge or specific truth' (Haas, 1992:3).

The primary purpose of any epistemic community is to enhance its power by injecting it with knowledge. Therefore, information and ideas that are generated by the epistemic community have a significant contribution to make in defining and articulating the state's power in the international arena. The shared causal beliefs in the community are considered a substantial input to the policy formation process and the bureaucratic institutions, implying that they can change the state's

behaviours and priorities (Haas, 1992). Furthermore, because the epistemic community builds its results on evidence-based processes and transparent methodologies, the policy suggestions easily gain recognition from decision makers and accordingly, policies are convergent (Thomas, 1997). Conversely, decision makers regularly look for insights and interpretations from the epistemic community due to the complexity and uncertainty of global problems, which systematic policy processes cannot handle efficiently (Meijerink, 2005).

The technical scope of such communities is engrained in the ways of approaching and evaluating the Nile hydropolitics, as explained in chapter four. This is why scientific activities are significant in the network; they shape the interactions between governmental agencies, international/regional research centres and individual scientists and scholars.

The '2002 Nile conferences' were recalled by some interviewees as an indication of scholars' communication with policymakers, to share ideas and concerns. Importantly, scholars discussed the Nile issues from the perspective of a transboundary mandate, and in a spirit of cooperation, not based on national determinants. Furthermore, these conferences offered a venue where the scholars could network with their peers (Interview 23).

The same assessment of the positive role of the Nile conferences was affirmed by Brunnee and Toope (2002). They described these conferences as a place where the epistemic community can

'(...) promote the kind of interaction, trust-building, and mutual learning that are crucial to the emergence of shared understandings, which in turn must underlie any effective normative evolution.' (Brunnee and Toope, 2002:154)

Accordingly, the participating scholars shared their field observations and project results at these conferences, thus contributing to a better understanding of Nile water management. On the other hand, the authors (Brunnee and Toope, 2002) demonstrate that the majority of scholars are affiliated to governmental research centres, besides the related ministries focusing on the Nile. Therefore, the conferences constituted 'intergovernmental issue networks' to facilitate introducing

new knowledge and norms which in turn can endorse establishing formal structures built on a shared vision of the Nile, such as is seen in the context of TECCONILE and the NBI.

The '2002 Nile conferences' started in 1993 when TECCONILE was the institutional format of cooperation in the Nile Basin. Then, when the NBI was established, these conferences were continued, but under the title of the Nile Basin Development Forum (NBDF) which is held every two years (Paisley and Henshaw, 2013).

The international donor agencies adopted this scientific format for Nile cooperation and accordingly, CIDA, the UNDP and the World Meteorological Organisation were the sponsors of the 2002 Nile Conferences (Paisley and Henshaw, 2013); the WB and GIZ were the main partners for the NBDFs.

These Nile conferences were designed by governmental institutions, but invited non-state actors to participate. There have been diverse coordination formats where scholars from hydraulic sciences and technical practices also participated. The principal objective of these formats is to create dialogue as an alternative approach to attain common understanding beyond the national governmental visions and calculations (Interview 23). It is assumed that building consensus via these scientific meetings is essential for Nile management in order to prevent water conflict. Importantly, the conferences were utilised by the international actors as a tool to mitigate conflict over CFA. Zaerpoor (2019) explains that when the negotiations had started in 1997, there was 'heterogeneity in capacities, beliefs, and identities' among the riparian countries. Therefore, the negotiators were encouraged to participate in these conferences where they could exchange their 'beliefs and identities' regarding Nile cooperation.

Similarly, the Environment and Cooperation in the Nile Basin (ECONILE) Project was one of the projects funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in 1999. The project entailed a series of dialogue workshops among hydraulic scientists in the Nile Basin and also included representatives of civil society. The organisers of these series affirmed that national determinants did not drive participants' discussions; participants who attended as independent scientists rather than through their

governmental affiliations to governmental research centres. The engagement of civil society was intended to include the vision of grassroots individuals or organisations who were normally excluded from such discussions (Mason, 2005).

CSOs also include the conducting of scientific research and publication of policy papers on their activities. For example, The Global Coalition for Lake Tana Restoration aims to create a 'research-proven environmental management system', using GIS data. The research results are to be used to monitor hyacinth in the Lake and, based on the findings, research papers about the ecology of the Lake can be produced and shared with decision makers. Accordingly, they have an MoU with the Amhara Regional State Environment, Forest and Wildlife Protection and the Development Authority (Global Coalition for Lake Tana Restoration, 2020).

Furthermore, the power of science in framing the relations in the Nile Basin constitutes the core focus of negotiations regarding the GERD and has been an inducement for relatively independent researchers and scientists who work on water-related issues from different disciplines to formulate initiatives. The examples I encountered came from Egypt, as reactions to the potential harm of the GERD inflicted on the downstream countries.

The Water Institute for the Nile (WIN) is formed by young people who are affiliated with different institutions. They sought to endorse a win-win cooperation arrangement among the riparian countries. The main activities of WIN are to conduct research and hold seminars at which the outputs are disseminated to decision makers on the national level (mainly in Egypt) and the regional level if possible (Water Institute for the Nile, 2011).

A group of professors from the Department of Irrigation and Hydraulics at the Faculty of Engineering (Cairo University) established the Group of the Nile Basin (GNB). The GNB was joined by a group of social scientists interested in Nile politics. They aimed to use scientific models to study how the GERD could comprise a 'threat' to the Nile flow to Egypt. Their ultimate goal is to advise the decision makers, particularly as some of the scholars were seasoned members of the GERD national negotiation committee (Zeinobia, 2013).

In 2013, the GNB warned the Government of GERD's impending destructive impact, mainly because of the height and the capacity of the reservoir of the dam (Zeinobia, 2013). Later in 2015 the GNB released a position statement published on the newspaper website. The Group members affirmed that:

'The objective of constructing GERD is political not for development purposes. It aims to control the Nile waters which affect negatively on economic, political, social and security affairs in Egypt. Moreover, it constrains Egypt's comprehensive capabilities and regional role. Controlling the Nile water is increasing with the Ethiopian implantations of the other planned dams on the Blue Nile and Sobat-Atbarah river' (Salem, 2015: para 2, own translation).

The GNB demonstrated the impacts of GERD on the reservoir of the High Aswan Dam as it can only be refilled at times of high flooding. Additionally, the groundwater cannot be replenished as a result of water shortage; and the salinity of the delta will increase due to the declining river discharge in the sea. However, the GNB suspected that there might be insufficient competence to substitute the loss of the Nile water through the rationing of use and desalination of the seawater. Furthermore, the GNB's members argued that accepting the Ethiopian dam means accepting the construction of other dams on the river and then 'selling water to Egypt'. Also, South Sudan could be encouraged to join the CFA which could challenge the national Egyptian water plans to capitalise water losses in Sudd. As discussed in chapter four (section 4.2.1), the Egyptian water resources policy emphasises the possibility of increasing its water resources through the construction of the Jonglei Canal. So, if South Sudan joined the CFA that would involve two countries, Egypt and South Sudan, who are opponents regarding the Nile water shares as settled in the 1929 and 1959 agreements. In other words, South Sudan could construct water projects without consensus from Egypt (Salman, 2011).

With the continuity of construction, the GNB expressed its disagreement with the Declaration of Principles (DoP) because it acknowledges the Ethiopian right to construct the dam without guaranteeing Egypt's historical and legal rights. Moreover, there is no compliance mechanism to arrange the filling period and operation. Accordingly, the GNB has demanded that the Government should halt the construction until the negotiations are concluded and if not, they do not exclude

the possibility of calling on international actors to mediate or raise complaints about Ethiopian behaviour on the international level (Abu Elsoud, 2013; Salem, 2015).

The engagement of researchers on the regional scale has been driven by the strong support they received from Nile decision makers and donors. Nevertheless, strong relations alone do not guarantee trust-building and regional cooperation. The next chapter explains the NBCBN case, which addresses the relations between scientists and politics of the Nile Basin cooperation.

6.3.2 Capacity building activities

The objective of providing training courses and sessions is to develop the capabilities and skills of institutions and individuals. This objective has evolved and integrated into development strategies and national policies at the time of employing Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the 1990s. The rationale behind this was that the state apparatus and civil servants need to improve administrative systems and to develop their managerial skills, besides possessing technical and personal skills to be able to implement development policies effectively. To attain this objective, the donor agencies have employed CSOs in the provision of training for capacity building, mainly for local institutions, so they can sufficiently deliver public goods and services. On the other side, CSOs also provide this kind of training at grassroots level, to be able to articulate and channel their demands to policymakers (Brass, 2016; Dicklitch, 1998).

Therefore, capacity building activities are incorporated in the work of many CSOs working on water issues. I classify these into three categories: one is to build the scientific and research capabilities of hydraulic scholars; another category emphasises upgrading the practical skills of farmers and workers in the water and sanitation sector; and the third addresses the governance of CSOs as organisations.

Building capacity in hydrology science and research is a significant activity, because Nile management is based on hydraulic engineering and technical interventions. Additionally, the transnational vision of cooperation in the Nile has been articulated from hydraulic management

perspectives through HYDROMET, TECHONILE and many activities by the NBI, such as the Eastern Nile Flood Preparedness and Early Warning (FPEW) project.

Transnational research organisations like the IWMI and GWP entail capacity building in their vision and strategies as a way to attain better water management, especially in countries and societies that face water scarcity. From this perspective, the GWP mentions that 'building capacity is integral to GWP's mission to achieve water security' (GWP, 2017). Accordingly, the organisation implements capacity building activities for institutions and employees in water governance in addition to tailored training relevant to the context (GWP, 2017). The IWMI's main mission is to find 'evidence-based solutions' for water-related challenges through research. Therefore, building scholars' capacity in the area of water management is the core target, besides providing scientific assistance to post-graduate students (IWMI, 2020).

Another function of capacity building is related to practical skills at grassroots level, such as the implementation of programs for farmers on best irrigation practices by CARE International, the FAO and governmental organisations.

For instance, WUAs in Egypt were mobilised by the MWRI in 2018 through a national campaign: 'Save It to Get It'. It is funded by the EU and aims to encourage farmers who are applying advanced technology and practices to save water in agriculture. The campaign is based on a competition to select a 'distinguished farmer' who uses advanced methods and water-saving practices, thus achieving feasible results reflected in yield increases. Furthermore, the farmer has to convince other farmers to also adopt the practice (El-Said, 2018).

The Nile Project University Program targets students at six universities in the Nile Basin. In this program, the students receive training on sustainability and water management and subsequently, they form a university club to be hubs where they can discuss, share and produce collaborative projects tackling Nile issues from the perspective of food-water dimensions (The Nile Project, n.d.).

The third function is capacity building for the governance of CSOs that work in the area of water and the environment, allowing them to develop their structures. This category of NGOs is commonly endorsed by donor agencies. Blumstein (2017) discusses how donors' influence on river basin policies defines the cooperation priorities and when the donors change, their priorities, simultaneously, are modified as well. This dynamic with donors was significant, for example, in the relation between the DFID and the NBD. The British aid emphasized governance challenges in the national forums of the NBD, such as those related to organisation election, financial auditing or accountability. Therefore, the interview respondent stated the priority of an organisation's governance took time and effort that could be allocated to enlarge the NBD network (Interview 16).

Following the termination of DFID funds in 2013, the NBD Report (2015a) entitled 'The Nile Basin Countries Stakeholder Mapping of CSOs Network Members and their Partners' highlighted several challenges in the governance of the national NBD forums (NBD, 2015a). These encompassed in one dimension the NDFs' connections, which were featured by a lack of coordination either with the national peer forums across the Nile Basin or with individuals and local CSOs that NDFs represent on the regional level. Regarding relations among NDFs, the Report mentions that 'on horizontal linkages, NDFs from different countries interact very little with one another, and in most cases, they have to be coordinated by [the] NBD Secretariat to have joint activities' (NBD, 2015a:10).

Generally, the Report suggested that to attain effective relations with different stakeholders, an employee in each NDF should be appointed to ensure a structured stakeholders engagement. Such a structural position is deemed to be essential for building the capacity of organisations in technical water issues and to get feedback and appraisal of the activities from stakeholders.

Another dimension of the challenges involves organisational and administrative issues in NDFs. The Report addressed the lack of funds due to the independency of NDFs. The host organisation employed its priorities and activities over those of the NDF. Accordingly, the Nile-related activities could be relegated (NBD, 2015a). For instance, the Egyptian NDF (Eg-NDF) is incubated by the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED) and the NDF's

activities have been reduced due to a lack of funds. This case will be explained in more detail in the next chapter.

Relevant to that, the process of decision making was affected by the management style of the host organisation. Furthermore, the rotation of the NBF's board members was not frequent enough and their positions became diffused with the one of the host organisation. Also, the Report highlighted the issue of a lack of women and youth representation on the board (NBD, 2015a). Additionally, there was no consistency in the membership rules for being part of NBFs because of different types of organisations and individuals, some of whom were affiliated to governmental entities or media organisations and network associations. Therefore, the Report emphasized the need for the 'establishment of NDFs as pure conglomerates of CSOs' and to attain that, NBD would prepare a membership guideline to identify the rules of being a national forum of NBD (NBD, 2015a).

Seemingly, the three types of capacity building activities constitute an essential component of ties between diverse actors in the Eastern Nile Basin network. Additionally, providing training, despite their duration and specialization, retains dynamics and motion in the network.

6.3.3 Service provision activities

The engagement of CSOs in providing water services is significant on a national scale. There are different types of interventions, such as physical intervention to construct water pipelines or to drill wells in villages or slums areas; to set up water-filtering equipment; to do technical tests for water quality; and offering sanitation services for dwellings. For rural areas where agriculture is the main economic activity, service provision involves technical training and rain harvesting.

Neoliberal economic policies and minimising the role of the state in providing public goods and services are the main drivers behind the significant engagement of CSOs and the financial and technical support they get from donor agencies. Therefore, Dicklitch (1998:6-7) frames these CSOs as the 'gap-fillers' to the role of the state in terms of providing public service. Furthermore, contrary to the expected result of neoliberal policies implemented through structural adjustment

programs, the private sector has not been successful in public service provision. The reality illustrates that citizens cannot pay for the public services that are delivered or maintained by profit oriented enterprises. Therefore, CSOs with family and faith-based organisations have become an alternative to both the state and private sector in public service provision (Kushner and MacLean, 2015).

In addition to this, CSOs, compared to the state, can respond quickly to grassroots demands and articulate their complaints of dysfunction of public services. Thus foreign donors channel their disbursements to CSOs to achieve goals such as poverty alleviation and to simultaneously promote civic engagement (Obiyan, 2005). This explains why the state does not challenge the engagement of CSOs in service provision, because services are delivered to the public as a tangible product without debates about the economic and political power asymmetry behind government malfunction. As a result, CSOs depoliticise their activities to maintain a partnership with governmental agencies and donors' disbursements (Dicklitch, 1998).

In the three countries under investigation in this study, the engagement of CSOs in providing water services is evident, with clear support from intergovernmental organisations such as the FAO or donors agencies and definitely, governmental support. For instance, in Ethiopia, ORDA was established as a response to the 1984 famine, and since that time works on natural resources conservation, agriculture and water supply. Regarding water issues, the organisation helps communities and WUAs in the Amhara region to construct water facilities and sanitation, including wells, irrigation canals, rain harvesting and the generating of drinking water for households. These water projects are funded by donor agencies, including bilateral ones such as USAID, Foundation Green Ethiopia, Switzerland (GET) or multilateral agencies such as the WB and IFAD (ORDA, 2018).

In Egypt, improving irrigation canals is an example of CSOs' engagement in water services because of their ability to reach the grassroots level (farmers), and the alignment with national policy. For example, the Father Jesuits Centre received funds from a Swiss agency to assist some WUAs in Nubian villages to clean and improve the capacity of the irrigation canals, in efforts to enhance the farmers' economic wellbeing (Interview 8).

The state's malfunction in securing water services has provoked members of the diaspora to engage in water services by donating to their relatives or to CSOs that are active in their home towns, as explained earlier. There are many charity organisations in Egypt (e.g. the Life from Water Foundation) and in Sudan (e.g. Sadagaat) that have received money from diaspora groups to establish public water services.

This service provision is implemented on the local level, not on the Nile Basin level, but such interventions are a reflection of national visions of water scarcity and how to manage it. Additionally, the CSOs have relations with both powerful actors, governments and donors, which illuminates the role of CSOs within the network.

6.3.4 Advocacy activities

Advocacy is deemed essential for CSO activities concerned with water issues. Nevertheless, advocacy in Nile politics takes two discrete endeavours: one proceeds from a problem-solving approach to address water scarcity; while the second is sought to change or resist - in many cases - the national water policies.

Advocacy for water conservation is inextricably entangled with other activities conducted to attain the resolution of water scarcity and sustainability after completion of a project. This endeavour takes various forms, as Hudson (2001:333) demonstrates:

'NGO advocacy is based upon policy analysis, research, and the channelling of information. On these bases, they engage in a range of activities from awareness-raising, through development education, capacity-building, lobbying and campaigning, to, in some cases, direct action.'

Therefore, CSOs design public campaigns for water-saving purposes, in addition to holding seminars for the public. The GWP-Egypt, the Environmental Initiative for Sustainable Development and SYPW in Sudan conduct visits for school students and villages to raise awareness of SDG 6. They also exchange information on water-related diseases, and use the

materials provided by multilateral organisations, mainly the UNDP and WHO, to increase knowledge on the issue

Another example of raising awareness about the Nile as a transnational river is the Nile day, which is held every year on the 22nd of February. This is the date in 1999 when the Nile Basin countries announced, at their meeting in Tanzania, that the NBI would be established.

In February 2018, I was able to participate in the NBI-led Nile Day that took place in Addis Ababa; the NBD contribution to this event was marginal. Different representatives and actors gathered in Meskel Square, a large and historical square in Addis Ababa and then started walking together for two kilometres to the event venue at the premises of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). The walk included some ministers of water resources of the Nile countries, national officials, and representatives of donors and international organisations, journalists and the media. The trail was led by school children wearing white T-shirts with the NBI logo and carrying the flags of riparian countries as well as a banner of the 'Nile Day', all led by martial music.

During our walk, people lined up along the street and construction workers stopped working so they could watch the walk. Employees and officers working for companies surrounding the terraces watched the trail and took photographs. This disturbance of daily routine in Addis Ababa contributed to raising the awareness of ordinary people and encouraged them to think about challenges related to water and the Nile. Nonetheless, the rest of the Day program (official speeches and scientific presentations) was conducted in closed venues at the building of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

The media is an important tool through which to interact with stakeholders of regional Nile organisations. The current Strategic Plan of the NBI (2017-2027) addresses the role of different media outlets, besides encouraging radio and television programs to host technical specialists and officers speaking on the Nile issue. Furthermore, the NBI has sponsored the establishment of the Nile Media Network to channel the Nile issue into the public sphere (NBI, 2009). In this regard, the NBI, in collaboration with the GWP and the German government sponsored the 'Nile Media

Awards' that are given to outstanding journalists and presenters covering aspects related to Nile cooperation (NBI, 2017b).

Likewise, the NBD uses the media as a source of communication and outreach and hence, the NDFs have Nile issues covered in their national media, together with the NBD, to publicize on the website and through social media. As a result, the NBD can foster communication between NDFs on the one hand and on the other, between the regional and local or citizen levels (WB, 2018).

In Sudan, the SECS, which represents the NBD, have established a virtual network called the 'Environmental News Network', where volunteers share newsworthy stories as well as expose negative environmental practices in their community, via mobile phones. Furthermore, to communicate with locals, SECS have run two-weekly radio programs: 'Us and the Environment' and 'Environmental Media Forums' (SECS, 2018).

The second advocacy endeavour accentuates resistance to Nile policies either on the transnational level or locally. The pursuit of advocacy for change is to transform the contestation among the riparian peoples into new forms of cooperation. In light of that, espousing cultural connections is the entry point for CSOs advocating for dialogue and cooperation over the Nile. Music performances by the Nile Project and public diplomacy delegations are a way to change the politics, by highlighting the similarities and produce reciprocal dialogues. In the same vein, the NBD organised visits to national forums of Ethiopia and Egypt in 2011 and 2012 to visit water projects in each country, focusing on several cities so that the delegations observed the reality of water conditions. This in turn created mutual understanding to attain cooperation across the Eastern Nile Basin. These exchange visits influenced the cognitive perception of the visiting members. One of the Egyptian participants to Bahir Dar city mentioned that it was his first visit to the city and to witness the poor economic conditions. He explained how he suffered from frequent electricity blackouts which had affected his business. After this visit, he understood the reality by experiencing the poor situation of Ethiopian development (Interview 11).

Contrary to the soft cultural tools with which to change policies, the Eastern Nile Basin has witnessed resistance to national water projects, mainly dams. The cases illustrate that social

movements rather than structured CSOs lead the resistance. Such resistance movements involve citizens, activists and CSOs who have experienced the same grievances and consequently, articulate common objectives for 'societal and policy change' (Clark, 2003:4).

In Sudan, the anti-Kajbar dam movement is one example of many anti-dam movements there. Abdelkareem (2018)⁴¹ explains the resistance to the dam and the risk of resettlement by referring to three phases: 1) Mobilization phase - based on mutual understanding and consensus against the dam project and its destructive impacts on Nubian values and social bonds. The tools of mobilization were songs, stories and even rumours. All these forms created narratives that constituted a local counter-knowledge of the modernist vision adopted by the Government and the developers; 2) Confrontation phase - this occurred when the Government abruptly established the construction machines in the area without the approval of the community. The reaction to this invasion was through severe actions against the Government such as through demonstrations and petitions; and 3) De-escalation phase - this was after the peak of violence in 2007 where the government's strategy was to diffuse violent confrontation and manoeuvre the community by using religious discourse and the power of the community's elites. Despite the Government's brutality, the mobilization process kept going by reviving the memory of people who had been killed by the Government. The Nubian (Mahas) people established communication channels with political parties and CSOs to convey their stance against the dam⁴². Additionally, they published a newsletter to update the broader public on developments regarding the situation. The resistance of the Mahas people constitutes a successful case of anti-dam movements in Nile politics, as the dam has not been completed until now.

Resisting dams in the Nile also engages the organisation 'International Rivers' in Nile politics. This is an American-based organisation established in 1985 to help network activists around the globe to maintain the rivers' ecologies and people's right to rivers. The organisation opposes mega-dams because of their destructive impacts (International Rivers, n.d.). The organisation is well-known

⁴¹ The following paragraph has been adapted from a published book review article by the author (Abazeed, 2020).

⁴² The Nubian labour migrants in the Gulf countries supported the anti-Kajbar activists. The Nubians' engagement was fuelled not only by the risk of resettlement but also by the contempt the Al-Bashir regime had for Nubian labour in domestic work (i.e. cooks and drivers) in the Gulf countries. Therefore, Nubian migrants provided financial support and advocacy to anti-dam activism (Abdelkareem, 2018).

as an anti-dam network and therefore, anti-Kajbar dam activists have communicated with the organisation to gain experience of resisting resettlement, in addition to gaining exposure through them (Interview 28). For example, the organisation has supported the anti-Kajbar dam committee by sending an opposition letter to the Chinese embassy in Khartoum because of the involvement of a Chinese company in the dam's construction (Bosshard, 2011).

Concerning GERD, International Rivers in 2017 published a report entitled '5 Myths Surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)'. It urged that the Ethiopian Government should maximise the use of other natural resources such as wind and solar energy to generate electricity. Renewable sources of energy are better than constructing a mega hydropower dam that will affect the flow of water to downstream countries (International Rivers, 2017). The statements and published pieces by the International Rivers were refused, however, by the Ethiopian Government, accusing the organisation of supporting the Egyptian interests and position (Berhane, 2014).

The anti-dam movements are an example of 'insurgent' activism that challenge water development policies and projects that can cause displacement. It is difficult for this kind of activism to build a solid global alliance defending their cause, because of the dominance of policies driven by neoliberal thought in powerful global organisations and within national entities (Swyngedouw, 2014). Therefore, the anti-dam movement and the International Rivers organisation are outliers in the context of the Eastern Nile Basin network.

In a nutshell, the advocacy activities in the Eastern Nile Basin reveal two distinct approaches to tackling Nile issues: transboundary politics and national water policies. Furthermore, these two approaches are not intertwined and consequently, appear in analytical clusters. Added to that, the anti-dam movements are outliers within the Eastern Nile Basin network. In contrast, civil society actors that implement problem-solving advocacy and promote cultural activities, and who do not resist the riparians' policies, occupy visible positions within the Eastern Nile network.

6.4 Preliminary conclusion

The interactions among the various civic networks in the Eastern Nile Basin are always in motion because the differences in interests and the context in which they operate shape the structure of these relations.

The composition of ties can be simultaneously tangible and intangible, because each organisation or initiative I encountered conducts its activities in order to be visible on the Eastern Nile map. Importantly, it is obvious that there is no activity that is implemented by an organisation by itself, since all activities also involve other partner organisations from different levels.

The tangible components are framed in various ways, with some being based on organisational ties (e.g. the focal point) and others based on the provision of training and awareness campaigns, in addition to water service provision and to remittances.

The intangible components are visible among nodes who share similar causes or approaches towards the tackling of the Nile water issues. Global think tanks, such as the IWMI and GWP, by comparison, have contributed to creating regional and national focal points that endorse scholars to approach Nile issues from the paradigms presented by the IWRM and water security. Additionally, CSOs take part in relevant network platforms (e.g. ANEW and the Butterfly Effect), to share news and present calls of opportunities, without assuming clear or frequent responsibilities.

However, the frequency of interactions fluctuates, except in the cases of organisational relations when the national office represents a regional or global organisation (e.g., the NDFs). Beyond this established tie, the interactions seemingly rely on the implementation of joint projects or programs and in many cases, are merely invitations to help attend general meetings or workshops. Many interviewees claimed they have a connection with another organisation because they have attended a conference with them.

By comparison, the partnership scope of relations establishes undirected ties, where both actors contribute to the activity and avail each other. In the framework of conferences and workshops, the interactions involve mutual understanding of national needs and development aspirations, and to build trust, by bringing scholars and policy makers more closely together (NBI conferences). Nevertheless, the approaches and techniques used to articulate the substance of these activities are composed by the organiser/sponsor who designs the content and selects participants of the activity/performance; hence, it still is a top-down approach.

By contrast, the actors that are independently funded have one-directional ties to the target community. For example, charity organisations and diaspora groups send their scientific researchers or remittances to their communities or to policy makers without receiving gains, thus constituting directed ties.

Therefore, the ties are not symmetric; sponsorship of participation or establishments of a regional or national office, or advocating for global ideas are activities causing asymmetric ties. Clark (2003) argues that networks of environmental protection and sustainability, where CSOs from the North and the South are involved together, contain inequalities, because each partner deals differently with the causes and solutions for environmental challenges. Furthermore, in the case of the global organisations' national focal points, the offices act as supporters rather than members, because the decisions are taken in headquarters that are based in the North.

The perspective of partnership, which prevails in the network, supposedly denotes cooperation between actors, but the competitive ties are noteworthy. The lack of resources to conduct transnational activities makes the involvement of foreign donors necessary and therefore, there are competitive relations between actors who are involved in the same set of activities. I found this notably being the case with the research and scientific organisations that compete with their peers to get funds enabling them to implement training workshops or joint research projects. Another example shows the erratic nature of partnership on the regional level when two organisations, one from Sudan and another from Egypt, have conducted a joint program funded by a foreign donor. After completing the activities, however, they got into conflict over a financial arrangement and then decided not to collaborate again (Interview 24).

Furthermore, networking relations should be for sharing data, information, up-to-date research studies and activities, and not for alliance purposes. Accordingly, many interviewed organisations and initiatives perceive networks as a source for benefits and for funding opportunities. Yet, the case of anti-dam movements shows attempts to create ties with other actors supporting their cause to resistance and to adopt the same position. However, these resistance ties are not visible in the network analysis.

The four trajectories of civic engagement have addressed the Nile as a river at risk because of the increasing population and related demands on water, food and energy. As a result, non-political interventions are required to conserve and develop the Nile. Above that, the dominance of technical and service activities is compatible with the apolitical role of civil society as coined by global discourse and donors' policies. International organisations support the involvement of civil society under the roof of development and poverty reduction mandates, while playing political roles in assessing or opposing governmental policies is discouraged (Fowler and Biekart, 2011). Nevertheless, the contestations over the Nile water shares, as well as the relation with donors, have revealed political dynamics in civic engagement, as will be discussed in the next chapter.