Earthscan Studies in Water Resource Management

GENDER DYNAMICS IN TRANSBOUNDARY WATER GOVERNANCE

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON WATER CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

Edited by
Jenniver Sehring, Rozemarijn ter Horst, and
Margreet Zwarteveen

ROUTLEDGE

Gender Dynamics in Transboundary Water Governance

This volume assesses the nexus of gender and transboundary water governance, containing empirical case studies, discourse analyses, practitioners' accounts, and theoretical reflections.

Transboundary water governance exists at the intersection of two highly masculinised fields: diplomacy and water resources management. In both fields, positions are mainly held by men, and core ideas, norms, and guiding principles that are presented as neutral are both shaped by men and based on male experiences. This book sheds light on the often hidden gender dynamics of water conflict and cooperation at the transboundary level and on the implicit assumptions that guide research and policies. The individual chapters of the book, based on case studies from around the world, reveal the gendered nature of water diplomacy, take stock of the number of women involved in organisations that govern shared waters, and analyse programmes that have been set up to promote women in water diplomacy and the obstacles that they face. They explore and contest leading narratives and knowledge that have been shaped mainly by privileged men, and assess how the participation of women concretely impacts the practices, routines, and processes of water negotiations.

This volume will be of great interest to students and scholars of water governance, water diplomacy, gender, international relations, and environmental politics. It will also be of interest to professionals and policymakers involved in supporting gender mainstreaming in water cooperation.

Jenniver Sehring is Senior Lecturer in Water Governance and Diplomacy at the IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, the Netherlands. She coordinates the joint Master programme Water Cooperation and Diplomacy and is an editor of the *Central Asian Journal of Water Research* (CAJWR).

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"In this seminal collection, the authors expose the inherent genderedness of business-as-usual transboundary water management and provide readers with tools and experience to unravel and dismantle implicit and explicit bias at various scales. While focusing on gender, their work is equally relevant to cultural, racial, and inter-generational examinations. The authors voice the need for active mitigation of institutional bias and a critical re-thinking of decision-making processes and priorities. With this important new release, the authors make visible the untenable cost of the status quo and the urgent need to course correct to meet the water and environmental crisis of today for all of society."

Elizabeth A. Koch, *Operations Lead, Transboundary Water Cooperation, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)*

"This book provides a unique account of what 'gender mainstreaming' means in transboundary water resources governance, from conceptual understanding to real life experiences. The comparative case studies across basins and basin organisations uncover critical narratives on participation in formal institutions and transboundary governance processes from a gender perspective, drawing attention to issues of inclusion, participation, and intersectionality. The depth of the case studies portrays uncontested responsibilities of duty bearers, being confronted with the lived experiences of women in society, and provides examples of transformational approaches to engender transboundary water management. Its conclusions on gender and feminism concretely summarize the contemporary state of knowledge and provide a well guided, forward-looking perspective on what and how inclusion can and should be in transboundary water governance."

Donald Kasongi, *Secretary General, Nile Basin Discourse*

"This book uses a feminist gaze to pry open the masculinist terrain of transboundary water governance. It skillfully unravels how water diplomacy and management professions come to be gendered. It also questions the persistence of state-centric and technical framings in transboundary water governance agendas that exclude other knowledges. Finally, the book is self-reflective and respects the situated knowledges of its contributors, thus amplifying a truly inclusive feminist ethos. I recommend this book not only to water professionals but also to aligned political ecologists who may be pondering on the positioning of feminist contributions to social justice in transboundary waters."

Bernadette P. Resurrección, *Associate Professor and Queen's National Scholar on Development in Practice, Global Development Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada*

"As noted in the introduction to this wide ranging and nuanced volume, representatives of the interests in water diplomacy have historically been both overwhelmingly male and technical in their backgrounds and outlooks. Fortunately, that imbalance is slowly changing. Not only are women increasingly representing water constituents in dialogue at all scales, but the frameworks that are used to inform policy are moving well beyond the historical "deification of quantification"

to include alternative, critical, affective, spiritual and, yes, feminist approaches – what the editors and authors refer to as the "gendering" of the field. The editors, all cutting edge "pracademics" in their own rights whose worldviews are deeply informed by their professional experiences as well as their academic frameworks, bring together a rich set of authors whose compelling case studies from around the world and thoughtful assessments weave a collective narrative of much needed global change, as well as the far-reaching implications that result."

Aaron Wolf, *Professor of Geography, College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, Oregon State University, USA*

Earthscan Studies in Water Resource Management

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1 (En-)gendering Water Diplomacy

Jenniver Sehring, Rozemarijn ter Horst, Margreet Zwarteveen

Cooperation and conflict around transboundary water resources have been studied from many angles: hydrological conditions, technical solutions, legal norms, institutional capacities, costs and benefits, power interests, as well as geographic, economic, and political disparities. In the past decades, awareness has been growing that the use, management, and protection of transboundary water resources is intrinsically political and embedded in complex political and socio-cultural settings. This awareness has translated into more attention to governance arrangements and diplomatic processes. Photos depicting water diplomacy or transboundary water governance-in-action – for instance of negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the signing of the water allocation protocols of the International Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia, or the staff overview on the website of the Lake Chad Basin Commission – show a variety of experts involved in this comprehensive task: diplomats, water officials, engineers, environmental experts, and lawyers. But first and foremost, they display the gatherings of men. As a matter of fact, the majority of professionals engaged in transboundary water governance are men. A recent survey of 117 transboundary river basin organisations worldwide found that – at least based on the publicly available data – fewer than one-third of their staff and fewer than one-fifth of staff in the highest leadership positions are women (Best 2019). Despite these clear gender disparities, few studies exist that look at transboundary waters from the angle of gender.

This might be because many consider the male dominance or masculinity of transboundary water governance as normal, and therefore as not needing explanation. In water diplomacy, after all, two highly masculinised professional fields come together: diplomacy and water resources management. By calling these professions masculinised, we do not only mean that positions in this field are mainly held by men – as reflected in the numbers mentioned above. The genderedness of professions also becomes manifest in the ideas, values, and principles used to define and measure professionality – what makes a real or true water diplomat? Who qualifies as a water diplomat? Terms used to describe and assess professional performance are often gendered in their association with behaviours and personality traits seen as belonging more to (or appreciated more in) one gender. For instance, the ability to negotiate can be expressed in

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terms of someone's ability to win an argument. This may be associated with forms of competitiveness that are seen as coming more "naturally" to men, or that are more positively appreciated when encountered in men than in women. The ability to negotiate can also be expressed in terms of skills that may be easier to recognise in women, for instance as one's ability to reach a compromise, thereby differently gendering the art of negotiation and making it easier for women to be seen and valued as professional negotiators. To date, there has not been much critical feminist research to unravel and reflect on the genderedness of transboundary water governance. Most research on gender and water governance has focused on households, local irrigation agriculture, or water system levels (drinking water or sanitation) (De Silva et al. 2018).[1]

The few articles and reports that do reflect on the genderedness of transboundary water governance are frequently referred to throughout the chapters of this book; we therefore briefly discuss their main arguments. Earle and Bazili (2013) noted relatively early on that, in contrast to the national and local levels, questions of gender are not incorporated in international transboundary water management. Based on an assessment of two River Basin Organisations (RBOs), as well as international legal instruments, they concluded that the laws, policies, and strategies at the transboundary level hardly address gender, if at all. They point towards the intersection of the masculine discourses and practices of both the water management community, dominated until recently by the "hydraulic mission" approach (Molle et al. 2009) and with military antecedents, and among scholars of international relations (IR), international water law, and political science.

Von Lossow (2015) notes that if questions of gender are addressed in interstate water politics, it is often at the request of donors. He assesses the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) and shows how the responsibility for questions of gender is attributed to the national level, ignoring the role of gender at the interstate level. Carmi et al. (2019) studied the challenges that women face in attaining high-level positions in water diplomacy in Jordan, Lebanon, and the State of Palestine through a survey of 33 female water professionals. Their answers highlight the challenges of a male-dominant society and negative perceptions of female decision makers by other women, among others. Reflections on gender in transboundary water governance can also be found in a number of policy reports (e.g., Fauconnier et al. 2018) which list the (potential) benefits of more women's involvement in transboundary water governance in support of a call for action to change structures that diminish the recognition, opportunities, and voice of women.

These findings show that questions of gender in transboundary water governance are about both *what* is discussed and negotiated in transboundary deliberations and *who* participates in these deliberations. There can be a relation between the two, though it is unlikely to be causal and needs further elaboration. There are clearly many questions still left open when it comes to gender and transboundary water governance. This book builds on, and aims to expand, the scholarship on this topic. It originates from the online workshop

"(En)Gendering Transboundary Water Governance: Feminist Perspectives on Water Conflict and Cooperation" organised by IHE Delft on 29–30 September 2020. The event brought together more than 100 researchers and practitioners from around the globe. Some of the presentations held at the workshop were summarised in a series of blog posts on FLOWs, the Water Governance Blog at IHE Delft Institute for Water Education.[2] Others were transformed into chapters for this edited volume. Both the workshop and the subsequent work on this edited volume were financially supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs via the DUPC2 Programme with IHE Delft. This support has also enabled the open access publication of this book.

In the remainder of this introduction, we first share our understanding of transboundary water governance, water diplomacy, and gender. We then elaborate on our argument that transboundary water governance is a masculinised field by exploring the dominating masculinities in both the water sector and diplomacy. We continue by explaining what we mean by a "feminist perspective" on transboundary water governance. The chapter ends with an overview of the sections and the individual chapters of this book.

Gender, Masculinities, and Transboundary Water Governance and Diplomacy

Water Diplomacy and Transboundary Water Governance

In current debates, interactions over water between representatives of states are often referred to as water diplomacy (Klimes et al. 2019; Keskinen et al. 2021). Water diplomacy stresses the role of negotiations and other foreign policy tools in decision making on transboundary waters, together with a broadening of the traditional diplomatic spheres to multiple tracks (Barua 2018; Mirumachi 2020). With water often seen as a strategic resource and related to (violent) conflicts, either as cause, trigger, or instrument (DeStefano 2017; Ide 2015; Gleick 2019), the water diplomacy discourse draws not only from IR literature but also, to a greater extent, from peace and conflict studies. The discourse around water diplomacy acknowledges the complexity of water-related problem settings and their interlinkage with other policy fields, issue-areas, and professional and academic communities. It also considers the interrelatedness of transboundary water governance with regional security and stability beyond the water sector. We use the term water diplomacy when referring to the political processes and practices of preventing, mitigating, and resolving disputes over transboundary water resources and developing joint water governance arrangements by applying foreign policy means. This definition involves looking beyond state-centric conceptualisations and focusing on how diplomats and others actually *do* transboundary water cooperation at different levels.

We use the broader term of transboundary water governance to refer to the institutions (including organisational structures as well as formal and informal rules and norms), processes, and practices that regulate water use, protection,

and management at a transboundary level. These practices and processes mostly occur within established decision-making mechanisms of transboundary river basin organisations or other institutionalised arrangements. The main actors are officials from the respective line Ministries dealing with water, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, other relevant national agencies, but also third parties engaged in these processes, academic experts, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It therefore includes water diplomacy processes, but also interactions beyond these.

Zwarteveen et al. (2017) stress that water governance is about distributions of water, but also of voice and authority, and expertise. Decisions about water are therefore inherently political choices, which are based on certain norms and rules, and are also influenced by which and whose authority and forms of knowledge are seen as legitimate. Focusing on distributions helps to recognise governance as a political process, dealing with contentious questions of fairness, justice, and representation. Water governance takes place through complex processes only some of which are regulated and institutionalised, which is also why not all involved actors are formally designated as water decision makers. In transboundary contexts, this means that understanding conflict and cooperation between states requires looking beyond the state to grasp the complexities of the politics of the distribution of water, voice, and knowledge among different actors and at different scales. Critical scholars of transboundary water interactions stress that there is not a linear development from conflict to cooperation. Rather, conflict and cooperation are both inherent in transboundary water governance and often occur simultaneously. Neither is conflict per se negative and cooperation positive, but both can have constructive as well as destructive dimensions (Mirumachi 2015; Zeitoun & Mirumachi 2008; Zeitoun et al. 2020). We therefore understand transboundary water governance as a dynamic field where different state and non-state actors with different interests and backgrounds interact in processes of decision making on shared water resources, with different degrees of institutionalised cooperation. As a specific field of governance, it is not only shaped by the geographic, climatic, or hydrological conditions of water availability, but embedded in the general political relations among basin countries, in the respective political systems and bureaucratic cultures. For example, the European integration smoothed transboundary water cooperation among European Union member states, not only due to common water quality standards, but also because of shared policy priorities, close overall cooperation, reduction of language and travel barriers, etc. In other contexts, like the Indus, the Jordan, or the Kura river basins, political tensions between riparian countries make even technical collaboration efforts an issue of security politics. Also, how independent from their respective national directives staff members of a transboundary basin organisation are depends not only on the formal mandate but also on the political setting and on bureaucratic and decision-making cultures. As these relations and cultures are always gendered, looking at transboundary water governance with a gendered lens does not stop at documenting and explaining

the formal roles and positions of men, women, and those with a different gender identification.

Gender and Transboundary Water Governance

Gender is about identities and identifications, about who and what is understood as "man", "manly", "woman", or "womanly" – or something else altogether. Although "embodied", these identities and identifications are never just or purely ordained by biology but constructed by society. They are deeply cultural performances that always emerge in specific histories and places, with gendered difference intersecting with other differences – such as those based on class, race, age, religion, etc. – to form power-laden social hierarchies (Butler 1990; Shields 2008; Goodrich et al. 2019). One's gender co-shapes opportunities for expression and self-realisation, and co-determines how one is perceived and valued by others. Beyond individual identities, gender manifests itself in societal structures (of kinship, property, divisions of income and labour, etc.) as well as in symbols and discourses (dress, ways of moving and behaving) (Harding 1986; Zwarteveen 2017). In addition to the dominance of one gender in important positions, then, gendered hierarchies and differences also become institutionalised and normalised in how notions of and associations with "male" or "female" shape the definition and qualification of what and who matters in transboundary water governance.

Hence, analysing how transboundary water governance is gendered means identifying and questioning men and their dominance, as much as it entails unravelling how prevailing professional norms and institutions themselves are shaped and coloured by what it means to be a "real" or "good" man. A critical re-evaluation and reassessment of everything and everyone that is marginal to or not fitting the male norm is a necessary accompaniment. To date, the analysis of gender and water has focused mostly on women – on their role and positions, their marginalisation, or on strategies for their inclusion or empowerment. These studies have yielded a wealth of data and provide an important empirical basis for feminist understanding and action. Yet, without also looking at men, and questioning how the male–female distinction has emerged and operates in transboundary water governance, the analysis remains incomplete. This can be done by taking inspiration from masculinity studies, and from a focus on "masculinisation" as a historical process.

Masculinities

Based on Whitehead (2002) and Zwarteveen (2017), we define masculinities as "those practices and ways of being that serve to validate the masculine subject's sense of itself as male/boy/man" (Zwarteveen 2017, p. 82). Being (seen as) male or masculine is loosely related to visible biological features, making it somewhat more difficult for some bodies to be seen, accepted, or treated as "real" men than for others. We use the term masculinities in plural

to indicate that there are several masculinities, a diversity that emerges partly from how gender intersects with other axes of difference (e.g., class, race, age, sexual preference, professional field or religion), but also from differences in how people can or prefer to perform their gender. Even within a relatively small socio-cultural setting, be it a country or a ministry, there may be multiple masculinities. The concept of hegemonic masculinity expresses that masculinities are not only plural, but are also hierarchically ordered – with some ways of performing masculinity being considered as superior to others (Connell 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Hegemonic masculinity, then, is the socially or culturally preferred way of being a man – it expresses what a "real" man is supposed to be like.

The current masculine character of transboundary water governance is the result of historical processes: there is nothing natural or normal about it, nor is it static or inherent to the field. Spike Peterson's (2004) definition of masculinism neatly captures such processes as:

> the discursive, cultural, material, and structural privileging of that which is associated with "maleness" or masculinity (which is not limited to men) over that which is associated with "femaleness" or femininity (which is not limited to women).
>
> (p. 45)

Masculinism therefore justifies, normalises, naturalises, and depoliticises existing gender hierarchies in transboundary water governance, as we discuss in the next section.

Water Resources Management and Diplomacy as Masculinised Fields

While both water resources management and diplomacy are masculinised professional fields, they are so in different ways. In what follows, we review and summarise research about the genderedness of the two professions. This, we hope, provides a useful starting point for reflecting on and examining what happens when the two come together in transboundary water governance.

Tracing the Historical Emergence of Diplomacy and Water Resources Management as Professions

A first way to identify and trace how the two professional fields that come together in transboundary water governance are gendered is by studying how they historically emerged as professions. Diplomacy, at least in its formal and professional form, has long been a field reserved for men belonging to the upper-class elite or nobility. Diplomacy has therefore come to be culturally defined at the intersection of aristocracy and gender (Neumann 2012, Aggestam & Towns 2019). Even in Sweden, a country considered particularly liberal and

progressive in terms of social and gender equity, a female diplomat who entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 1986 noticed that its leadership "was strongly dominated by elderly distinguished men from the upper classes dressed in dark suits" (Sparre in Niklasson, B., & Robertson, F. (2018), p. 68).

It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that women started entering the Foreign Service; in most countries, they could first have administrative and consular positions before being allowed to occupy diplomatic posts (Neumann 2012; Enloe 2014; Herren 2014). In the 1920s, the first female diplomats started working in the United States and some European countries, followed by Turkey in 1932, Brazil in 1938, and Japan in 1950. Until the 1970s, or even more recently, however, in many countries married women continued to be banned from postings abroad or from working in the same embassies as their husbands (de Souza Farias & Do Carmo 2018; Fowler 2018; Rumelili & Suleymanoglu-Kurum 2018). Still today, globally 85 per cent of all ambassadors are men, and the more prestigious ambassadorial positions are less frequently occupied by women (Towns & Niklasson 2018). With diplomacy changing, also masculinities in diplomacy are changing. Neumann (2012), based on a study of the post-Second World War Norwegian Foreign Ministry, identified three types of masculinity: (1) the dominant civil servant masculinity, which stemmed from bourgeois, upper-middle class families; (2) the subordinate petit bourgeois masculinity, reflecting the upward social mobility under social democratic governments and after the Second World War; and (3) the troublemaking masculinity of the "68er",[3] challenging existing practices and norms (and supporting female colleagues). In addition, as Towns (2020) shows, a certain idea of femininity is also often associated with diplomacy as a soft (or weak) alternative to military power and violence.

The underrepresentation of women in formal diplomacy does not mean that women have not played a role in diplomacy. Scholars in diplomatic history have shown the important (but usually unofficial) functions of women behind the scenes (Bastian et al. 2014; Aggestam & Towns 2018). However, with the professionalisation in the nineteenth century "diplomacy came to be defined as an exclusively male and masculine profession" (Rumelili & Suleymanoglu-Kurum 2018, p. 90). Yet, in modern diplomacy women have also played crucial roles, most visibly as the spouses of ambassadors. They are responsible for hosting dinners, organising social events, or, more generally, for maintaining informal relations. Many diplomats would agree that such social events – that happen outside offices – are key to creating and maintaining relations of trust with their counterparts from other countries. This is important as trust is key for diplomacy to work (Aggestam & Towns 2018). Nevertheless, although diplomacy relies and has always relied on work done by women (often wives of male diplomats), this work is hardly recognised as an integral part in the "formal, anti-emotional, masculine-dominated world of traditional diplomacy" (Ross 2007, p. 156).

Not only is international politics male-dominated, but also its study. Mainstream IR has been "both an andro- and Eurocentric enterprise that […]

has used selective global and historical examples to universalize the experience of European men" (Ashworth & Swatuk 2018, p. 76; see also Peterson 2004, Tickner 1997). Ashworth and Swatuk (2018) link the two main theoretical schools in IR, realism and liberalism, with two different masculinities: the hypermasculinity of the warrior for the former, and the rational masculinity of the objective decision maker for the latter. IR has long been seen as the field of war and peace, of diplomacy, high-level politics, economic power – thus a field for men, that has nothing to do with the private domain, women, or the lives of working-class people. This was challenged by feminist IR scholars like Enloe (2014) who showed that where there are male diplomats, there are wives; where there are soldiers, there are prostitutes; where there are international businessmen, there are maids; where there is international trade, there are labourers.

Similarly, in water management, authority and expertise have historically come to be attributed more easily to men than to women. Water management is believed to require attributes and skills – like physical strength, technical competence, being in command, determination, self-confidence – that are usually associated with men rather than with women (Alda-Vidal et al. 2017; Rap & Oré 2017; Leder et al. 2019; Zwarteveen 2008). While no legal barriers exist, these perceptions act as barriers for women to seek careers in the water sector. A global survey found that less than 20 per cent of water service providers' staff are women (World Bank 2019). Despite regular laments about the need for more women in the water sector, there is surprisingly little actual data on the gender balance in the water sector. Even the 2016 World Water Development Report, devoted to the topic "Water and Jobs", has only a small sub-chapter on the gender gap, providing data about female participation in the labour market in general, not specifically for the water sector (WWAP 2016). Professional cultures in water are strongly shaped by engineers, as engineers dominate those who work in (public) water organisations. Gendered accounts of the rise of engineering as a profession (such as Oldenziel 1999 for the United States), in-depth studies of the professionalisation of irrigation and the history of engineering colleges in specific countries (see Zwarteveen 2017; Rap & Oré 2017; Mital 1986; Vera Delgado & Zwarteveen 2017; Liebrand 2022) do provide some insights in how water engineering became masculinised. First, these suggest that the gradual establishment of (irrigation) engineering as a scientific discipline and a profession was itself part of a more or less conscious move of (what until then were seen as) craftspeople to improve their social status and legitimacy. This move created a new possibility for upward mobility and political influence to those not born into the higher classes or belonging to the aristocracy. Second, the studies also show how the importance of irrigation engineering in creating a modern society throughout the twentieth century – most visible through the construction of large hydraulic infrastructures (see Molle et al. 2009) – was important in bolstering the power and prestige of irrigation engineers. In some countries, including Peru (see Vera Delgado & Zwarteveen 2017;

Rap & Oré 2017) and the Netherlands (Bergsma 2019), water engineers became new protagonists of the societal and political elite, with some of them even becoming presidents. Third, these studies provide evidence to support the hypothesis that the symbolic construction of engineering as an honourable and prestigious profession happened through the intersection of gendered and racial metaphorical binaries. These qualify the skills, abilities, and expertise of white, upper-class men as better than, and often even in explicit opposition to, those of others. In Peru, for instance, this happened partly through the association of engineering with rural *hacienda* and *mestizo* men[4] (Vera Delgado & Zwarteveen 2017). In many other places, like India or the United States, it was also deeply shaped by the intimate connections between engineering and the military with the first public engineering departments often being part of the army (Zwarteveen 2017).[5] Hence, in India many of the first colonial irrigation engineers were army men who were trained in military colleges (see Gilmartin 1994, 2003). The overall conclusion from these studies is that irrigation engineering (and the water profession more broadly) *was made* masculine and white, and therefore intrinsically incompatible with femininity and non-white. The first engineering institute of the British Empire in India in 1847, for instance, was Roorkee College. It offered different courses for different classes of students: Engineers, Upper Subordinate, and Lower Subordinate. Who could follow which class was clearly specified: the Engineers class was just for Europeans, the Upper Subordinate class was for both Europeans and Indians, and the Lower Subordinate class was just for Indians. Hence, initially only Europeans could become engineers (Mital 1986; see also Zwarteveen 2017).

While in water management and diplomacy the respective processes of masculinisation and the masculine ideals are clearly different, we can see that it has shaped hierarchies that are closely interlinked with class (in diplomacy) and race (in engineering).

The Making Of "True" Diplomats and Water Managers

The modelling of engineers or diplomats from a distinctly masculine mould – making sure that their appearance and behaviour fit what is expected – does not happen by itself. It requires active work, much of which happens through more or less explicit processes of socialisation and acculturation, many of which occur during their education and training. Hence, diplomats are often trained in specific diplomatic academies after a tough selection process. In Brazil, for example, aspiring diplomats follow an 18-month programme at the Rio Branco Institute, their MFA's diplomatic academy. The Dutch MFA's traineeship starts with a joint 8-week course. In Germany, aspiring diplomats spend several months of their training programme together in the MFA's own training centre located in a castle near Berlin. The "crew", as each cohort is called, forms the basis for strong bonding and informal networks throughout the career, one that stays stable throughout regular changing postings.

Likewise, many water professionals are trained in specific engineering colleges. Similar to what happens in diplomacy academies, training as an engineer also works to forge strong homosocial bonds with those being trained in the same year, often forming friendships that last for the rest of their life. Rap and Oré (2017) showed through an in-depth study of such a college, namely *La Molina* in Peru, how the making of engineers-as-men (or men-as-engineers) happens often through ritualised performances – including theatrical dances and the singing of songs – that forge strong linkages between engineering and a specific version of masculinity.

The making of "true" diplomats and engineers happens through actively cultivating ways of speaking about and knowing the world. Hence, engineers prefer numbers, maps, and equations and may dismiss other forms of talking about or knowing water (see Zwarteveen & Liebrand 2016). Equally, Ross (2007) has shown how the use of a specific terminology representing a particular way of thinking contributes to keeping diplomacy barely intelligible for outsiders and to its image as a closed world.

Women and Other "Not-Normal Men" in Masculine Fields

In both diplomacy and water resources management, more or less formal requirements for and rules of access and belonging to the profession are linked to deeply gendered idea(l)s about what it means to be a "good" or "true" diplomat or a "good" or "true" water engineer. These ideas and ideals make it much harder for some people (e.g., all those who do not identify as typical men or who do not conform to ruling stereotypes about masculinity) to enter these professions. They make it equally more difficult for them to be seen and recognised as well-performing professionals or to successfully make a career in this field.

Women who nevertheless want to enter and perform well in the field have to do "gender work" to prove that it is possible to be both feminine and a true or good diplomat or water resources manager. They can do this by creatively stretching the meanings of both femininity and professionality, or by trying to change how both are defined (Spike Peterson 2004; Towns 2020).

In diplomacy, the arrival of the first female diplomats and ambassadors challenged the established protocol rules. While diplomatic protocol serves as a common code to overcome national and cultural differences, its masculine character became obvious when for example rules regarding correctly addressing others or seating arrangements could not be applied to female diplomats (and their husbands) (see e.g., Schattenberg 2014; Zala & Bentele 2014). A nice example of how female diplomats adapt to more informal rules and ways of bonding comes from the Turkish diplomat Sumru Noyan. When holding a high position at the UNODC in Vienna, she started to watch football matches and even hung a Turkish football team's flag in her office in order to share cultural preferences with her male colleagues (Rumelili & Suleymanoglu-Kurum 2018).

Studies of the genderedness of water bureaucracies in South Asia (Liebrand 2014, 2022; Kulkarni et al. 2009; Liebrand & Udas 2017; Udas & Zwarteveen 2010) likewise show that those few women who do work in water management find it difficult to be recognised and seen to perform as "real" water professionals and face all kinds of practical and ideological problems. One is either a man and an engineer or a woman and, therefore by definition, not an engineer. Combining the two identities is difficult, risky, or simply implies that one of them suffers. Hence, if a female engineer is successful as an engineer, she risks being accused of "unwomanly" behaviour. As one assistant engineer of the Bangladesh Water Board states: "if a woman is successful, she is told that she is egoistic and stretching herself too far" (Kulkarni in Zwarteveen 2017, p. 90). Hence, women need to actively invest in constructing themselves as credible engineers, while remaining convincing as decent women (see Zwarteveen 2017).

The Gendered Organisation of Work

Another way to start examining and questioning the genderedness of professions is by observing how work is organised, something that is directly related to how different types of work are valued. Feminists have long pointed out that 8-hour working days are only possible when the tasks of reproduction (cooking, cleaning, caring for children and the elderly) can be delegated to others. These tasks are seldom recognised as "real" work, and if they are, it is when they are paid (such as employed help in the home) and valued much less than the salaried work of, for instance, diplomats and water managers. Although many other examples are possible, in both diplomacy and water resources management the gendering of work becomes strikingly apparent in the importance attached to "being in" or "going to" the field. In diplomacy, "being in the field" refers to postings abroad, whereas in the water sector it refers to travelling to project sites – sites where engineering work is located, the construction or operation of which needs to be done or supervised.

Postings abroad form a key element of professional identity and career advancement in diplomacy, and in many countries women used to be excluded from it. When the first women entered the United States Foreign Service in the 1920s, overseas postings and career development were denied to them, due to the belief that, among other things:

> Women could not keep secrets, faced physical risk in foreign postings, were unable to network effectively given restrictions on access to elite clubs in many locations and relied too heavily on emotions to function in a cerebral and rational field of endeavour.
>
> (Bashevkin 2018, p. 47)

When organising diplomatic postings abroad, it has long been taken for granted that the spouse (and children) would accompany the male partner. Spouses

were not expected to engage in paid work themselves, but to concentrate on their role as housewives, which included organising and hosting social events for their husbands, as previously mentioned. This has changed in the past decades, with career interests of spouses now being considered much more. Yet, specific challenges for women remain, especially related to societal expectations. An example from Sweden illustrates this:

> The Swedish diplomat Maria Velasco is one of those who had to leave her family behind in Sweden when serving at a foreign mission. She recounts how appalled a male Nordic ambassador was when she told him of her family situation, even though he himself had made the same choice to go alone. When she wondered how their decisions differed, he answered: "But you are a *mother*!".
>
> (Niklasson & Robertson 2018, p. 76)

Being a water engineer also requires travel, not in the form of long postings abroad, but duty travels for maintenance, construction, or monitoring of water infrastructure, often located in remote areas. Research on public irrigation engineers in Nepal and India shows how trips to the field are seen as particularly challenging and sometimes even inappropriate for women engineers. This is partly because women are expected to also assume all kinds of domestic tasks, thus spending a couple of days in the field signals that they are not "good" women. It is also because of how the field is seen as a distinctly masculine space, one that is not suitable for women due to poor sanitary facilities or because it involves physical hardship, among other things (Liebrand & Udas 2017).

Studies that shed light on how professions are defined and organised through spatial distinctions between more male and more female spaces suggest that part of the reason why it is difficult to challenge them – even when it would require relatively straightforward and practical adjustments – has to do with how these distinctions themselves have become part of symbolically demarcating and defining professional identities and cultures. Hence, making it possible for women to enter into "masculine" spaces such as the field challenges what it means to be a diplomat or water manager at symbolic levels.

From a Feminist Perspective?

The aim of this edited collection is to shed light on the often hidden gender dynamics of water conflict and cooperation at transboundary level and the implicit assumptions that guide research as well as policies, and to contribute to the policy and academic debate with empirical case studies, practitioners' accounts, and theoretical reflections.

A feminist perspective helps to achieve this aim in different ways. It challenges the state-focused approach of traditional IR research that limits the theoretical space to include gender in the analysis, and often overlooks domestic

complexities or concrete practices of interstate relations in transboundary water governance. Building on feminist theories also allows shifting the research gaze to the more personal and relational aspects of IR, thinking beyond states as the most important units of analysis, and highlighting the role and agency of various individuals that make up these states and their institutions (Ackerly et al. 2006; Mackay et al. 2010). Beyond that, a feminist perspective includes a reflection on how knowledge is constructed and how gender biases shape the academic discourses and scientific knowledge generation in the disciplines that study and inform diplomacy and water governance.

Not every analysis of gender relations or women's participation has an explicit feminist approach. On the contrary, some experts and practitioners prefer to stress that they and their research and/or projects are not feminist (see Kunz et al. 2019). Their rationale for a gendered approach is more instrumental and relates to expected overall benefits like increased effectiveness, for example. This book also brings together authors with different approaches and understandings, one of its core values being this diversity. Nevertheless, we as editors have an explicit feminist understanding of our approach. For us, a feminist perspective means to critically question and challenge masculinities and gender hierarchies in transboundary water governance – not by adding women, but by challenging power relations and using gender as an analytical category. In this, we follow Zwarteveen's (2017) understanding that a "feminist analysis sets out not just to describe and name different manifestations of gender, but also to critically unravel their effects in terms of power and the creation of social hierarchies" (p. 82). This means focusing "less on sex as an empirical variable and more on gender as an analytical category […] and hence, the significance of gender in how we *think* as well as how we act. […] [It] entails a shift from 'adding' empirically to 'rethinking' analytically" (Spike Peterson 2004, p. 40, emphasis in original). A feminist exploration of transboundary water governance thus means scrutinising the (gendered) ideas and norms behind supposedly neutral or normal procedures and standards and investigating how these have different effects on men and women. It entails uncovering how expected behaviours of professionals (and others) engaged in transboundary water governance are shaped by historical processes of gendered socialisation, and how institutionalised norms of "good" professionalism or behaviour more broadly have co-evolved with what is deemed culturally appropriate for men or for women (Mackay et al. 2010).

While we have stated repeatedly that looking at numbers is not sufficient, showing numbers and making women visible is an important first step for a feminist analysis. It exposes the masculine dominance of the existing arrangements and processes of transboundary water governance. If women (categorised as resembling femininity) are added to the state/diplomacy/the water sector (categorised as masculine), it has consequences: either women are forced to adapt, meaning to change in order not to be what is perceived as feminine anymore (thus, become more masculine), or the category must be transformed to include the feminine aspects. If the latter occurs, the meaning

and understanding of the original category (e.g., diplomacy) changes and with that also the associated meaning of masculinity. Therefore, aiming for the inclusion of more women in transboundary water governance – while bearing the risk of being only about achieving a quota of female actors – can also, and ultimately probably will, pave the way for the reframing and restructuring of the very concept and understanding of transboundary water governance and diplomacy.

We are convinced that such a perspective contributes to questioning the taken-for-grantedness of the status quo and to better understand the rules of engagement in a field in which the exchange between people is highly orchestrated through diplomatic protocol and informal etiquette, while acknowledging that these interactions occur simultaneously between people as individuals and as representatives of their states.

In this sense, a feminist approach is also not only about visibility and empowerment of women, but about addressing all inequalities that are linked to a devaluation of "female" or "feminine". This includes raising awareness of and challenging the dominance of the Global North in the scholarship in our field, while the objects of study are often transboundary basins in the Global South. We have tried to address this imbalance by reaching out to authors from diverse backgrounds, and including case studies from both the Global South and the Global North. This was also important to situate both gender and transboundary water governance in specific contexts, explore their dynamics in their own particular setting, and nurture attentiveness and sensitivity to the concept- or language-dependence of knowledge about gender in transboundary water governance. However, this endeavour did not reach the success we had hoped for. Therefore, we acknowledge the early stages of the discussion on gender in transboundary water governance, and the path still to go to make all the different voices and perspectives heard.

Another ambition not met is that in the chapters, gender and transboundary water governance is discussed through binary categorisation (explicit or implicit), primarily focusing on cisgender individuals. We did not succeed in making visible those who do not identify according to these binary cisgender norms. By at least being explicit about their absence, we want to signal our awareness that there is much more to unravel in terms of gender and transboundary waters than we manage to do with this volume. In this sense, the book is only a first step in identifying gender-based hierarchies and power differences as a basis for questioning and possibly changing them.

Outline of the Book

This volume contains empirical case studies, discourse analyses, practitioners' accounts, and theoretical reflections to assess the nexus of gender and transboundary water governance. The authors are a mix of well-established academics, promising young researchers, and experts with a practitioner background. The different positions of the authors as researchers, gender

experts, or practitioners make for diverse texts, ranging from theory-guided research chapters to chapters that are written from a practitioner's view. There are two chapters in the format of written interviews, allowing us to bring the rich experience of female water negotiators to light. For several contributors, writing for an academic book like this was a new and sometimes challenging endeavour. We are grateful for the extra effort they undertook to share their insights.

The first section of the volume is entitled "Rethinking frameworks and knowledge" and collects contributions that question the established ways of thinking about transboundary water governance and the categories and terms used in its discussion. This section aims to invite the reader to rethink supposedly neutral theories and approaches and discover the way they are gendered. In Chapter 2, Diego Jara and Mariana Yumbay Yallico present the perspective of the first indigenous female judge of the National Court of Justice of Ecuador, who has been involved in the negotiations for the establishment of a binational water commission between Ecuador and Peru. Her account shows the importance of considering not only different genders, but also different forms of knowledge and different understandings of what "transboundary" is, and of who sets and defines borders. Ritu Priya and Tania Debnath review the academic literature on transboundary waters in South Asia in Chapter 3 to show how knowledge production is dominated by men, and ask if and how this is linked to different disciplinary backgrounds and theoretical approaches. In Chapter 4, Alyssa Offutt reviews the literature on the water-conflict nexus at multiple scales. She analyses how far gender is considered and shows where the blind spots are that hinder a full understanding of the genderedness of water conflicts. Medha Bisht asks in Chapter 5 what feminising water diplomacy could mean. She brings together network studies and diplomacy in order to develop a more relational understanding of (water) diplomacy and applies this to the collaboration between India and Bhutan on the Saralbhanga/Saralpara river, a tributary of the Brahmaputra river.

The next section focuses on more practical questions: (how) can gender mainstreaming policies help support more gender equality in transboundary water governance? Ellen Hagerman, Hellen Natu, and Christine Ochieng (Chapter 6) reflect on one specific international programme to foster women's participation and leadership in transboundary water governance in the Nile basin. Based on in-depth interviews with stakeholders, they assess the challenges to achieving a truly transformative approach for gender equality. These challenges are partly rooted in the fact that gender inequalities are deeply entrenched in daily practices, private and professional socialisations, and cultural norms that we are often not aware of. However, awareness is the first step toward changing them. In Chapter 7, Tobias von Lossow looks at five transboundary basins – Nile, Jordan, Zambesi, Indus, and Danube – and assesses whether and which gender-related policies are in place. His assessment is that presence and effect of gender policies are very modest, but he was nevertheless able to identify several factors that can help in promoting gender policies.

The third section aims to unravel some of the hidden gender dynamics in procedures, rules, and norms within transboundary water organisations and in negotiation processes. Jenniver Sehring analyses the gendered norms and practices within the transboundary Chu–Talas Commission in Central Asia in Chapter 8 and shows how they affect men and women differently in terms of access to and performing work on transboundary waters. In Chapter 9, Rachana Mattur and Rozemarijn ter Horst study an exceptional commission: in the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, a majority of leadership positions are held by women. They show how political and societal developments over the past decades have changed the water sector and transboundary decision making in the basin. Alexandra Said takes another look at the Nile basin in Chapter 10, focusing specifically on the Nile–Technical Advisory Committee to understand why there are so few women represented and how gender affects the decision-making processes in this committee. The last chapter (Chapter 11) in this section is again an interview chapter, it is a dialogue of Rozemarijn ter Horst with five female water diplomats and experts: Maria Amakali from Namibia, Anamika Barua from India, Nadia Gefoun from Sudan, Heide Jekel from Germany, and Pilar Carolina Villar from Brazil. They share their personal experiences of gender dynamics in water negotiations and more generally in manoeuvring in a male-dominated field.

In the concluding chapter, we reflect on the main insights gained from the chapters of this book, the different approaches taken by the authors, and the value a feminist perspective adds to understanding the dynamics of water conflict and cooperation.

Notes

1 De Silva et al. (2018), by analysing over 10,000 papers published between 1977 and 2016 that contain the keywords "women" and "water", found that the vast majority of them focused primarily on women's health in relation to water access and water quality and on the role of women as water users, rather than as managers and governors.
2 The blog series can be found on FLOWs at https://flows.hypotheses.org/category/research/engendering-water-diplomacy-research
3 The 68ers refers to a progressive student movement in European states and the generation born at the end of the Second World War and politicised in the late 1960s.
4 These are the sons or sometimes the paid assistants of large landholding farmers, many of whom descended from Spanish colonial families. A large proportion of those who were enrolled in the first engineering colleges in Peru belonged to this group, colouring it with a distinct countryside form of male behaviour.
5 This is in stark contrast to diplomacy, which happens to be presented as a soft (or feminine) alternative to the military, see Towns (2020).

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Part I

Rethinking Frameworks and Knowledge

2 An Interview with Dr. Mariana Yumbay Yallico, Human Rights Activist in Ecuador

Diego Jara and Mariana Yumbay Yallico

Introduction

Ecuador is an intercultural and plurinational state that recognises and guarantees the rights of indigenous communities, peoples, and nations as one of its basic constitutional principles (The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008 Art. 1, 56 in Constitute 2021). These rights ensure the participation of indigenous peoples in the use, management, and conservation of natural resources located in their lands, as well as the free, prior, and informed consultation in relation to plans and programmes that potentially have an environmental or cultural impact on their territories (Idem: Art. 57). This chapter provides insights on how the management of freshwater resources in transboundary contexts is perceived from the perspectives of an indigenous woman. We emphasise transboundary contexts in this chapter, as the experiences do not only address interactions between nations, but also their impact on people living in the border regions, as well as water that crosses boundaries in a legal pluralist state.

Dr. Mariana Yumbay Yallico is a Kichwa woman from the Waranka people in the Ecuadorian Andes. She is a lawyer specialised in human rights and criminal law, and an activist for indigenous people's movements. She became the first indigenous female judge of the National Court of Justice of Ecuador, and more recently, she became the Subsecretary for Social Affairs and Water Resources of the National Water Secretary of Ecuador. In this capacity she was part of the negotiations for the establishment of the Binational Commission for Integrated Water Resources Management of Transboundary Basins between Ecuador and Peru (EPBCTW).[1]

According to Dr. Yumbay, indigenous women and particularly Waranka women have a close relationship with nature, as both give life. They are also holders of ancestral knowledge and custodians of the Kichwa culture and language. Despite their fundamental role in society, indigenous women have been subject to different forms of discrimination and racism for centuries. This has led to the gradual loss of their identity, including traditional clothing and language, and they were particularly oppressed during the '80s. This situation improved through a series of different indigenous uprisings during the '90s and the adoption of bilingual intercultural education which has helped them

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recover their traditions. Education has facilitated their organisation and their fight for collective rights (Pacari, 2020).

Indigenous peoples have lived in harmony with nature for centuries and have acquired a unique knowledge which can be crucial to understanding shared ecosystems and implementing measures to protect them in a peaceful way. Indigenous peoples also have high stakes in protecting these fragile ecosystems as they live within them and depend directly on them and are thus the first to suffer from the negative effects of inadequate management of natural resources. The lessons and experiences shared by Dr. Yumbay in this interview aim to demonstrate the importance of involving indigenous peoples in water diplomacy worldwide and challenge the meaning of something being transboundary.

I, Diego Jara, was an observer of the processes of negotiation between Ecuador and Peru for the establishment of EPBCTW, I consider it a privilege to have had the opportunity to witness Dr. Yumbay guiding these processes and bringing a different approach to traditional water diplomacy. I am inspired by her work on the defence of indigenous people's rights and the protection of nature. The interview was conducted in Spanish and translated into English for the purpose of this chapter. Only minor adjustments were made to ensure a natural flow of the text.

Thank you, Mariana Yumbay, for agreeing to this interview. The first question relates to the work you have done on human rights and indigenous peoples' issues, especially in relation to water governance in Ecuador. Can you describe the work you have done throughout the years?

The work I have done throughout my life is related in a large part to the human rights of indigenous peoples[2] and nationalities[3] of Ecuador, as well as public administration and in particular the justice administration system. Being a judge has allowed me to familiarise myself with the functioning of the justice administration system from the inside out, whilst at the same time from the outside in, as throughout the years I have also dedicated myself to litigation as a lawyer and the overall practice of law. I worked for the defence of the human rights of indigenous peoples, as well as vulnerable groups, including women, children and adolescents, peasants, and others. I contributed to peoples and nationalities as a legal advisor to executing training processes on various topics such as indigenous justice, human rights, collective rights, women's rights, children's rights, free and informed prior consultation, constitutional rights, legal pluralism, right to land and territory, and the right to water, among others.

Regarding water governance in Ecuador, being part of an indigenous group myself has always allowed me to be involved in community activities and within it in those related to water governance; this is by virtue of the fact that, throughout history, communities and indigenous peoples have been carrying out the management and administration of water based on their own practices,

knowledge, and rights within the communities. The governance systems implemented by the communities' own initiative, with the support of some national and foreign non-governmental organisations, have been fundamental in conserving the water resources, which in turn is fundamental for life.

These communities have organised and managed water with their own decision-making and participatory mechanisms, which has allowed them to build strong organisations that not only carry forward water governance, but also the solution to the various problems that have affected the indigenous peoples and nationalities of Ecuador. In this context, from a very young age I have been involved in the activities developed by the communities for water governance, have participated in the work carried out within the organisations to guarantee access to water for all, for people, animals, and for use in agriculture, through the community work called *minka*[4] in which children and adults have been participating, as well as in the decision making and planning. These experiences have allowed me to get to know and learn a lot from our community leaders who have led these processes. On the other hand, activities of resistance have also been carried out to oppose policies and laws that could affect the rights of indigenous peoples. This opposition has emerged against water legislation that only benefits large agricultural entrepreneurs, thus promoting the hoarding of the vital liquid, leaving aside indigenous peoples and nationalities who as producers guarantee the food security of the population.

What opportunities and challenges have you encountered throughout your professional career as a woman and member of an indigenous community?

In terms of opportunities, there have been several and one of them is related to my belonging to an indigenous people. Being an active member of this community has allowed me to be in contact with the processes, actions, and struggles in defence of the rights of indigenous peoples, among which are the rights to water, territory, and other natural resources. I have been part of processes to define the constitutional reforms prior to the Constitutional Assembly of 1997 that culminated in the approval of the Constitution of 1998, as well as in discussions of the reforms to the Water Law.

I have had to face enormous professional and personal challenges due to being part of an indigenous people because discrimination and racism has always been present. And indigenous women have had to muster courage when interacting with a non-indigenous society. But discrimination does not only come from the non-indigenous societies, there is also discrimination in our communities and families, unfortunately. For example, there is the patriarchal, deeply rooted idea that women are only useful for domestic chores and that education is reserved only for men.

I have not had to suffer this kind of discrimination with my family. On the contrary, I have had the support of my parents; my family has always been involved in organisations and changing processes, which has allowed me to be

able to study and get involved in the organisational processes and open spaces. As proof of this, I became the first indigenous female judge in the province of Bolivar, where I come from. Later, after a merit-based competition process, I became the first indigenous judge at the highest National Court of Justice of Ecuador. Overcoming these challenges helps us, women, to demonstrate our capacity, work, honesty, and efficiency. The very fact of coming from nothing, and having lived closely with injustice and inequality, has made it possible for us to have a different performance that is conscious and committed to reality.

Could you share with us how transboundary water management is carried out in Ecuador, especially regarding the actors involved, the role of indigenous peoples, and priorities or conflicts that are addressed?

Ecuador is inhabited by 14 indigenous nationalities and 18 indigenous peoples, in addition to Afro-Ecuadorians, Montubios, and non-indigenous people. Within this framework, there are several nationalities such as the Wuaorani, Kichwa, Shuar, Achuar, Epera, Awa, Chachi, and others who live on the border with both Colombia and Peru. On the other hand, there are rivers shared between Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru, which has led the indigenous people to have a relationship of harmonious coexistence. They carry out cooperation and coordination with their brothers because in practice they are relatives and belong to the same nationality. The only thing that separates them is the border set by states. Meanwhile, Ecuador has also been promoting joint work with bordering countries, looking for joint management and administration of the shared rivers in order to guarantee conservation as well as sustainability and non-pollution. Within this framework, work has been developed jointly. For instance, we all face problems affecting transboundary waters that come from large-scale mining and oil and timber companies that do not understand that prioritising exploitation hinders the conservation of these resources for our future generations.

So the struggle of the people living in the border areas is a joint fight, connected to the government's demand to stop this voracious ambition to exploit these resources. In the Ecuadorian case, oil has been exploited for over 40 years. However, the economic situation of the indigenous peoples living in these areas affected by the pollution from exploitation has not changed. They remain mired in poverty, without access to basic services and without a good education.

On the other hand, for indigenous peoples and their cosmovision, land, water, and all other elements of nature, which is *pacha mama*, have life and affect the existence of humanity. The human being is not the owner of it but a component of the ecosystem. So humans have the responsibility to take care of it, protect it and preserve it, and to ensure a dignified life free of pollution for its present and future generations. In our communities there is the awareness of taking only what is necessary from nature. This worldview, of course,

contrasts with the objectives promoted by governments that see indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources as the only alternative for the next generation of economic resources, without taking into account what habitat and home for indigenous nationalities and peoples is, or the other living beings who also have the right to life. Unfortunately, this reality will not change as long as the economies of countries depend on the exploitation of natural resources and governments do not implement other strategies.

Do you consider that the gender perspective has been considered in transboundary water governance? Do you consider that there is a large difference in the proportion of men and women in meetings? What do you consider to be the causes of this situation?

To answer this question, it is important to divide the life and reality of the indigenous peoples into two parts: the first, before the arrival of the Spaniards, in which there is empirical and philosophical evidence that shows a different reality of a relationship based on principles of complementarity between the different peoples. The second part is after the arrival [of the Spaniards], so to say, during the colonial and republic times. We have lived a reality where the spaces belonging to women have not been recognised, which is not only the Ecuadorian or Latin American case, but a reality that has been experienced worldwide. The belief that women serve only as decorative objects and for domestic chores has led to women carrying out great struggles to demand their rights to be recognised, both in international instruments and in national regulations and, most importantly, for their rights to be implemented and guaranteed by the states. In this framework, in the Ecuadorian case we could say that women began to play an important role in the '60s and onwards, but if we refer to indigenous women it is much later.

Now, from the state point of view, rights have been incorporated in favour of women since the '90s, allowing, for example, a greater participation of women in political and public life; public policies have been designed to ensure much greater participation of women so that the gender perspective has been taken into account by the institutions. All of this is a result of strong and arduous work executed by women.

When it comes to indigenous women, this reality was much more complex, because indigenous women were not only subject to exclusion within the communities but also, when they had to interact with the non-indigenous world, they had to experience exclusion and discrimination both from society in general and from the state itself. That is, indigenous women are discriminated against three times over: for being women, for being indigenous, and for being poor.

This reality has depended a lot on the contact they have had with the Western population. The more distant and little contact they have had with Western society, I believe the more they have managed to maintain the

principles of indigenous peoples such as complementarity or duality, where both men and women have the same conditions and are complementary. We cannot speak of a society where a man can live and evolve by himself, only one where he can do so together with his partner. For this reason, within the vision of indigenous peoples, not only in human beings are there men and women, but also there are male stones, female stones, male trees, female trees. It is the same concerning animals – in the snowy mountains and mountains there are also males and females, for example the *Tayta*[5] – Father Chimborazo and the Mama – Mother Tungurahua, the *Tayta* Imbabura, and the Mama Cotacachi and so on.

I consider that some indigenous transboundary peoples have promoted equal participation of men and women in the use and management of water since ancient times. However, this has not been the case in all indigenous communities; therefore, it has been necessary to adopt regulations, policies, and laws to ensure the inclusion of gender perspectives and increase the participation of women.

I believe that participation policies have been strengthened since 2000, with the aim of reducing the existing gap, which was reflected in the statistical data that there are few women leading water organisations, for example. In the same way, measures are taken to ensure that there is equal participation in the assemblies where decisions are made and that in these spaces there are also women making decisions and that they are not just there to fill a quota.

It is pertinent to point out that women's participation in water management and administration has played a key role and has existed for many years; it cannot be said that their participation has been recent. On the contrary, it has been key; women participate in the *mingas*[6] for example, without their spouse, father, or siblings. In other words, women have always been involved and were always present in the resistance actions in defence of water, leading the struggles, without fear of being the object of aggression by public forces, so they were always active. What has happened is that women's leading role has not been made visible, which is a mistake by the organisations. This situation has been changing positively, little by little.

From your experience, how are the dynamics of the meetings or negotiations from a gender point of view? Are there differences when there is a mixed group or groups of mostly men or mostly women? Do you consider that there are gender stereotypes and/or cultural aspects that affect the meetings or negotiations?

It is necessary to establish that there are differences between and within every case, peoples, and community. As I pointed out earlier, everything depends on the contact they have had with Western culture, so that where there has been greater contact with the Western world, this denial and invisibilisation of women's participation is stronger. Some years ago, I had to do a study on the

violence and legal situation of indigenous women in one of the provinces of Ecuador. One of the interviewees told me:

> We have mistreated women a lot, that is what we learned from our employers, they told us that they are only good for the household, to give birth and take care of the *wawas*,[7] and that is why at the beginning we preferred to send our sons to study and not our daughters. Because we said that they [daughters] would surely get married and what would be the use of studying, that was the thought we had, but this has changed thanks to the organization.

On one occasion, I attended a meeting within my organisation and I saw only two or three women speaking in a room full of about 150 men and women. In several cases, the woman whispered her thoughts to her husband so that he would be the one to transmit her idea to the room. Then when I asked the women why they did not speak up, they told me that they were afraid. However, this reality in some cases persists despite the work that has been done; I personally believe that this happens because of all the violence and domination that has been exercised against women, which is not only limited to the colonial period but also what has happened in the Republic.

From my experience after working in the National Water Secretariat, the directives of the organisations that manage and administer water are mostly led by men – there is no strong participation of women. Indeed, it is visible that discrimination still persists and proof of this is that women are protagonists in the *mingas* and others but are not being considered to lead organisations. This is a fact that must be worked on so that the governance of water is also in the hands of women.

The term "transboundary" is usually used to refer to rivers that cross borders between countries. If a river crosses indigenous peoples' territories, how was it managed? How are rivers governed between indigenous peoples and the state? What lessons can we learn about river management by indigenous peoples?

First, it must be taken into account that, for indigenous peoples who live on the border, there are no limits and therefore "transboundary" is not within their vocabulary. It is simply a shared river as well as their lands and other knowledge so much so that in the life of the indigenous peoples everything is communal and therefore it is necessary to share. This reality made indigenous peoples raise the need to recognise the right to dual nationality of all the inhabitants who live on the border. This, by virtue of the fact that, from the limits imposed, in some cases the parents were Colombian and the children Ecuadorian and so on. This is effectively managed in the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008 (in Constitute 2021) in its Article 7: "persons belonging to communities,

peoples or nationalities recognized by Ecuador with presence in the border areas" (Art. 7).

Therefore, the work on the border has been free of conflict, the management has been developed in complete harmony among the indigenous peoples. I must add that the governance of transboundary water has been carried out through [the indigenous peoples'] own institutions and organisations, applying their knowledge, wisdom, and ancient practices, establishing regulations that allow the exercise of collective ownership, conservation, and care.

The structure and theories of transboundary water management have been developed mainly by men in more industrialised countries from a position of privilege. Do you consider that this system appropriately addresses the rights of indigenous peoples and the inclusion of women? What aspects specifically could be improved in these areas?

Indeed, this is what has happened, but it is not a reason to question this knowledge. I consider that any contribution is welcome. What I do consider necessary is to collect the knowledge, practices, wisdom, dynamics to know the institutions and rights of indigenous peoples. Ignorance sometimes makes us end up imposing theories or structures alien to the life of these peoples and this is what has happened with the work developed over the years from the governing institutions for water in Ecuador,[8] for example, this has led to the weakening and fragmentation of the community structure and its institutions. What should have been done was simply to recognise the indigenous peoples' own forms of community organisation and that the same institution should have been in charge of water management and administration. Only since 2008, when the new Constitution entered into force and as a result of the adoption of the SENAGUA Ministerial Agreement 031 from 2017, the autonomy of the communities, peoples, and nationalities was respected. Now, these communities in their condition of community governments are the ones who can decide which organisation carries out the water management and administration (Registro Oficial 2017).

In addition to respecting their organisational structure, I believe that through these, their own organisations, work should be pushed to ensure greater participation and strengthening of women's leadership but based on the logic and philosophy of indigenous peoples. That means taking into account the principles of complementarity, of duality between men and women.

What actions are needed to achieve more inclusive and fair processes in conflict resolution?

I believe that it is necessary to carry out planned and participatory work, ensuring the sound and effective participation of local stakeholders in all processes, which will allow the empowerment of plans, programmes, projects.

On the other hand, it is key to guaranteeing the exercise of the collective right of free, prior, and informed consultation. This will contribute to the minimisation of internal conflicts.

And for those cases in which internal conflicts arise, the solution for the reestablishment of harmony and balance within these peoples or nationalities must be guaranteed through their own institutions, authorities, and, most importantly, based on their own norms and judicial mechanisms for conflict resolution. This has been adopted by the Ecuadorian Constitution[9] in accordance with international instruments, in particular with Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization[10]; therefore it is binding and of obligatory application. This instrument has also been ratified by sister countries, in this case Colombia and Peru with whom we share the waters.

Likewise, it is necessary to achieve greater empowerment of the communities in all the work that is done in terms of water management and administration, which will reduce the number of conflicts.

For its part, the state, through its institutions, should promote intercultural and horizontal dialogue, within a framework of respect for the autonomy of indigenous peoples and nationalities, and seek strategies to ensure the full exercise of collective rights enshrined in the various normative instruments.

What has your experience as an indigenous woman been like when negotiations between indigenous peoples and the government take place?

Since 1990 I have been participating in struggles, uprisings, marches, and other activities. Effectively, days of struggle in defence and vindication of rights have concluded in the conformation of dialogue roundtables with the governments. However, dialogue roundtables have not been effective as there have been no concrete answers from the state. On the contrary, they have been used to neutralise the struggle of the indigenous peoples and diminish their proposals, with no answers to the collective demands at the end. That is the experience we have had over the years, while the only results have been people imprisoned and sometimes even killed. Furthermore, these social struggles of resistance for the demand of rights have been considered, by the governments and the factical[11] powers that control the state, as terrorist acts.

Therefore, I would say that there have not been true horizontal dialogues or true negotiations. On the contrary, there have been spaces that have been opened so that in the end the state evades its responsibility, does not attend to the demands of the people, and continues to postpone discussing inequality, exclusion, and poverty, among other issues that have been raised.

Based on these experiences, I believe that it is necessary that all negotiations or dialogues should be carried out in a framework of respect, sincerity, transparency, and equality, as well as an understanding that indigenous peoples only demand their rights be both exercised and respected. The aim is that, if

they sit at a dialogue roundtable, it is effectively a dialogue with results, not to impose the proposals of the governments in power.

Do you consider that the fact of being a woman and belonging to an indigenous people has had a positive influence on the resolution or prevention of any conflict?

I would say that it is not determinant; the most important thing is to know, be involved, and be part of the organisations, given the fact that an indigenous woman is linked to her family and the community in a permanent way.

Due to the complex economic conditions in the communities, women are the ones in charge of the family, the community, and the organisations, while their partners go out to work in the cities. In fact, when a conflict is generated, women are the ones who resolve conflicts within communities and their families.

On the other hand, an indigenous woman, being part of a community or a village, lives in the midst of complicated conflicts that are resolved in a communitarian way. This reality allows her to have knowledge and skills to face the adversities of family and community life. A woman's character of struggle and courage is consolidated from a young age and the strategies to resolve conflicts are learned in the process of being a permanent part of a collective whose struggle is historical. To that extent the intervention of indigenous women in conflict resolution is positive and decisive.

During the resolution or prevention of a conflict, have you felt any type of limitation or discrimination for being an indigenous woman? If so, what recommendations do you have to counteract these limitations?

It is necessary to take into account that, within the communities of indigenous peoples and nationalities, there is a system of administration of justice. Through this system, all conflicts arising within these territorial spaces are resolved, and the community assembly is the highest body responsible for resolving conflicts. If I am a member of the community organisation, I can use my expertise but I cannot influence a decision, since those who resolve the conflict are all community members, following their procedure, applying their principles, rules, and sanctions.

From my experience, I have not felt discriminated against by the communities, peoples, or nationalities. On the contrary, I have been invited to participate in the assembly of judgement and conflict resolution to advise and guide the process of conflict resolution in a framework of respect for human rights and others. My participation has been to strengthen the actions of the indigenous authorities, respecting their own dynamics of conflict resolution, which is fundamental.

Do you consider gender diversity important for transboundary water governance? Why? How can inclusion and representation in institutions be promoted?

Gender diversity is important, since all societies are made up of men, women, and other sexes and gender identities, so that all actions are carried out within a territory. Within this framework no one should be excluded from the governance of transboundary waters. Mechanisms must be adopted to ensure the participation of the different groups, given the fact that women and men have their own visions, and these different visions can contribute to the management and governance of transboundary waters.

Creating awareness of equity between men and women, making visible their contribution throughout history: no action has been carried out only by men, but rather, women have always participated. It is also important to strengthen the continuous education and training of women on topics such as participation and leadership, women's rights, governance, rights of indigenous peoples, and philosophy of indigenous peoples and nationalities, among other topics that could strengthen and develop the skills to assume new responsibilities both within community organisations that manage and administer transboundary water, as well as assuming representation in the institutions, so that, from that space they can generate advocacy actions.

How can indigenous peoples' ancestral knowledge support water governance and conflict resolution?

It is essential to understand that indigenous peoples have knowledge and wisdom that have been preserved throughout history through collective memory, transmitted from generation to generation, and it is this knowledge that has allowed them to ensure their survival until today. Hence, indigenous peoples have millennia of historical continuity because they were in this territory before the very constitution of the nation states.

The care of Mother Earth, water, and other elements found in nature has been possible thanks to the use and application of this knowledge. An example of peoples' knowledge is water sowing,[12] which they have been applying throughout history and which has allowed them to ensure the use of water for various needs. In the same way, they know which are the plants to sow that will allow water storage and conservation, as well as which animals are not suitable to keep in areas where water sources are born, and so on. However, this knowledge is not found in books, but in the collective memory. That is why it is important to systematise this knowledge so that it can be preserved for future generations as a collective property.

Another important element to consider is that indigenous peoples, without the support of the state, have been building and strengthening their own organisational institutions through which they have been able to carry out their own governance of their territory. This also includes everything related to

water, as within the vision of the indigenous peoples there is no separation of land, water, animals, and other elements. On the contrary, it has been treated as an integral part of a whole including the human being.

In these systems of organisation, peoples' knowledge, principles, norms, etc. have been put into practice. Among these principles, for example, is the *minga*, the *randi randi*,[13] reciprocity, relationality, which are put into practice on a daily basis. Hence, almost all of the irrigation systems are built in indigenous peoples' and nationalities' territories with the *minga*, community work, where men and women of any ages can participate. If this had not been built in this way, you can be sure that the communities and indigenous peoples would live in much more critical conditions today. So it has been fundamental to organise and unify communities to work out all these great projects that have allowed them to bring water both for irrigation and human consumption.

The governance of the indigenous peoples is based on the full and effective participation of all its members; therefore, all decisions will be adopted in large assemblies with the participation of all the community members, and that makes everyone feel obliged to comply and empower themselves with the decisions adopted for the good of their organisation.

On the other hand, as I already mentioned, in Ecuador, the state is recognised as plurinational and intercultural. This implies the recognition of the existence of the various nationalities and indigenous peoples, each with its richness, wisdom, knowledge, languages, religiosity, institutions, organisational systems, legal systems, among others. So that, in Ecuador the legal pluralism is in force, which is nothing more than the full force of the different legal systems in the same territorial space, within a framework of respect for the autonomy of peoples. In this sense, in accordance with the provisions of Article 171 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008 (in Constitute 2021), it is recognised that the authorities of the communes, communities, peoples, and nationalities have jurisdictional functions to resolve internal conflicts within their territorial scope, applying their rules, principles, procedures, and sanctions. Thus, by respecting the human rights prescribed both in the Constitution of the Republic and in international instruments, indigenous peoples have competence and jurisdiction to resolve all conflicts. This implies that if conflicts arise related to water use and administration, the community authorities will be able to resolve them, and this is what should be strengthened. Therefore, the state, through its institutions, must respect the decisions that are adopted within the system of indigenous justice administration, and thus contribute to the true construction of a plurinational and intercultural state like ours [Ecuador's].

How has the situation and decision-making position of women and indigenous peoples regarding water management in your country evolved over the last 30 years?

The situation of indigenous peoples and women in decision making in a general and broad way has been strengthened from the '90s onward, and concretely

from the uprising carried out in June 1990 when an irruption of the indigenous peoples happened. From this moment on, women were more present in political processes with demands that had been postponed for many years, and that had not been attended to by the rulers. It is in this uprising that around 15 mandates were raised, among which are: the constitutional reform, the participation of indigenous peoples in the various decision-making spaces, the restitution of lands and territories and their titling, access to water for irrigation and human consumption, the right to intercultural bilingual education, the right to preserve ancestral medicine, and the right to strengthen their own organisations and institutions, among others. However, these demands were not immediately met. On the contrary, for example, in terms of constitutional reform, it occurred only in 1998 and recognised about 15 collective rights, among which are the right to keep lands and territories and that the same are imprescriptible, indivisible, and unseizable, as well as the right to conserve their natural resources, among which is water.

It should be noted that the 1990 uprising was possible thanks to the work developed during the '70s and '80s, which focused on the construction of a great social fabric. The indigenous peoples and nationalities had organised themselves by forming community organisations. This work was the cornerstone for the resistance actions that marked Ecuadorian history and the role of the indigenous peoples in Ecuador in their struggle for the recognition of their rights.

During the '70s, '80s, and '90s, the struggle of the indigenous peoples for the vindication and recognition of their rights was unique. Fundamentally, the recognition as subjects of rights and the recognition of their lands and territory. This was the banner of the struggle for both men and women, so that there was not a divided struggle, with approaches for men and another for women. On the contrary, there was the need and awareness to fight first for general rights and later for specific rights.

It is important to point out that women have always played an important role in the struggles and their participation was key in the uprising of 1990, which led organisations to strengthen their participation through the creation of Women's Secretariats at the level of all organisations. It is from this space that training processes are carried out to strengthen the participation of women at different levels. Therefore, I consider that this space created for women contributes enormously to the empowerment of women's role in the management of transboundary waters at the national level.

In what other aspects do you consider that gender mainstreaming and the involvement of indigenous peoples are important for transboundary water governance in Ecuador?

The incorporation of the gender perspective and involvement of indigenous peoples cannot only be reduced to local work; I believe that greater participation in decision-making spaces should also be sought, so that it is they with their

own thoughts and voices who can have an impact from within in strengthening the governance of transboundary waters. This will allow indigenous women and peoples to not only play a role as local actors, but also in decision-making spaces at national and international level, and from up there, they will be a great support for advocacy.

On the other hand, it is also fundamental that the knowledge that indigenous peoples have in relation to participation, organisation, and others, be systematised and incorporated as part of public policies or serve as good practices in other places.

What aspects do you consider necessary to improve the current situation of women and indigenous peoples in water governance in Ecuador?

During the time I worked at SENAGUA, the National Water Secretariat, I was able to observe that there is indeed a great social structure around water. However, there is a lack of greater participation of women leading those processes and those social structures. Therefore, I think there is a need to ensure greater participation of women as leaders of the organisations leading water administration and in particular, governance, and not only as treasurers or secretaries. The active role of women over the years should be taken into account, because it has been women who have always been present in community assemblies, in *mingas*, in the great political struggles. So it is urgent that we seek mechanisms for women to have greater participation in the decision-making processes; everyone should be involved in this effort, including the state authorities.

On the other hand, there is an urgent need to solve the problems affecting indigenous peoples in the governance of transboundary waters; I refer to the pollution generated by mining and other activities, which greatly affects the lives of peoples, since rivers are not only used for navigation, but also provide food, among others. Therefore, the life of indigenous peoples living on the borders will always be threatened as long as there is no control and the corresponding sanctions to those responsible for causing pollution, and damages repair. Therefore, the state must assume responsibility and guarantee access to quality water and protection of rights that peoples deserve in relation to governance.

In the same way, although it is true that indigenous people have the right to exercise water governance, it does not imply that the state should ignore the unresolved needs from populations living on the borders as well as the overall indigenous population, given the fact that indigenous peoples do not have the required economic resources, for example, the provision of water quality for human consumption. These issues should be prioritised and incorporated into action plans of the decentralised autonomous governments in order to work in full coordination with the authorities of the indigenous peoples and solve these problems that affect them to this day.

What message could you share from your experience with people who are doing or striving towards transboundary water governance work/research?

There is a lot of work to be done regarding transboundary waters, so I salute the authors' contribution. On the other hand, it is essential to guarantee the active participation of men and women of all ages in the work of transboundary waters. Given that, within the vision of these peoples, there is no age difference. On the contrary, if participation in activities begins at an early age, the knowledge will be transmitted from generation to generation. In the same way, it is guaranteed that the knowledge, wisdom, and practices of indigenous peoples are incorporated in the plans, programmes, and projects to be implemented, as well as in the public policies designed by the state, which will allow governance of the transboundary waters to be successful and the greatest empowerment and sustainability. In the same way, the strengthening of the peoples' organisational structure is ensured, as well as the strict respect for the legal systems that the peoples have for the resolution of conflicts.

Thank you for this interview

Notes

1 The Binational Commission for the Integrated Water Resources Management of Transboundary Basins between Ecuador and Peru was established through an Agreement in 2017 to consolidate the bilateral cooperation for the management and protection of the nine river basins shared between these countries.
2 The term "indigenous nationalities" refer to ancient and native peoples or groups of peoples preceding the creation of Ecuador, self-identified as such, sharing a common historic identity, language, culture, living in a defined territory, through their own institutions, traditional social, economic, legal, and political organisation.
3 The term "indigenous peoples" refers to native collectivities, constituted by communities with particular cultural identities that distinguish them from other sectors for Ecuadorian society, governed by their own social, economic, politic, and legal systems.
4 "*Minka*" is a Kichwa term to describe community work for the benefit of all its members. An example of a "*minka*" is the clearing of ditches for irrigation.
5 *Tayta*, Kichwa term for "father"
6 *Mingas*, from the Kichwa term *Minka*, meaning "collective work", and can apply to different communal tasks, including public works but also movements for indigenous rights.
7 "*Wawas*" a term from Kichwa meaning "babies" or "little children"
8 In 2008 the Water National Secretary (Secretaria Nacional del Agua or SENAGUA), was established as the main institution in charge of the management and governance of water resources. In 2020, SENAGUA and its functions were absorbed by the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition.
9 The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008 Art. 171 (in Constitute 2021) states: "The authorities of the indigenous communities, peoples, and nations shall perform jurisdictional duties, based on their ancestral traditions and their own system of law, within their own territories, with a guarantee for the participation of, and decision-making by, women. The authorities shall apply their own standards and procedures for

the settlement of internal disputes, as long as they are not contrary to the Constitution and human rights enshrined in international instruments".

10 The C169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989, Article 8 (in ILO 2021) "1. In applying national laws and regulations to the peoples concerned, due regard shall be had to their customs or customary laws. 2. These peoples shall have the right to retain their own customs and institutions, where these are not incompatible with fundamental rights defined by the national legal system and with internationally recognised human rights. Procedures shall be established, whenever necessary, to resolve conflicts which may arise in the application of this principle" (Art. 8).

11 According to Dr. Yumay, factical powers refer to strong economic groups, bankers, and media.

12 Water sowing is an ancestral process that involves gathering and infiltrating (Sowing) rainwater, surface runoff, and hypodermic or groundwater to retrieve (harvest) it at a later date and/or place (see Martos-Rossilo et al. 2021).

13 *Randi randi*, a Kichwa term meaning "giving and giving" to describe a system barter exchange.

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3 Is Academic Knowledge Production on Transboundary Waters in South Asia Gender Neutral?

Ritu Priya and Tania Debnath

Introduction

It is necessary to examine the relationship between people and water in the modern world. Linton (2010) argues that the discursive and material practices around water in modern times have concealed its social nature. "Modern water" has been universally accepted as an "intellectual abstraction, [which is] materially contained, de-territorialised and socially alienated" (Linton 2010, p. 40). However, this way of thinking about water excludes several other water worldviews, often those in direct interaction with water such as farmers and women. This is true of academic knowledge production on transboundary water governance, too. Von Lossow (2015) points out three characteristics of academic approaches to transboundary water in particular. Firstly, it deals with issues of conflict, confrontation, and warfare that are associated traditionally with masculine ideas of virtue and power. Secondly, state-centric models based on national interest dominate both research and policymaking for transboundary water. Thirdly, water management is usually seen in terms of hydro-engineering and building of large-scale water infrastructure (Von Lossow 2015, p. 107). Thus, the very approach to transboundary water has been masculine and developed around a state-centric "hydrological mission" (Molle et al. 2009, p. 328). Gender research has been highlighting the problems with such objective knowledge for a long time (Allen 1999). All knowledge production is discursively mediated. Talking about a feminist approach to water, it has been highlighted that knowledge creation about water is also a social process. Thus, in order to understand the feminist perspective on water it must be acknowledged that the very way in which modern water is understood is an outcome of the power structures and must therefore be evaluated critically (Zwarteveen 2010). There can be more than one way of "knowing" water. Particularly for transboundary water governance, the role of gender in the process of such knowledge production remains largely unexplored (Singh 2019; Earle & Bazilli 2013).

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Gender and Academic Knowledge Production

The academic world faces several structural challenges. One of the most important is the gendered nature of knowledge production. Significant productivity differences for women and men have been reported across all disciplines (Santos et al. 2020), with the gap being significantly larger for science technology, engineering, and medicine disciplines (Etzkowitz & Ranga 2011). Bibliometric studies across disciplines have consistently shown that women's representation in academia is lower than that of men on major indicators such as number of publications in high impact journals, publication ratios, research output, and outcomes (Barrios et al. 2013; Mc Dowell et al. 2006).

Several institutional level barriers have systematically excluded women in academics. It has been observed that women scholars tend to drop out at mid-career level much more frequently than men (Etzkowitz & Ranga 2011), metaphorically called the "leaky pipeline" by gender researchers. Another phenomenon observed is the "invisibility paradox" (Faulkner 2009). As a minority in the workplace, women are forced to adopt the work cultures which are predominantly masculine. This leads to the paradox that in order to exist they have to become invisible. Men also tend to have a bigger network and collaborative system as compared to women. In addition, because of patriarchal systemic biases, men in general are more confident about their work as compared to women (Santos et al. 2020).

In order to challenge the hegemonic space of knowledge creation and bring in greater democracy and diversity within academia, it is important to bring in female perspectives. Several studies have highlighted the benefits of having gender-inclusive research groups. Schiebinger and Schraudner (2011) found that "gendered innovations" (p. 154), i.e., applying gender analysis to science, technology, and medicine leads to better innovations and makes the outcomes more inclusive. Similarly, it encourages equality of opportunity (González et al. 2015) and creates a diverse knowledge pool as women bring in their subjective interpretations and solutions to the problem.

It is in fact logical that, given their different subjective experiences in the world, men and women develop different preferences for research work. Several studies provide evidence that gender plays a role in the setting of research agendas. Santos et al. (2020) found that in sciences, the fields of enquiry for women were "less risky and less focused on fields likely to lead to scientific discovery" (p. 1) but at the same time were more collaborative. This leads to reduced innovations from women researchers and increases the gender gap in innovation. Barrios et al. (2013) found in a national-level study that women researchers show a greater preference for topics concerning social innovation over technical solutions for any research problem. This shows that women scholars often put in more thought to the social impact their research would have. Overall, the aforementioned studies have observed differences in the approaches of male and female authors to the same research problem.

This gender difference is interesting to study in the context of transboundary water governance. It can be relevant to see whether male and female researchers look at water-related issues in different ways. A literature gap has been identified at the intersection of gender, academia, and transboundary water governance. This is where we look to see if the experiences and interactions of women are captured in the way they pursue research on water. One way of doing this is to look at women academics participating in knowledge production on transboundary water governance. We will do this by analysing the representation of female scholars in research on transboundary waters in South Asia and the gender differences in theoretical and conceptual approaches used in this research. We also bring in a region-specific perspective by limiting our enquiry to academic work on transboundary waters of South Asia only. Several longstanding water conflicts among the countries sharing the two major transboundary river systems – the Indus river system and the Ganga–Brahmaputra–Meghna river system – make South Asia a relevant case study. This chapter aims to show the gendered nature of academic knowledge production on transboundary waters on these two river systems.

Methodology

A mixed-method approach has been used to carry out the research. The chapter is primarily based on a review of the relevant academic literature. After the selection of articles, information on gender and theoretical approaches was coded from the selected articles and then statistically analysed. The three steps – criteria for selection of literature, criteria for the inclusion of articles in the review, and identification of female representation – were followed in this order and described below.

Criteria for Selection of Literature

As a first step, we identified relevant papers on South Asian transboundary waters using Google Scholar. Then, we selected more papers and other relevant journals through snowball sampling, meaning through the bibliographies of the papers chosen in the first round. Key words used for search of articles were "transboundary water South Asia", "hydropower South Asia", "Indus River Treaty", "Ganga Brahmaputra Meghna" for the period January 2000 to August 2020. Finally, articles from 26 journals were selected (Table 3.1). All of these journals are peer reviewed and indexed in Scopus. A total of 373 documents were shortlisted using these criteria which included articles, discussions on the articles, and commentaries.

Criteria for the Inclusion of Articles in the Review

The selected database was further screened and only those articles that deal with water, are focused on South Asia or provide relevant examples from the

Table 3.1 List of journals from which articles were included in the study

No.	*Journal*	*Citation Index (2019)*
1	*American Journal of International law*	1.7
2	*Annals of the Association of American Geographers*	5.5
3	*Asian Affairs*	1
4	*Asian Journal of Political Science*	0.7
5	*Daedalus*	3.6
6	*Economic and Political Weekly*	0.7
7	*Energy Policy*	7.2
8	*Environmental Politics*	5.5
9	*Environmental Science and Policy*	8.4
10	*The Geographical Journal*	5
11	*Geopolitics*	3.1
12	*Global Environmental Politics*	5.4
13	*Hydrogeology Journal*	3.5
14	*Hydrological Sciences Journal*	4.2
15	*Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalisation*	0.7
16	*International Journal of River Basin Management*	2.1
17	*International Journal of Water Resource Development*	4.3
18	*International Security*	9.6
19	*Journal of Conflict Resolution*	6
20	*Journal of Peace Research*	5.8
21	*South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*	1
22	*Water*	2.6
23	*Water and Environment Journal*	2.1
24	*Water International*	3.5
25	*Water Policy*	2
26	*Water Resources Management*	5.2

region, and consider more than one country (transboundary) were selected. Based on the selection process, three broad categories of articles are included in the review: (1) articles directly concerned with transboundary water sharing; (2) articles studying activities indirectly impacted by transboundary water sharing-farming, navigation, hydropower generation etc.; and (3) articles discussing the institutional mechanisms for water sharing with prominent South Asian examples. Overall, 105 articles are included for a more detailed review; noting that one article was excluded as the gender of the authors could not be identified.

Identification of Female Representation

All the documents have been categorised based on the gender of the sole and/or first and co-authors of the paper into six types: (1) papers with male sole authors; (2) papers with female sole authors; (3) papers with male first authors

and all-male co-authors; (4) papers with female first authors and all-female co-authors; (5) papers with male first authors and at least one female co-author; and (6) papers with female first authors and at least one male co-author. The majority of the documents have five authors at maximum. Only six documents were found to have more than five authors. Therefore, only the first five authors have been considered for categorising the documents. Several authors have also written more than one article. In total, four male and two female authors are in the database with several articles. We have counted each article individually as a contribution to knowledge production.

The Representation of Men and Women among Authors

The first objective of the chapter is to investigate the presence of female authors in South Asia transboundary water research. Therefore, we looked into two aspects, i.e., the share of female sole/first authors and the pattern of collaboration among authors. The presence of women as sole/first authors is taken to be an indicator of their role in developing the research idea. Collaboration among authors can indicate the gender preferences of networking in this particular field of research.

Representation of Female Authors

Out of the 105 articles, only 45 articles (42.9 per cent) have at least one female author or co-author and over 60 articles (57.1 per cent) have no female authors. In contrast, 80 articles (76.2 per cent) have at least one male author and only 5 articles (4.8 per cent) have no male authors. All articles have been divided into four categories based on the gender of the sole/first author: (1) male sole author; (2) male first author; (3) female sole author; (3) female first author. We found that there are 37 articles with a male sole author and 31 articles with a male first author. On the other hand, there are only 15 articles by a female sole author and 22 articles with a female first author. When combining these into articles with male sole/first author and articles with female sole/first author, we can show that transboundary water research in South Asia is dominated by male scholars, as only 35.2 per cent of the articles have female sole/first authors (Figure 3.1).

We also analysed the temporal changes in female representation (see Table 3.2). Of the 105 articles in our database, 24 papers were published between 2000 and 2009 and 81 papers between 2010 and 2020, showing an increase in academic output on this topic. Among the papers of the first decade, only 29.2 per cent have females as sole or first authors. However, 37.0 per cent of the papers of the second decade have a female sole or first author. Thus, academic knowledge production both in absolute output and in the share of women as sole/first authors has increased over the last two decades. Female representation in academia has been gradually increasing over the last decade (Department of Higher Education 2019). Particularly in the water sector,

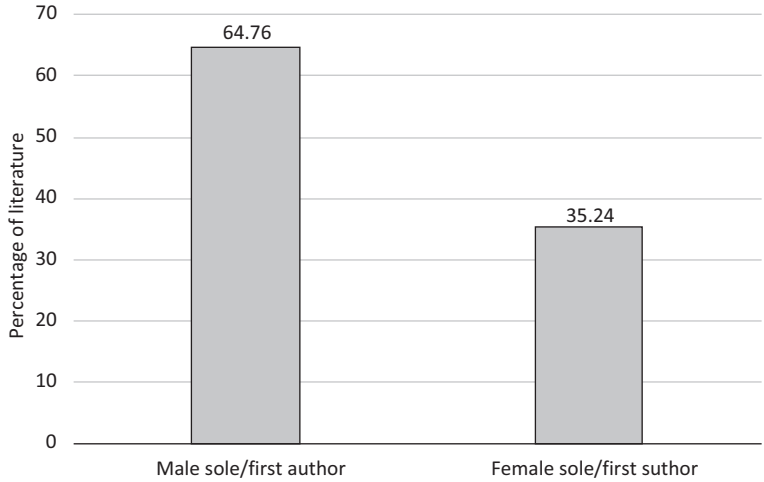

Figure 3.1 Distribution of literature by gender of the sole/first author

Table 3.2 Temporal change in female representation in South Asian transboundary water research (2000–20)

	Time Period			
	2000–09		*2010–20**	
	Frequency	*Percentage*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Male sole/first author	17	70.8	51	63
Female sole/first author	7	29.2	30	37
Total	24	100	81	100

Note: *Till August 2020

alternative perspectives have emerged since the 1990s, based on decentralisation and participatory management. Emphasis on inclusivity has increased visibility for women in water governance as academicians, policymakers, practitioners, although a considerable gap still remains (Krishna 2018).

We also looked at the regional affiliation of the sole/first author of the papers. The regional affiliation is denoted in terms of the region of the institute with which the respective sole/first author is associated at the time of publication.

As shown in Table 3.3, the distribution of papers from South Asia and from outside South Asia is more or less equal, with slightly more papers written by authors affiliated with institutions outside the region. However, there is a stark contrast in terms of gender. In papers with sole/first authors with institutional affiliation in South Asian countries, less than 20 per cent are led

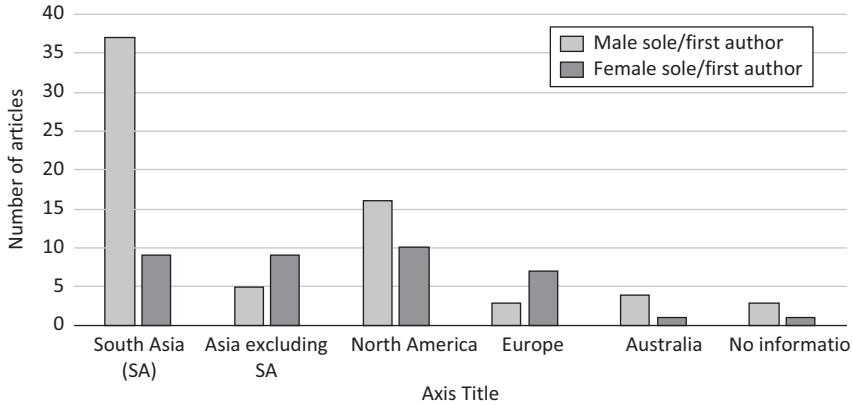

Figure 3.2 Distribution of literature by regional affiliation of the sole/first author

Table 3.3 Regional affiliation of sole/first author and gender representation in South Asia transboundary water research

	No information	*South Asia*	*Outside South Asia*	*Total*
Total number of papers/articles reviewed	4	46	55	105
% share of papers with female as sole/first author	–	19.6	49.1	35.2

by women, while for papers with sole/first authors with institutional affiliation outside South Asia almost half are led by women. This could partially be explained by the limited presence of women in academia in South Asia. For example, according to government data for the academic year 2018–19, the average number of females per 100 males in teaching staff in higher education in India is only 73 (Department of Higher Education 2019). Thus, women are generally a numerical minority across all academic fields in South Asia. Moreover, a significant part of transboundary water research is produced by authors with backgrounds in disciplines such as engineering and diplomacy, where the number of female researchers is even less as women traditionally do not choose these disciplines (Malliniak 2008). These two aspects can explain women's underrepresentation in transboundary studies in general and South Asia in particular.

Outside South Asia, the gender gap is not so sharp. In fact, in Europe and Asia (excluding South Asia) women authors are publishing more than men (Figure 3.2). Thus, publications from within the region of South Asia add majorly to the skewness of gender in authorship.

Collaboration: Gendered Networking Patterns

Gendered patterns of formal and informal academic networks have been a subject of study in the past 20 years (McDowell 2006; Boschini 2007; Barios 2013; Hopkins 2013; Santos et al. 2020). Authors, like McDowell (2006), have shown that there is a propensity of academics to publish together with co-authors of the same gender. Moreover, women scholars tend to match more with co-authors who have fewer publications in journals with a high impact factor (Ghosh & Liu 2020, p. 580).

We found the gendered pattern of co-authorship to be true for South Asian transboundary water research, too. Table 3.4 presents the networking pattern of the reviewed articles based on gender. First, it is noted that almost half of the papers reviewed were single-authored. Among these 52 single-authored papers, 37 have a male author and only 15 a female one. Among 53 papers with multiple authors, 23 papers had only male co-authors, compared to only five papers with all-female co-authors. These constitute 21.9 per cent and 4.8 per cent of the total observations, respectively. On the other hand, 25 (23.8 per cent) of the papers have both male and female co-authors. Interestingly, of these 25 papers, 16 were led by female scientists and only eight by men. Thus, compared with male scholars, female scholars have a greater tendency to collaborate with mixed groups of co-authors.

Regional Study Area

It is noted that 49.5 per cent of the papers are about the Ganges–Brahmaputra–Meghna (GBM) basin, 27.6 per cent about the Indus river basin, and 13.3 per cent study both Indus and GBM basins (Table 3.5). While male author-led papers are spread more or less evenly across these basins, it is remarkable that almost 60 per cent of the female author-led papers are focused on the GBM basin. Female representation is very low in papers on the Indus basin.

Table 3.4 Gendered networking patterns in South Asia transboundary water research

		Freq.	*Percentage*
Total Observation		105	100
Single author (49.5 per cent)	Male sole author	37	35.2
	Female sole author	15	14.3
	Total	52	49.5
Papers with collaboration (50.5 per cent)	All-male authors	23	21.9
	All-female authors	5	4.8
	Male first author with at least one female co-author	8	7.6
	Female first author with at least one male co-author	17	16.2
	Total	53	50.5

Table 3.5 River basin studied and gender of the sole/first author

River basin	*Total literature reviewed*		*Male sole/first author*		*Female sole/first author*	
	Frequency	*Percentage*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Indus	29	27.6	22	32.4	7	18.9
Ganges–Brahmaputra–Meghna	52	49.5	30	44.1	22	59.5
Indus and Ganges–Brahmaputra–Meghna	14	13.3	11	16.2	3	8.1
Not specified	10	9.5	5	7.4	5	13.5

It makes geographical sense that more papers are published on the GBM basin rather than on the Indus basin. GBM is a larger river system, almost 1.5 times the size of the Indus drainage basin. Further, GBM is shared between five countries, namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Nepal, and India, with several bilateral treaties between countries for transboundary water sharing. Indus, on the other hand, has only one major treaty between India and Pakistan. This has also enhanced the scope of transboundary water-related academic inquiry on GBM. Within our dataset for the GBM basin, we found literature covering diverse aspects, including bilateral cooperation for hydropower generation, navigation, and water sharing (Saklani et al. 2020). Additionally, most of the literature on the Indus basin in our dataset was discussing the Indus Water Treaty of 1960. Due to the strained political relations between India and Pakistan, there is very little literature exploring other avenues of cooperation. Moreover, there is a higher presence of authors with diplomatic and defence backgrounds writing about the Indus basin. As women are generally underrepresented in these fields, it could explain their lower representation as authors on the Indus basin.

Theoretical and Conceptual Approaches and Gender

This section tries to identify the various conceptual outlooks and theories adopted by scholars writing on transboundary waters in South Asia. We look for gender-based preferences for theoretical and conceptual approaches among authors. We also look at their current departmental affiliations or disciplines to find any correlation with their preferences.

The key conceptual approaches identified through a review of literature are hydro-hegemony, integrated water resources management (IWRM), (neo-) institutionalism, hydro-social discourse analysis, nexus approach, polycentric governance, water war and water scarcity framework, and technical solution. It is interesting to note that that feminist analysis is totally missing in the academic discourses regarding shared waters of South Asia in all 105 articles included in

Table 3.6 Number of papers published by gender and theoretical framework

Theoretical framework	*Total literature reviewed*		*Male sole/first author*		*Female sole/first author*	
	Frequency	*Percentage*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Hydro-hegemony	29	27.6	19	27.9	10	27.0
Integrated water resource management framework	22	21.0	17	25.0	5	13.5
(Neo-)institutionalism	18	17.1	11	16.2	7	18.9
Hydro-social discourse analysis	10	9.5	5	7.4	5	13.5
Nexus approach	9	8.6	5	7.4	4	10.8
Polycentric governance	9	8.6	5	7.4	4	10.8
Water wars & water scarcity framework	6	5.7	4	5.9	2	5.4
Technical solution	2	1.9	2	2.9	0	0.0
Total	105	100	68	100	37	100

this review. We have divided all the articles on the basis of the gender of the first author in order to assess whether we can identify gendered preferences with regard to the theoretical framework followed and/or the solutions provided (Table 3.6).

The key aspects of these frameworks and the gender pattern are discussed below.

Hydro-hegemony

In our database, we noted that hydro-hegemony is the most common theoretical perspective taken by authors irrespective of gender. This theoretical perspective highlights water as a security issue, focuses on the role of power, and takes a state-centric approach. Authors analyse the tactics used by states to achieve or counter hydro-hegemony, including coercion, pressure, treaties, and knowledge construction, among others (Zeitoun & Warner 2006); 27 per cent of the authors look at water issues from the state securitisation perspective. It is important to note that there is no gender difference in this perspective.

Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) Framework

The second most common approach was the IWRM framework. For proponents of IWRM, cooperative watershed management is the only way to "incorporate all of the physical, political, and economic characteristics for a river basin" (Rahman & Varis 2005, p. 17). Thus, river basins become more relevant than political boundaries. This approach has been taken by several

authors for analysing water relations in South Asia. Overall, 22 of the 105 papers being considered have focused on this framework. Looking at the gender segregation, 25 per cent of papers with sole/first male authors have adopted the IWRM framework in contrast to only 13.5 per cent of the sole/first female authors.

(Neo-)Institutionalism

(Neo-)Institutionalism is the third most common theoretical perspective among the authors. This is a water-rational approach based on the liberal theory which argues that the interests of the states lie in mutually beneficial outcomes (Dinar 2011). The authors focus on explaining how institutions facilitate or hamper water cooperation. There is also much inquiry into the design of institutions and their impact on water conflicts (Saravanan 2015). Overall 18.9 per cent of female authors and 16.2 per cent of male authors have used this framework for analysis.

Hydro-social Discourse Analysis

Bringing out hydro-social relations through discourse analysis is a theoretical framework adopted by ten of the papers. This approach focuses on water as a medium of politics (Agnew 2011). Control over water narratives becomes a medium of control over the population dependent upon the water resource (Linton 2010). It highlights "naturalised, universalised, and hegemonized" perspectives on quantity and quality of water (Mirumachi 2015, p. 5). This approach is considerably more common among female authors as compared with male authors: 13.5 per cent vs 7.4 per cent.

Nexus Approach

The Nexus approach is an emerging conceptual framework that aims to systematise the interconnections between water, energy, and food interfaces in a river basin for achieving sustainable adaptation (Rasul & Sharma 2016). Out of the nine authors looking at water through the Nexus approach, five are male and four are female. In percentage terms, 10.8 per cent female sole/first authors and 7.4 per cent male sole/first authors have advocated this approach.

Polycentric Governance

The polycentric governance approach is adopted by nine articles. Polycentric governance advocates for multi-level governance. Distribution of power is the key aspect of polycentric water governance with "differently sized governance units with different purposes, organizations and spatial locations interact to form together systems" (Pahl-Wostl 2012, p. 27). This approach is used by 10.8 per cent of female sole/first authors and 7.4 per cent of male first/sole authors to look at transboundary water in South Asia.

Water Wars and Water Scarcity Framework

The water wars and water scarcity framework is not very commonly adopted by authors. Some scholars claimed that increasing water shortage could lead to an escalation of violence between states. These water war predictions were based on the concept of water as a scarce and limited natural resource (Linton, 2010, p. 191). Overall increasing human population, economic growth, water pollution, as well as climate change are cumulatively going to create situations of water stress for several regions of the world and might lead to water wars (Postel 2000). This framework has been adopted by 6 of the 105 studied research works. Both male (5.4 per cent) and female (5.9 per cent) have similar representation.

Technical Solution

Finally, two articles have worked on purely technical aspects, not focusing on any theoretical framework of international politics. Both are male sole/first author research articles.

The water worldviews adopted by authors are not adequately explained by their gender. The most common framework adopted by authors irrespective of gender is hydro-hegemony. The theoretical framework of (neo-)institutionalism has also been equally adopted by authors of both genders. Female authors show a greater preference for the three non-state-centric approaches consisting of hydro-social discourse analysis, Nexus approach, and polycentric governance. However, the difference is less than 5 per cent for all three approaches. Male authors show a greater preference for IWRM and water wars and water scarcity framework. Technical solutions are only suggested by male authors. Overall, both male and female authors have suggested both state-centric and non state-centric approaches. While male authors show inclination towards an integrational approach like IWRM, more female authors have chosen the Nexus approach which is also based on interconnectedness of various aspects of a river basin. It is seen that preference for none of the frameworks is explained sufficiently by gender, nor did we find any evidence of a regional pattern in preference for any particular theoretical frameworks (Table 3.7). In order to analyse the variations in theoretical perspectives adopted by authors, we also look at their departmental affiliation and disciplinary background.

Authors' Disciplines and Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

We looked at the departmental affiliation and disciplinary background of the authors for our database. We found that scholars represented various fields across science and social sciences. The majority of papers were contributed by authors who have backgrounds in geography and environmental sciences followed by engineering, hydrology and water resource management, international relations, political science, economics, law, and sociology. Additionally,

Table 3.7 Frequency of authors based on regional affiliation and the theoretical framework used by them

Theoretical framework	*Gender of sole/ first author*	*Regional affiliation of author*						
		No information	*South Asia*	*Asia excluding SA*	*Europe*	*North America*	*Australia*	*Total*
Hydro-hegemony	Male	1	13	1	1	3	0	19
	Female	0	2	4	2	2	0	10
IWRM	Male	0	9	1	1	4	2	17
	Female	1	0	2	0	2	0	5
(Neo-)institutionalism	Male	2	5	1	0	3	0	11
	Female	0	0	2	1	4	0	7
Hydro-social discourse analysis	Male	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
	Female	0	2	0	2	1	0	5
Nexus approach	Male	0	4	0	0	1	0	5
	Female	0	2	0	1	1	0	4
Polycentric governance	Male	0	2	1	0	1	1	5
	Female	0	2	0	1	0	1	4
Water war & water scarcity	Male	0	1	0	0	3	0	4
	Female	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Technical solution	Male	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		4	46	14	10	26	5	105

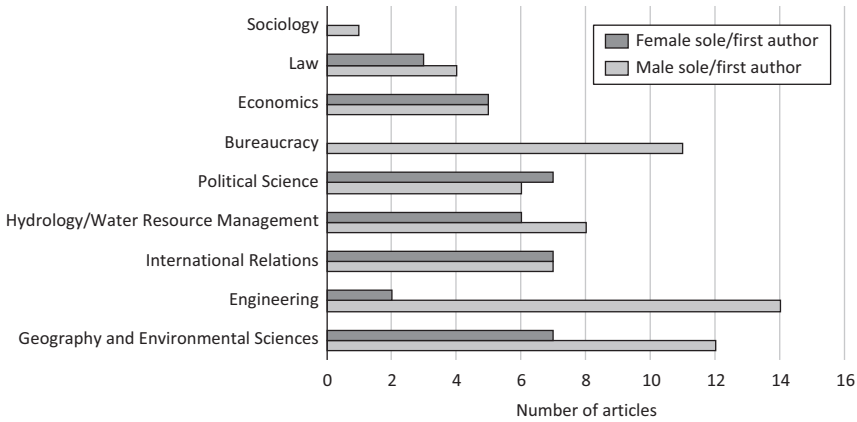

Figure 3.3 Departmental affiliation/Disciplinary background of the authors

11 papers were authored by former civil servants or military personnel. The disaggregation of the data on the subject expertise per gender is shown in Figure 3.3.

The disciplinary background of the authors can partially explain their preference for particular conceptual frameworks. Most of the writing in transboundary water governance comes from subjects like political science, international relations, law, and engineering that have a state- and institution-centric approach in general which is followed by all authors irrespective of their gender (Earle & Bazilli, 2013; Maliniak 2008). Political science and international relations are two disciplines that have traditionally taken a state-centric paradigm. Indeed, Tickner (2006) highlighted how some of the most prominent researchers in international relations came from military backgrounds. Singh (2019) noted that transboundary water research in South Asia lies at the "intersection of two masculinized fields – water resource management and the disciplines engaged in the research of transboundary water management, namely, political science and international relations" (Singh 2019, p. 140). Thus, the subject has traditionally been broached within a state-centric paradigm, informed by knowledge produced by technical experts and an absence of innovation from the social sciences (Earle & Bazilli 2013). This is reflected in the relationship between the authors' disciplines and their preferred theoretical frameworks for our dataset, too.

Table 3.8 presents a cross tabulation between the theoretical perspectives adopted by scholars and their departmental affiliations or disciplinary background. Hydro-hegemony, the most common theoretical perspective, has an over-representation of scholars from backgrounds in engineering and authors who have been former civil servants or army personnel. Notably, most of these authors are men (see Table 3.9). In our database, these included four out of

Table 3.8 Authors' disciplines and their preferred theoretical frameworks

Theoretical framework	*Authors discipline/Departmental affiliation*[1]									
	Geography	*Engineering*	*WRM*	*IR*	*PolSc*	*CS*	*Economics*	*Law*	*Sociology*	*Total*
Hydro-hegemony	4	5	3	2	3	7	3	2	0	29
IWRM	4	4	3	4	2	1	2	1	1	22
Institutionalism	0	1	4	3	7	2	0	1	0	18
Discourse analysis	5	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	10
Nexus approach	2	0	2	1	0	1	2	1	0	9
Polycentric governance	2	2	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	9
Water wars and water scarcity framework	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	6
Technical solution	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	19	16	15	14	13	11	10	7	1	105

Source: Author's calculation

[1] Subject expertise/Departmental affiliation – Geography includes Environmental science, WRM includes Water Resource Management and Hydrology, CS includes former civil servants and army personnel, PolSc includes political sciences, IR includes International Relations.

Table 3.9 Discipline wise frequency of authors and the theoretical framework used by them

Theoretical framework	*Departmental affiliation/Subject expertise*										
	Sole/first author	*Political Science*	*Engineering*	*Geography and Environmental Sciences*	*International Relations*	*Economics*	*Hydrology/ Water Resource Management*	*Bureaucracy*	*Law*	*Sociology*	*Total*
Hydro-hegemony	Male	0	4	3	0	2	2	7	1	0	19
	Female	3	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	10
IWRM	Male	2	4	3	3	1	2	1	0	1	17
	Female	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	5
Institutionalism	Male	3	1	0	2	0	2	2	1	0	11
	Female	4	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	7
Hydro-social discourse analysis	Male	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
	Female	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Nexus approach	Male	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	5
	Female	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	4
Polycentric governance	Male	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
	Female	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
Water wars and water scarcity framework	Male	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	4
	Female	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Technical solution	Male	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		13	16	19	14	10	15	11	7	1	105

five scholars from engineering backgrounds and all seven former civil servants or army personnel. The second state-centric theoretical perspective of institutionalism has the highest number of authors with subject expertise in political sciences, international relations, and water resource management. In contrast to this, IWRM is a perspective which is adopted by scholars with specialisation across disciplines. For the three non state-centric approaches – discourse analysis, Nexus approach, and polycentric governance – disciplines such as geography, environmental sciences, and environmental economics have a greater representation. It is seen that engineering and diplomacy are mostly represented by men. Three out of four authors working within the framework of water wars and water scarcity come from technical disciplines like engineering and environmental sciences. Thus, the disciplinary background of the author is a better explanation of their conceptual framework preferences than their gender.

Conclusion

For this chapter, two main research questions were posed. We looked for the representation of women scholars in transboundary water governance studies in South Asia and enquired whether their theoretical understanding on transboundary water governance in South Asia is different from male authors. Based on the results of our analysis of 105 papers, we were able to note that transboundary water research in South Asia is numerically dominated by male scholars with only 35.2 per cent of the articles having a female sole/first author. However, there has been increasing female participation over the past two decades. Collaboration among scholars also showed a gendered pattern. Among 53 papers with multiple authors, 23 papers had all-male co-authors, compared to only 5 papers with all-female co-authors. Secondly, we found authors taking diverse theoretical and conceptual perspectives on transboundary water governance including hydro-hegemony, IWRM, (neo-)institutionalism, hydro-social discourse analysis, Nexus approach, polycentric governance, water war and water scarcity framework, and technical solutions. However, we found no evidence of gender-based preference for these views on transboundary water. Taking a hydro-hegemonic theoretical approach is most common among both male and female authors and is adopted by 27 per cent of all authors. Overall, both male and female authors have suggested state-centric approaches as well as non-state-centric approaches. The disciplinary background of authors rather than their gender was better correlated with their theoretical preferences. Most research coming from authors trained in disciplines like engineering, political sciences, international relations, and law was state-centric and focused on technical aspects, irrespective of the gender of the author. Even when female authors are present, the approach is masculinised, focused on power struggle and conflict. On the other hand, non state-centric theoretical frameworks have a higher representation from diverse disciplines including geography, environmental economics, etc. Like most of academia, transboundary water research in South Asia is a male-dominated domain. This is indicated by the presence

of fewer women writing on these issues as well as in the worldviews around transboundary water most popular in academic works.

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4 A Gendered Perspective on the Multiple Scales of Water Conflict

Alyssa Offutt

Introduction

Transboundary river basins encompass over half of the global population and provide necessary water resources to meet global needs (McCracken & Wolf 2019). However, as basins that span administrative boundaries and contain actors with seemingly diverging interests, transboundary systems also hold potential for tensions that affect water security. These tensions can arise from disagreements over how water is allocated and used, or existing tensions can be aggravated further with water as an escalating factor or spark of conflict. The resulting response**,** ranging from mild speech to violence, is considered water conflict, a process that can contest inequitable allocations and impact human security and environmental degradation (Wolf et al. 2003; Zeitoun & Mirumachi 2008). By understanding water conflict and the range of factors that contribute to its development, interventions can be informed to support its resolution and future mitigation.

Both the initiation and outcomes of water conflict are closely tied to the water security of individuals that is further based in the intersecting identities that affect their privileges, roles, and rights to water, or more simply, who is allowed to utilise a water resource and under what conditions (Fletcher 2018; Goldsworthy 2010). Deeply embedded within these identities is the role of gender which influences how individuals interact with water resources and their related tensions. As a result, water conflicts are not gender neutral and require that gender be analysed to support well-developed policies, improved early warning systems, and gender-sensitive conflict responses (Detraz 2009; Fröhlich & Gioli 2015; Herbert 2014; Myrttinen 2018). However, few studies have assessed the gendered implications of water conflict to date, limiting a comprehensive understanding of the development and response to water-related conflict in transboundary basins (Myrttinen et al. 2018).

Gender is the collection of socially constructed characteristics that create expectations of how one should behave and be treated. Gender is not inherently binary nor is it consistent over time and space; instead, this concept is dependent on context and evolving power relationships that intersect with other aspects of an individual's identity (Demetriades & Esplen 2009; Tuana 2013). Gender

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characteristics can manifest in the roles or responsibilities assigned to genders, in the identities and expectations of masculinity and femininity that are held by individuals and cultures, in institutions which dictate actions, and in the ideologies that justify and reinforce behaviours (El-Bushra & Sahl 2005). Although gender cannot be generalised given the heterogony of individuals and environments, it should be analysed with consideration of the broader social, political, and economic contexts in which it exists to understand its influence more fully on water-related conflicts.

In transboundary river basins, these water conflicts can occur at different geographic scales including interpersonal interactions between individuals, within groups at local, regional, and national scales, and amid state actors at the transboundary scale. These conflicts can occur across borders or within small subsets of each basin, creating complex dynamics that can interrelate amongst scales, with both top-down ramifications on water security and conflict and bottom-up elevation of conflict and its resolution (El-Bushra & Sahl 2005; von Lossow 2015; Offutt 2020; Myrttinen 2018). Differing relational dynamics and intervening factors also affect interactions at each scale and influence the content and intensity of water conflicts. For instance, interactions within a household are privately shaped by individuals who may acutely experience water stress, whereas between states, national actors face public pressures of representation and consequences (de Silva 2018). Given these various constraints, analyses of water conflict and gender must consider the scalar and multi-scalar dimensions that shape interactions to better understand the dynamics of transboundary systems.

However, despite the identified need for a multi-level approach to conflict analyses, the existing body of research on gender and water conflict has primarily focused on local and household dynamics, building understanding at very localised scales (Detraz 2009; Fröhlich & Gioli 2015; Myrttinen et al. 2018). Limited research exists that considers multiple geographic scales and their relationships, preventing a nuanced understanding of water conflict and the broader structures that shape gendered interactions (Fletcher 2018). Existing research also often presents women as victims of water conflict and equates gender to women, which not only overlooks the agency of women but also fails to identify how all genders engage with and are impacted by water conflict (Myrttinen et al. 2018). This chapter seeks to address these gaps by assessing the gendered dimensions of water conflicts at different geographic scales while also interrogating dominant narratives and interrelated scalar influences. The chapter highlights a range of ways in which gender interacts with the initiation, practice, and response to water conflicts to compile the current state of knowledge and, ultimately, deepen and broaden the gender and water conflict discourse to inform its application in transboundary systems.

To conduct this analysis, this chapter comprises a multidisciplinary literature review of the gendered contribution to and impacts of water-related conflict at different levels of scale. Pulling from existing literature that mentions gender and water conflict, gender and conflict, and gender and water security, this chapter

consolidates the existing discourse over the topic and assesses the influence of gender within these processes. Gender and water conflict are reviewed at the interpersonal, local/regional, and transboundary scales. The scales are selected to reflect the range of human choice and geographic domains, with terms that are common to environmental literature (Gibson et al. 2000). The interpersonal scale captures the individual aspects of gender and household dynamics, and the transboundary scale assesses the international nature of transboundary basins. The local and regional scales refer to the dynamics in counties or cities and subnational areas, respectively, and are combined based on similar patterns observed in literature and slight overlaps between scales. Finally, the national scale is not included as state behaviour is also represented in transboundary dynamics. The findings are presented through case studies that reflect a range of conflict intensities and context-specific literature to provide a broad overview without overgeneralising or preventing the inclusion of other narratives in literature.

Gender is then analysed through the lens of gender roles, identities, institutions, and ideologies to both draw comparisons across case studies and methodologies and identify the different dimensions of gender that influence water and conflict at various scales. Within this lens, roles consider duties and responsibilities, identities assess stereotypes and expectations, institutions evaluate power dynamics and structures which instil ideas, and ideologies consider the broader beliefs that shape behaviour (El-Bushra & Sahl 2005). This chapter uses these four elements of gender to review case studies at the three scales more generally, given limited literature specific to transboundary systems, and then evaluates their interrelated nature that could impact transboundary basins. By presenting these scalar perspectives separately and then reflecting on their relationships, the research provides a bridge between disparate studies that can inform transboundary systems and generates a strong foundation for future research on the gendered dimensions of multi-scalar water conflict.

Gendered Dimensions of Interpersonal Water Conflicts

Interpersonal water conflicts are the conflicts that occur within small geographic settings and relate to the day-to-day interactions between individuals. These conflicts often involve water insecurity or challenges to water access as shaped by gendered roles and structures (Pearson et al. 2021). Given that many societies allocate the provision of domestic water to women, this distribution of roles can place women at the heart of interpersonal water conflicts, requiring their participation and agency in a constant renegotiation of the space (Goldsworthy 2010).

Sultana (2011) provides one such example where women are responsible for obtaining water in rural Bangladesh. She describes how arsenic distributions throughout shallow and deep aquifers reduce the potability of water and require water users to access clean wells which may belong to others. The process of using another's well is dependent on relationships and social capital that are

derived from favours and a range of shared identities including kinship, religion, and political ties, demonstrating an intersection of privileges. However, these relationships are constantly evolving with daily interactions that can also elicit conflict. Ranging from verbal arguments to physical altercations on the water use and amount, well access, cleanliness, overcrowding, and external disputes, these interactions place an emotional burden on women and can cause water insecurity. As a result of conflict or conflict-avoidance, these interactions can encourage women to seek out other wells or use contaminated wells, thereby creating a negative cycle between water insecurity and conflict for women whose gender roles include water collection.

In addition to the emotional burdens of water conflict, broader structures of water distribution can also promote women to engage in criminal activity for water access. Truelove (2011) discusses how women who collect water navigate access in unplanned areas of Delhi, India including unauthorised colonies, slums, and legal resettlement colonies. Within her analysis, the author describes how broader legal frameworks and inconsistencies in distribution networks limit opportunities for women to gather sufficient water for their families. In an attempt to fill this void, some women opt for alternate methods to gain water access, including financial persuasion for water deliveries and illegal tapping of water resources (ibid.). These acts of agency to gather water serve as an instigation of conflict that can result in public shaming, physical abuse, and threats of state violence through the wording of national water policies. Within this context, gendered roles of water provision converge with broader institutions of water law, distribution networks, and community norms that both limit and criminalise methods of water access, generating inherent conflict for women.

Within households, water-related conflicts can also occur. Several authors discuss how household conflicts over water scarcity can cause a gendered response where women do not use water or experience domestic violence and fatalities related to water insecurity and its financial implications (Fletcher 2018; Pearson et al. 2021; Sekhri & Storeygard 2013). Other identities can also intersect within household conflicts, as Sultana (2011) describes that young daughters-in-law often bear the responsibility of water gathering in Bangladesh homes. The fear of conflict within their homes related to insufficient water adds to the pressures felt by women when negotiating well access, demonstrating the intersecting power dynamics related to age and familial ties and how the avoidance of conflict in one space (i.e., the domestic sphere) can increase willingness to engage in potential conflict in public spaces (ibid.).

While these conflicts reflect the agency of women in negotiating water use and access, they also impact the physical and emotional burdens on women related to gendered roles of water gathering. However, these conflicts and water insecurity can also have a gendered impact on men. Sultana (2011) discusses how men in rural Bangladesh expressed guilt for being unable to afford deeper wells that are often free from arsenic, and thus, men are responding to their expectations of gender identities in providing the financial resources for

the household. In other instances, such as the unplanned areas of Delhi and the Cochabamba Valley, both genders perceive that men are unaffected by water collection and thus do not care to alter water systems or initiate repairs (Beltrán 2004; Truelove 2011). Additionally, in the case of the unplanned areas of Delhi, men frequently control water resource access through the transport of water tanks and illegal management of wells, enabling them to both support women in alternate water access while also providing an impediment and potential source of conflict (Truelove 2011). Within these settings, males' sense of responsibility reflects their gendered identities, roles, and beliefs that can evoke responses to, and at times, propagate conditions of water conflict, broadening the gendered perspective on interpersonal interactions.

Gendered Dimensions of Local/Regional Water Conflicts

Local/regional water conflicts are conflicts that occur between groups of people at local and regional scales and group responses to a state actor. A variety of factors influence broader local/regional involvement in water-related conflict which can challenge inequality, and in some cases, become violent and contribute to intrastate destabilisation (Myrttinen et al. 2018; de Silva 2018; Pearson et al. 2021). Within this social scale, existing literature identifies relationships between gender roles and identities in the initiation and propagation of conflict and assesses how these same identities can be performed and contested in ongoing water conflicts.

Gender Roles and Identities as a Contributing Factor of Local/Regional Water Conflict

Several authors have argued that gender roles and related identities can combine to be a contributing factor of conflict, and that environmental conditions, such as water stress, can trigger or perpetuate this causal chain by shifting gendered divisions of labour (El-Bushra & Sahl 2005). For instance, drought and changing climate can disproportionately impact male income sources and cause a male-outward migration that results in women becoming the head of their households (Goh 2004; Beltrán 2004). Simultaneously, water-related migration and conflict can also limit access to natural resources and traditional livelihoods, affecting both genders (El-Bushra & Sahl 2005). When these conditions exist, women tend to engage in more economic activity and male economic activity often decreases, which has a range of implications that both empower and increase the vulnerability of all actors (El-Bushra & Sahl 2005; Herbert 2014; Fletcher 2018).

The shift in economic gender roles can also cause a discord with gendered identities. El-Bushra and Sahl (2005) describe how in some cultures men are expected to be breadwinners who supply for their families. This expectation can be expressed and reinforced by both genders, linking the role of generating financial resources with an identity of masculinity (Birchall 2019). When

actors are unable to live up to their identity because of external factors, this is considered a "thwarted identity" (p. 111), which can elicit destructive behaviour including violence and the perpetuation of conflict in the interpersonal, local, and regional sphere (El-Bushra & Sahl 2005). Although not specific to water conflicts, this notion of "thwarted masculinity" (ibid., p. 111) can apply to instances where gendered divisions of labour have shifted as a result of water stress, thus presenting a causal relationship where water can contribute to a dissonance in gender roles and identities that can further contribute to and perpetuate conflict. Similarly, these gender roles and identities of masculinity, when paired with decreased economic activity from water stress, can also evoke alternate responses in fragile contexts, including that some men join armed groups as a means to gain financial security (El-Bushra & Sahl 2005; Herbert 2014). As a result, this response may further perpetuate local/regional conflicts.

The Practice and Contestation of Gender Identities in Local/Regional Water Conflict

Literature on local/regional water conflict also discusses how gendered identities are practised in water conflict through analysing how they are both performed and contested. These identities are highlighted in analyses that discuss how women are instrumental in shaping water conflict, often in response to state actors.

Peredo Beltrán (2004) discusses the role of women within the Cochabamba Water Wars, where residents of the Cochabamba Valley contested the privatisation of water resources. She argues that women were integral in mobilising and building cohesion within the community. Women engaged in media campaigns that shaped narratives of the conflict and built community through cooking meals for participants, caring for protestors, engaging in micro-negotiations, and helping to avoid violence (ibid.). Within this, women expressed a gender identity of protection and care that helped to build solidarity between sectors and urban and rural protestors for a unified community voice. Simultaneously, women contested gender identities that stereotype men as fighters and women as vulnerable by engaging in confrontation with the police and caring for the blockade (Herbert 2014; Beltrán 2004). These activities strengthened the local/regional response to privatisation although women were excluded from the negotiations that led to conflict resolution (ibid.).

In British Colombia, Canada, women of the Heiltsuk community played a similar role in initiating and shaping a conflict between the Heiltsuk First Nations tribes and government agencies that manage herring fisheries in the area. Women participated in conflictive behaviours through engaging in a physical standoff that was the trigger of social disruption and through participating and leading protests and office occupations (Harper et al. 2018). Women also organised and built community through the mobilisation of networks, intragenerational songs, logistics coordination, shared vision development, and emphasising peace (ibid.). Along with their roles as elected decision makers and

through coordination with traditional authorities, Harper et al. (2018) argue that women's activities created a necessary precondition for socio-economic change, in essence enabling the initiation, implementation, and resolution of this regional water-related conflict. Although women engaged in a broad range of activities similar to women's roles within the conflict of the Cochabamba Valley, the authors argue that these roles did not as directly confront typical gender identities due to historic gender balances and role fluidity of the Heiltsuk society. Instead, these roles aligned with the context-specific gender identities and represent the significant impact that women can have in conflict resolution.

Other gendered identities can also play a role in the initiation and resolution of conflict. Lebel et al. (2019) discuss how the narrative of the mother has been operationalised in the Mekong river basin. They posit that the narrative of women protestors as mothers can help to build support for women's leadership in negotiations with the government, such as in the dispute over fisheries compensation from the Pak Mun Dam in Thailand. In addition, depictions of the river as a mother can also be used to mobilise the community to safeguard nature and links to the gendered identity of females as vulnerable and in need of protection (ibid.; Herbert, 2014). From these examples, it is clear that gendered narratives can simultaneously empower women in negotiations while perpetuating narrow gender identities. Along with the other case studies, these findings show how a range of gendered identities shape women's participation and their ability to influence the resolution of local/regional water conflicts.

Gendered Dimensions of Transboundary Water Conflict

Within this analysis, transboundary water conflicts primarily present the interactions between state actors. Although these interactions are predominantly cooperative with the establishment of transboundary institutions, conflict can underlie cooperation and lead to an elevation of tensions that are exacerbated by the geopolitical environment (Wolf et al. 2003; Zeitoun & Mirumachi 2008). Various gendered dimensions are linked to the formation and the practice of transboundary water conflict including gendered institutions, ideologies, and identities that directly affect transboundary systems, as expressed in the following examples.

Gendered Institutions and Transboundary Water Conflict

Within transboundary basins, water management by state actors is often perceived as masculine, and thus, as a masculine institution (e.g., Earle & Bazilli 2013). In part, this perception is inherent to the level of scale, as states are traditionally conceptualised as masculine and are predominantly governed by men (Nagel 2015). Furthermore, many actors in transboundary water governance come from the male-dominated fields of engineering, international relations, and policymaking, which shape the discourse and practices of

transboundary interactions, even when not all representatives are male (Earle & Bazilli 2013; Sehring 2021; von Lossow 2015). As a result of the content and scale, gender is perceived to shape interactions in transboundary systems, including potential water conflict.

This perception of masculinity is furthered by the actions of water management. For instance, state management of transboundary water resources lends itself to securitisation, which entails that water insecurity, often through the framing of climate change, is perceived and communicated as a national threat (Fischhendler 2015; Dankelman et al. 2008). Once initiated, this securitisation can have gendered implications as it often justifies military involvement or actions that are critiqued for being highly masculine and for perpetuating broad policies that disadvantage women's security by ignoring gendered impacts (Fischhendler 2015; Nagel 2015; Detraz 2009). Through these processes, the securitisation of water resources not only generates gendered outcomes but can also tie to potential water conflict, as securitisation can justify the decision to not cooperate which may cause tensions between states, often in the form of mild verbal disputes (Fischhendler 2015).

The desire to achieve water security can also lead to a reliance on dam construction for water storage at international and national scales. Within ecofeminist perspectives, this dam construction perpetuates a hydraulic mission to control the environment and is perceived as a masculine act underlain by gendered ideologies of patriarchy and notions of power and strength (Earle & Bazilli 2013; von Lossow 2015). Although the propagation of dams can support water security by buffering changes in water availability, it can also be a source of conflict at multiple scales. The development of large dams, especially when constructed unilaterally, can be a major source of tension in transboundary basins and can cause conflicts even where cooperative agreements exist (Wolf et al. 2003). Similar government acts within a country can also trigger local and regional tensions as exemplified domestically over the Pak Mun Dam in Thailand (Lebel et al. 2019). Along with the securitisation of water resources and interactions amongst state entities, this propagation of infrastructure and its repercussions demonstrate how gendered institutions, such as transboundary water management, and masculine ideologies can contribute to the development of water conflict.

Gendered Identities and Transboundary Water Conflict

The gendered identities of state actors can also play a critical role in the practice of transboundary water conflict. Sehring (2021) describes a confrontational negotiation style in Central Asian transboundary governance as "strongman" diplomacy which is characterised by firm positions with limited flexibility and aligns with masculine stereotypes of toughness. Sehring (2021) explains that negotiators evoke "strongman" behaviours to align with social expectations in transboundary negotiations. However, these behaviours can cause potential disagreements or perpetuate water conflict and are a result of gendered identities

that are held and propagated by the broader society. Similar "strongman" behaviour can also be observed by government actors on a national scale, leading to violent interactions over water management in Palestine (Selby 2003). As a result, these gendered identities can contribute to ongoing water conflicts.

Gender identities can also be instrumentalised as narratives to support transboundary water conflict. Similar to the use of mother imagery for a river, Birchall (2019) describes how gender stereotypes of women in need of protection are often used to justify and mobilise actors into conflict. While these narratives have been primarily observed in ethnic intrastate conflicts, such as during conflict in Kosovo, they can also play a role in transboundary discourses (ibid.). For example, by discussing the benefits that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam will bring to women through the #itsherdam social media campaign, the campaign uses women's vulnerability to mobilise public support for a highly contested infrastructure project along the Blue Nile (Fantini 2020). Similarly, the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) promotes the benefits it will have for poverty reduction, especially for women along the Tigris and Euphrates basins, although the dams are a source of tension with downstream neighbours (Ronayne 2005). These evocations of gender identity help to legitimise positions that may contribute to water conflict, and in each case, were strategically employed to pressure and justify behaviour, shaping the relationships in transboundary basins.

The Multi-Scalar Gender Implications of Water Conflicts

Gendered roles, identities, institutions, and ideologies intersect in different ways throughout interpersonal, local, regional, and transboundary scales of water conflict. As a result of different intervening factors and pressures, these scales had different intensities and implications of water-related conflict on genders. However, the interrelated nature of water conflict also applies to the role of gender within these processes, requiring that the ways in which gender transcends scale and is influenced by other levels of scale also be addressed.

Within the scope of water conflict, ideologies and institutional ideas can prevail at all scales, and several academic and policy discourses of water and conflict are observed to have broad gender implications. For instance, a frequent narrative of water conflict is that water scarcity causes conflict (Homer-Dixon 1999). Albeit critiqued, this perspective is often reproduced and can be perceived as a neo-Malthusian idea that population growth will lead to conflict over water resources (Fröhlich & Gioli 2015). This argument is imbued with gender implications that target women, and particularly poor women, for their role in reproduction while ignoring context-specific differences (Detraz 2009; Hartman 2010). This logic can affect policies on national and international scales as the argument is embedded in foreign policy approaches of multiple developed countries (Shaffer 2017). Other ideologies such as patriarchal ideas

that privilege men were also observed to influence the distribution of roles and identities throughout the case studies, shaping patterns of behaviour at all scales.

Water-related interactions also have multi-scalar implications that affect both gender and water conflict. For instance, the propagation of infrastructure projects, such as dams, impacts local communities and disproportionately affects women (Ronayne 2005; World Commission on Dams 2020). Dams can cause a decrease in economic opportunities that reduce the position of women within households and communities, therefore affecting not only their financial security but also the ability of women to initiate and engage in conflicts (Lebel et al. 2019). Infrastructure projects can also displace conflict, evoking local and regional protests in responses that mobilise gender (ibid.). Conflict at a transboundary scale can exacerbate these impacts, as a lack of cooperative agreements prevents the ability to constrain infrastructure design (von Lossow 2015). In essence, transboundary water conflict over infrastructure and state actions can have trickle-down gendered implications for conflicts at alternate scales.

Other conflicts can also have top-down implications for actors at local/regional and interpersonal scales. El-Bushra and Sahl (2005) discuss how national-level conflict can adversely impact otherwise positive local relations in Mali and Somalia, causing potential destabilisation and perpetuating notions of "thwarted masculinity" (p. 111) at the local scale. Based on the proposed causal chain, this top-down influence could contribute to potential water-related conflicts. Similarly, local/regional conflicts and environmental disasters are often correlated with an increase in domestic and sexual violence and water insecurity (Dankelman et al. 2008; Fletcher 2018; SIDA 2015 as cited in de Silva et al. 2018). These processes not only perpetuate gendered conflict but can also generate potential interpersonal water conflicts, especially in relation to water provision. Furthermore, existing and previous conflicts can also endanger women whose roles include water collection, as fighting can limit water access, and the existence of landmines on the paths to water sources, as occurred in Mozambique, can threaten the security of women who collect water in post-conflict environments (Greenberg & Zukerman 2009). International actors can also play important roles in water conflict. For instance, the water conflict in Cochabamba Valley was triggered in part by international development banks and free trade agreements that encouraged the privatisation of water resources, evoking gendered conflict responses (Beltrán 2004). As a result, these top-down actions can displace gendered dimensions of water conflict to regional, local, and interpersonal scales.

However, gender and water conflict can also have bottom-up implications for alternate levels of scale. Although studies on gendered influence are limited, the mobilisations of gendered identities in the Cochabamba Valley and Heiltsuk communities were instrumental in reaching conflict resolution and shaping the actions of the state (Beltrán 2004; Harper et al. 2018). Given that regional stakeholders have elevated water conflicts to a transboundary scale

in other settings, it is likely that the gender dimensions of regional conflicts in transboundary systems could similarly influence state interactions (Offutt 2020). Furthermore, public pressure of gendered ideologies was observed to influence the behaviour of state actors and evoke "strongman" diplomacy demonstrating the potential bottom-up influence on tensions and gendered expectations at a transboundary scale (Sehring 2021).

Given the potential for mutually influential relationships of water, conflict, and gender at multiple scales, it can be concluded that interactions cause a cascade of gendered implications. Therefore, a multi-scalar approach is useful to effectively address these dynamics and facilitate conflict resolution. These approaches will not only help to identify and address the source of water conflict in transboundary basins but can also identify the gendered ramifications of water conflict that can be mitigated to reduce the potential for latent conflict.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of multiple scales, it is clear that gender is influential in the development and impacts of water conflict. Gendered roles, identities, institutions, and ideologies combine to shape behaviours that contribute to the life span of water conflicts from their initiation to their resolution. Within this, gendered identities were particularly influential and played roles at all scales, demonstrating how gendered expectations are a strong motivator of behaviour that was implemented, contested, and evoked to gather support in water conflicts. Gender was also impacted by discourses that present water conflict as gender neutral, such as those linking population growth and scarcity to water conflict. Given the importance of gender within these water conflict processes and policies, analyses must incorporate a gendered perspective for a more comprehensive understanding of the water conflict, identification of entry points for interventions and empowerment, and resolution that addresses all actors.

Additionally, the breadth of water conflicts presented also demonstrates that dominant narratives portraying women as victims are woefully inadequate. At interpersonal, local, and regional scales, women regularly engage in and navigate water conflicts. Women in government roles at the transboundary scale likely do the same. Although women are also negatively impacted by these conflicts, and the victim narrative is used to gather public support at local/regional and transboundary scales, women's participation in water conflict can contest existing water governance arrangements that are perceived as unfair to provide greater water access within their communities. Additionally, men also suffer from water-related conflicts and constraining gender identities, showing that narratives must be upended to fully identify the actors and impacts of water conflicts.

Finally, the relation between gender and water conflict differed across interpersonal, local/regional, and transboundary scales and was influenced by interactions at other scales. These differences are related to varying intervening

factors and pressures that shape the gendered dynamics between actors and the implications of conflict on water security. However, the case studies illustrate the potential for top-down implications and bottom-up pressures, which emphasise the interrelated nature of gender in multi-scalar water conflict as well as the potential for unforeseen gendered implications at alternate levels of scale (e.g., the construction of dams shifting power dynamics in interpersonal and local water conflicts). Therefore, given the potential for localised and regional water conflicts across borders, as well as for the connections between geographic scales, multi-scalar approaches can enable a more complete understanding of the dynamics of transboundary river basins. This comprehensive approach can build on the patterns observed at the different scales to identify how impacts can cascade and invoke diverse combinations of roles, identities, institutions, and ideologies.

Limitations exist within the analysis of gender in the water-conflict nexus. Literature on gender and water conflict is sparse and does not always identify mild tensions as conflict. Furthermore, where conflict is identified, it is often related to violent conflict. Together, these trends limit the range of intensities and gendered relationships for analysis. The existing literature also predominantly focuses on the Global South, constraining the range of contexts assessed and the potential for evaluating other intersecting privileges. Additionally, existing studies were predominantly confined to singular scales with limited analyses at multiple scales or interactions between scales, particularly within transboundary basins. Where scales were assessed, interactions primarily focused on the construction of dams. Finally, the majority of literature focuses on women and women's vulnerability in relation to water stress and conflict, often through the perspective of climate change, and does not always address causal mechanisms in the analysis of water conflict. For the field to advance, more gendered analyses and approaches that identify space and agency for males, females, and gender non-conforming individuals are needed within a broader range of topics, contexts, and multi-scalar environments. These analyses will further enrich the discourse and underscore the importance of gender in the formation, practice, and impacts of conflictive interactions.

This chapter provides a first step in consolidating the discourse of gender and water conflict at multiple scales to both emphasise the importance of gender in transboundary water conflict and provide a foundation for future research of the interrelated, gendered implications in transboundary systems. By identifying the importance of gender and scale within water conflicts and the limitations of current literature, this chapter presents opportunities for growth and strengthening understanding of the gendered dimensions of water conflict. Furthermore, through assessing the gendered roles, identities, institutions, and ideologies that shape and are impacted by water conflicts, this analysis can further support timely gender-sensitive interventions, sustainable conflict resolution, and improved multi-scalar water governance in transboundary basins.

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5 Thinking through Networks

Towards a Feminist Water Diplomacy

Medha Bisht

Introduction

What does feminising diplomacy mean? Before addressing this question, it is helpful to understand and put into perspective the discourses on women, water, and international relations. In the last few decades, there has been a deepening of the water discourse in both diplomacy and security studies. Partially foregrounded in soft law, deepening of this discourse is anchored to the framework of environment and development, kickstarted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). UNCED was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992, and brought the importance of sustainable development to the forefront. The Conference laid the blueprint for stakeholder partnerships through Agenda 21, thus introducing the "major group concept" which included setting up the Women's Major Group and Caucus. Agenda 21 acknowledged that achieving sustainable development would require broad-based local partnerships with non-governmental actors. In the same year, at the International Conference on Water and the Environment (ICWE) in Dublin, the Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development came out with its four guiding principles[1] on equitable and efficient management and sustainable use of water, emphasising that women play a central part in the provisioning, management, and safeguarding of water (Principle 3). These developments are significant, as they are reflective of feminising the water discourse, wherein women were considered to be critical users and managers of water. Significantly, this has become a major turning point for discourses on gender and water since the 1990s (Ray 2007).

The formal articulation of the term "feminisation" owes its credit to Kader Asmal, the former South African Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, who argued for "[the] feminisation of politics and policy" (Asmal 2001, p. 206), which was not just about tokenism but about transforming decision-making processes. Taking a cue from this, Turton et al. (2001) argue that:

> [The term feminisation] loosely refers to the re-introduction of women into various management processes around which water sector delivery

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> is built and the resultant change in *management perspective* that results from this.
>
> (p. 157, emphasis added)

This definition on feminisation is significant not only because it recognises that women are critical users associated with water-related activities, but also emphasises that a *change in perspective*s should be an important step for feminising water management practices which are often considered to have masculine connotations and symbolisms (Zwarteveen 2008). Rather than underlining the importance of participation and representation of women, which is of course an important marker for feminising water diplomacy, this chapter examines the role that networks can play in directing us to think about solidarity politics, when it comes to any discussion around women and diplomacy.

The broad question that is addressed in this regard is: In what ways is the study of networks insightful for feminising the discourse on water diplomacy in particular and feminist diplomacy in general? This question is addressed in four separate sections. The first section delineates the conceptual tropes associated with networks, diplomacy, and feminisation – terms which are extensively used in this chapter. This section helps foreground the understanding of diplomacy as a method to understand processes. The second section juxtaposes this understanding with networks arguing how a conversation between the two could be an effective way for deepening the discussion on water studies. Against this framework, this section looks at the literature around network and diplomacy studies, analysing how both networks and diplomacy can inform the meaning of power – an important concept in international relations in general and particularly in diplomacy. The third section presents a network case study, as an illustrative example to dwell on some theoretical propositions presented in the previous section. The fourth section offers concluding thoughts on feminist water diplomacy.

Networks, Diplomacy, and Feminisation: A Conversation towards Feminist Diplomacy

Networks are distinct from hierarchical modes of organisation (such as states) and from bargaining relations (such as markets) (Keck & Sikkink 1999; Kahler 2009). Reflective of processes through which both states and non-state actors socialise, they are often perceived through a lens of relations, connections, and communications, where the interests of actors are often tied to a specific issue area. Thus, networks often operate in a non-linear manner, thus enabling a hybrid set of actors to respond to challenges that can stem from multiple scales (Risse-Kappen 1995). While much of literature around networks focuses on the diffusion of ideas and norms, they can be a useful starting point to put in perspective the intersections between network (and) diplomacy.

Lebadeva et al. (2019) bring forth an interesting distinction between networked forms of diplomacy. For them, the Western political discourse on

network diplomacy privileges institutions and instruments, which function like a globally integrated transnational company. The focus is on building a large network of contacts, which makes network diplomacy closely related to the public. The Russian discourse on network diplomacy focuses more on flexible cooperation between countries in order to conform to general interests. Network diplomacy, thus, is marked by the formation of temporary coalitions (networks) formed to achieve common foreign policy goals. These coalitions serve as network (actor), where each member (which could range from government to private sector firms, to non-governmental organisations and regional and international organisations) could be an important node in the network (Lebadeva et al. 2019). Thus, what emerges from this argument is that network diplomacy focuses more on relational aspects, where alliance formations and alliance sustenance become key to understanding the consequences it has for diplomatic practices. Anne-Marie Slaughter (2017) has also made a significant contribution to network diplomacy through strategies of connection. She argues that networks are effective in facilitating information, in exercising adaptability and exhibiting scalability. An important characteristic of networks is their association with power, which as she argues is not a capability but an emergent property that can be exercised only in connection with others (Slaughter 2017).

Network diplomacy is thus broadly understood as bringing together government agencies and non-governmental organisations, which is suggestive of a different way "of conceptualising the framing and implementation of international policy – and thus of conducting diplomacy in general" (Hocking 2006, p. 65). Heine (2013) argues that what marks the growth of network diplomacy is not its internationalisation but its simultaneity – where networks of flows link the strategic units in all ambits of human activity. For him, the transformation of a "nation state" to a "network state" is important to understand the shift from club diplomacy to network diplomacy.[2]

While networked forms of diplomacy indeed offer useful insights for understanding practices and processes in international relations, which are inclusive of both state and non-state actors, not much attention has been given to its contribution towards feminising diplomacy.[3] Donna Haraway (1991), however, highlights the importance of situated knowledge, which she argues is partial, locatable, and critical. She notes that this knowledge of partial connections through construction and deconstruction can hope to transform the system of knowledge or ways of seeing. This hope for transformative knowledge requires a shift in seeing. Thus, while it is important to have women actors, it is equally important to have "shared conversations in epistemology" as these can lead to the "politics of solidarity" (Haraway 1991). The following pages shall focus on developments around feminising water, and dwell on the value it offers to this conversation.

As previously stated, the term feminising water has not just been associated with the recognition, representation, and participation of women. It also emphasises a change in perspectives one requires for initiating policies related

to water management conducive to the needs of women. One of the reasons for this shift in understanding in the water debate was the effort of women movements and collectives, who mobilised the attention of practitioners across local, national, and international levels, along with the emerging environment and development debate, which broadened and deepened the understanding of women and water. Additionally, in the 1990s, multiple international conferences held under the aegis of the United Nations drew attention to women's rights and the significance of inclusivity (i.e., the representation and participation of women) in the public domain. A major consequence of this development was a proliferation of scholarship around women and diplomacy. For instance, Aggestam and Towns (2019) offer a robust critique to the emergent discourse in diplomacy studies. While they recognise that discourses on diplomacy studies have tried keeping pace with new developments, feminist perspectives have largely been missing from such analysis. Highlighting the importance of using gender as an analytical category, they argue for a "gender turn in diplomacy" (p. 9). They argue that this turn can be developed by taking cognizance of women in diplomatic history, unravelling the biases towards representing more men than women through empirical mapping, and teasing out the limitations of diplomatic infrastructure, which produces and reproduces feminine and masculine practices and roles, often privileging males over females (Aggestam & Towns 2019). Drawing attention to such gendered structures, they take a rather deterministic view on the role played by structural factors, which often disciplines individual roles, behaviours, and expectations. For them, engendering diplomacy entails exploring ways through which women have contributed to the field of diplomatic practice historically, empirically, and conceptually. Thus, feminising diplomacy for Aggestam and Towns (2019) would necessitate the inclusion of more female voices and experiences, which can help unpack the "black box" of diplomatic practices, hinged on the intertwined relationship between gender, power, and diplomacy. In another article, taking the broader theme of feminising diplomacy, Towns (2020), draws attention to the ways through which masculinity and femininity are reinforced, produced, and reproduced in the profession of diplomacy. Towns (2020, p. 7) takes a rather essentialist interpretation of femininity and masculinity, by focusing on "figurations", which she points out are primarily "about power, about hierarchising actors, and about processes and practices".

While such analysis is useful in offering analytical insights, a major limitation of this scholarship is that it critiques diplomacy more in terms of technique (inclusion of men, women, transgender, language, discourses, amongst others) or institution (gendered structures) and less in terms of a method, which draws attention to processes, as central to studying and analysing diplomacy. Moreover, the understanding of processes is restricted to practices of diplomacy. Thus, a distinction between practices and processes in diplomacy is needed, as the former can be useful in understanding the perpetuation of certain roles and belief systems (which may of course be gendered), while the latter is more about the generative capacity of diplomacy, where multiplicity of actors can

aim for transformative social change.[4] The ontological focus on processes can serve feminist concerns because it can reveal how structures of race, caste, class, and/or sex can impact differently situated women (Gilmann 2016). Thus, taking the methodological lens which considers diplomacy to be a process (Qin 2020), this chapter emphasises a bottom-up approach to diplomacy. This can help in tracing processes, privileging situated perspectives from the ground over a meta or macro narrative of diplomacy. This also helps us understand the critical emancipatory potential in diplomacy.

This chapter employs the term feminisation to emphasise the notion of feminist diplomacy. In other words, this can also be taken as a conversation for opening a conceptual way forward for taking processes in diplomacy as central to one's analysis. While it appreciates the role of women as actors,[5] it does not necessarily restrict the analysis to them, as the focus is on processes through which multiple actors can arrive at "shared epistemologies" to form alliances, thus increasing their capacity and power. This chapter recognises the agency of women where the processes, perspectives, and plurality of actors privileges femininity. Power, in this case, is defined as empowerment which is the ability to act on one's goals despite opposition or make choices or decisions and act upon them without constraint, suggesting that both individual capacities and enabling collective space become important (Kabeer 1999). Networks, as we shall see below, by offering insights on processes play an important role in empowering actors.

This methodological focus for understanding diplomacy is important because there is an inherent methodological and/or epistemological tension between diplomacy and feminist studies. The reason being that diplomacy is generally associated with state-centred interaction, as it privileges positivist epistemology to understand the behaviour of states, while feminist theorists undertake a constitutive analysis of the (gendered) state, and privilege plural, partial, interpretive, situated, and subjective standpoints (Harding 2004).

This shift in knowing/seeing (or ontology) will not only help facilitate a conversation on feminist diplomacy but also foreground the concept of networked power in diplomacy, an aspect which has been missing in the scholarship on gender and diplomacy. By deepening the ontological focus on processes and interactions rather than on states as having fixed attributes, the chapter advances the understanding of how power operates. This exercise can help us understand the complementarities that exist between diplomacy and network studies and how the understanding of power can benefit from, and contribute to, a conversation between the two.

Network Diplomacy: Through the Lens of Power

Power has been conceptualised in three ways in diplomatic practice: (1) as relational power – which primarily means manipulation (Dahl 1957; Naim 2013; Qin 2018), (2) as soft/smart power (Melissen 2011; Lee 2011; Holsti 1964), which de-emphasises the use of force and underlines practices that are

transformational, and (3) as capacity building primarily undertaken through the processes of coalition building (Riker 1962; Dupont 1996). A significant factor which emerges from all three aforementioned ways of approaching power and diplomacy is the focus on processes and relations, which is elemental in defining power in diplomatic studies. This is ontologically significant because it indicates that processes, relations, interactions, and practices are central for determining the meaning of power.

Vij et al. (2020) rightly claim that "the literature on transboundary rivers is power-blind or at least power shy" (p. 250) and draw attention to both covert and overt interactions which are significant for understanding the intersection of power and water diplomacy. Alternatively, if one casts a look at how power has been employed around the literature on power and transboundary water cooperation, terms such as soft power, ideational power, hegemonic power, and hard power are employed. In these renditions, negotiated arrangements normally privilege the dominant and powerful. Terms such as benevolent hegemon, positive water agreements, and negative water agreements are often employed, as the definition of power is largely employed in an instrumental manner (Barua & Vij 2018; Barua 2018; Zeitoun & Warner 2006; Barua et al. 2018).

Important as these terms are for explaining the role of power in transboundary water politics in regions, it limits the relationship between power and diplomacy to instrumental and fixated ways, where power is essentially defined in terms of "acting in concert" or coalition building and forming alliances through persuasive practices (Tickner 1988). It is here that a networked understanding of power can offer insights to understand how processes, interactions, and relations can shine a light on the nature of power which is more than just being instrumental and fixated towards certain definite ways. Power through a networked lens is understood more through partial connections, where different (human and non-human) actors in a network, are mere mediums of translations, through which a specific situation is transformed. This shift in focus has ontological ramifications for making sense of how power gets activated and is translated through socialisation between (human and non-human) actors, leading to solidarity politics.

Introducing Network Studies

Network studies ontologically draws attention to the study of relations, interactions, and practices, thereby addressing some of the conceptual gaps which can be relevant towards understanding networked power. This is significant because not much work on network diplomacy has benefitted from alternative traditions for studying power in networks.[6] This chapter takes into consideration the following conceptualisations of power, namely Kahler's (2009; Burton et al. 2009) analysis, which is significant for underlining the importance of connections and relations in network studies, and Haraway's (1988, 1991) analysis which takes the discussion a step further by reflecting on

how non-human and human actors can lead to strong alliances adding on to the specific dimension of networked power.

Kahler's (2009) understanding of power elaborates on various forms of intangible power generated through the position of an actor in a network. These are bargaining power, social power, and delinking power. Bargaining power is exercised by those actors who are otherwise influential but are also weakly connected. These actors can become important brokers in a network, and are thus a powerful node in a network due to the influence they can exercise in terms of exercising intellectual, reputational, financial, and ideational power. Social power, on the other hand, is created and augmented through ties with states. This could be generated through their association with important bilateral and multilateral platforms. Social power has also been equated with soft power. Delinking power (or power to exit) is often exercised by the less embedded actors who are at the margins of a network. Thus, exploring the outside options for these actors and/or the ways in which these marginal actors are connected to important nodes in a network are determinants in the stability of a network. Power determined by a position of a specific actor in a network is mediated through social relations. Subsequently, the nature of connections often leads to successful alliances and capacity development of varied actors in a network (Kahler 2009).

Haraway's (1991) work offers a similar yet distinct insight on alliances, which is done through the analogy of a cybernetic organism (or cyborg) – a term used by the author to reject boundaries between humans and machines. The cyborg analogy offers a useful concept to network theory by focusing on partial connection. Partial connections are explained through the notion of translation through which technological objects are transformed and modified (in science and technology studies) and have been defined as a process of making connections, of forging a passage between two different/hybrid domains (Seres in Vicsek et al. 2016). By taking both human and non-human interactions into account, Haraway (1991) argues that potential translation between them changes and redefines the relationship in a situation. These hybrid connections are alliances which are maintained in networks, as long as specific conditions for their existence are ensured. The focus is on how the heterogeneous elements shape and support each other, and become a source of power or even the politics around solidarity (Vicsek et al. 2016). Haraway (1991) is interested in examining "effects", i.e., how power is activated through socialisation amongst agents, not only the living but also the non-living. Consequently, it is safe to assume that entities have no essence in themselves, but rather that their properties are formed and shaped through their relations to each other (Vicsek et al. 2016; Bisht 2020). This reconfiguration of power explains how alliances and new coalitions find meaning for weaving webs of connections. Thus, while Kahler's (2009) network analysis can be useful in studying connections between state and non-state actors, with a primary emphasis on the position of actors, Haraway (1991) offers a more spontaneous meaning of power. The latter can be

studied by understanding connections between humans and non-humans, and in giving meaning to solidarity politics which is an important aspect associated with feminist politics (Haraway 1991) To explain some of these theoretical propositions, the following section uses the Brahmaputra basin as an illustrative example.

Brahmaputra Basin: Reflections on Power through a Networked Lens

Flowing through the Himalayan foothills is a minor transboundary river, the Saralbhanga/Saralpara, a tributary of the Brahmaputra river. Unlike the key major river systems of South Asia, Saralbhanga is a smaller river system and offers an interesting tale of cooperation between India and Bhutan (see Bisht 2019). While much has been written on the hydro relations between Bhutan and India (Bisht 2011), not much is known about one of the major irritants, flashfloods, which often make the inhabitants of India–Bhutan border towns insecure.

The issue of flashflooding was first documented as a water induced disaster in 1994. Since then, intermittent flashfloods have led to degradation of agricultural land and infrastructure loss over time. The story of cooperation goes back to 2016 when flashfloods led to economic losses for bordering districts in Southern Bhutan and Northern Assam in India (Acharya 2017; Basu 2018; Kuensel 2017). These developments raised further concerns as the Bhutanese government responded by diverting the Saralbhanga river. This alarmed the local farmers in lower riparian Assam State in India, who were concerned that such a move would increase the sediment load in the river, causing much agricultural degradation. In the past, in order to meet their local requirements during the monsoon season, farmers in Assam built an indigenous dam – Dingo, a check dam – for diversion of water, which helped farmers downstream to irrigate their crops. The decision of the Bhutanese government in 2016 to put an embargo on the building of the indigenous check dam raised concerns and tensions (Yashwant 2018a; Yashwant 2018b; Bisht 2019).

The Formation of a Network

It was in response to this crisis that a loose network under the umbrella framework of Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSA) took shape. The TROSA was a five-year (2016–21) regional programme implemented by Oxfam and its partners in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar to understand the challenges related to transboundary rivers. Funded by the Government of Sweden, under the umbrella framework of this regional programme, facilitated primarily by Oxfam India, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and collectives have come together. TROSA is thus not unique to the case of Saralbhanga river and has helped mobilise a collective of organisations, particularly communities inhabiting the border towns of

Bhutan, Nepal, India, and Myanmar. However, the case of Saralbhanga river is significant for understanding networked power.

The network included a mix of local NGOs and existing informal collectives. NGOs such as Northern Research and Social Work Networking from India, Bhutan–Transparency International (BTI), and Bhutan–India Friendship Association (BIFA), a non-governmental organisation which has local chapters in districts of Bhutan (Royal Government of Bhutan, n.d.), played an important role. Meanwhile, the All India Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and Bodo Women Forum for Peace and Development were the local collectives. This network has a useful lesson to offer for transboundary water cooperation, as it suggests a different way through which transboundary cooperation can function. For instance, the roles played by various organisations were distinct from and complementary to each other ranging from financial, logistical, ideational, and relational functions, thus adding to Kahler's (2009) social power, bargaining power, and delinking power. The TROSA network, as it formally came to be called, played an important role in anchoring all organisations (formal and informal). Kahler's (2009) conceptualisation of networked politics is helpful to understand the position of actors and the importance of position in terms of generating specific forms of power.

The Bhutan–India Friendship Association (BIFA), for example, is an NGO with chapters in Phuntsholing, Nganglam, Samdrup Jhomkar, Jomotsangkha, Thimpu, and Gelephu districts in Bhutan. The presence of BIFA representatives played an important role as they facilitated the meeting with the Deputy Commissioner of the Sarpang district of Bhutan. This resulted in Bhutanese officials agreeing to allow farmers from Assam to build a check dam, which was used for diverting water from the Saralbhanga river for irrigation purposes in the past. BIFA thus played the role of a metaphorical bridge builder by engaging the Bhutanese government in an official capacity. The presence of the Bhutan–Transparency Initiative was also significant, as it facilitated access and outreach to Bhutanese decision makers. Thus, the webs of connections in networks that were formed particularly in Bhutan enhanced the TROSA network's social power.

Meanwhile, one can say that local NGOs such as India's Northern Research and Social Work Networking (NRSNW) and international NGOs such as Oxfam enhanced India's bargaining power. While Oxfam India had financial leverage, NRSNW was an established NGO of strong local repute working on building capacity of communities. It was also significant for routing in funding and contributing to the logistical aspects associated with the network, such as organising dialogues and meetings with the community. Both Oxfam India and NRSNW played an important role as brokers in reaching out to NGOs from Bhutan on one hand and to the community on the other. Oxfam's role as a financial partner helped in facilitating the entire process.

Delinking power can be associated with the power to exit from the network, and in case prevalent, can make a network unstable. Delinking power was possessed by informal networks of students' and women's movements – the

All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and Bodo Women's Forum for Peace and Development (BWFPD) – given their strong connections to mobilise the local population. While ABSU has been spearheading the student movement since the 1970s in Assam, India, BWFPD have been active in spearheading the women's movement. Both of these collectives have been active in spearheading the informal movement for a separate state, Bodoland, in Assam, playing an important role in peacebuilding in this conflict torn area. Further, as shared with the author, BWFPD had always been a connector for mobilising students, and the village men and women felt more comfortable in communicating with women leaders than men about their issues. It was further shared that, as a collective, the Bodo women have strong ties to the ABSU and are more easily able to mobilise villagers about local concerns (BWFPD representative, personal communication, 9 March 2018). This has been due to the difficult militant history experienced by the Indian districts bordering Bhutan, where women's movements have been at the forefront of raising the issues concerning local people (Choudhury 2017). This combination of both formal organisations and informal networks has become a significant entry point to understanding how alliances and coalitions – which help build power in a network – can be created and sustained in the border regions.

Meanwhile, exit power in the network for collectives and/or informal organisations was minimised by giving them long-term hope of sustainable cooperation with Bhutan. Local collectives were particularly interested in issues related to maintaining their livelihoods and how these issues could be seen as opportunities for women collectives in the region. The promise of long-term benefits, not exclusively water centric, helped to increase the cohesiveness and expectation of members from within the TROSA network. A member of the BWFPD shared that one of the main attractions to the network was the livelihood promises that such an exchange could offer to the Bodo women (BWFPD representative, personal communication, 9 March 2018). Many women in informal collectives, were members of NGOs, groups, vendor associations related to livelihood programmes, and this initiative offered a promise for connecting with Bhutanese citizens on the other side (ibid.). This was an interesting insight, as Bhutan–India share an open border, which means that people can move across their border towns without passports.

These conversations add to the understanding that a reason for the success of the TROSA network was because it responded to the needs of the women, who were exploring opportunities for security livelihood opportunities through trade with Bhutan border towns. This ignited the long-term interests and expectations of the women to own the process and mobilise others (particularly the men) towards the goal. Significantly, it was reported that in June 2019,

> over 500 people from 36 villages of Saralpara area in Kokrajhar district participated in Shramdan [voluntary work] to repair traditional diversion based irrigation canal [local natives called Jamfwi/Dong] from Saralbanga

> river, which flows downstream from Bhutan through Kokrajhar district in Assam.
>
> (Preetam 2019)

Moreover in 2018, India and Bhutan announced the opening of a Border Trade Centre between the border districts of Assam and Bhutan, which has helped sustain the interests of the locals, particularly women (Singh 2018).

Conclusion: Towards Feminist Water Diplomacy

Networks are significant in highlighting the value of connections as well as the distinct positions and locations that multiple actors occupy in them. They are useful for understanding how power is produced and reproduced and the role played by multiple actors including the non-human in sustaining this alliance. When it comes to non-human actors, the Saralbhanga river plays an important role in this area. The kind of mobilisation that the communities around the Saralbhanga river experienced would not have been possible without the ownership of resources and the river itself.

While the benefits for maintaining livelihoods coming out of the cooperation played an important role, the protection of the river and the Manas bio-reserve (of which the entire ecosystem of the river is a part) offered a natural connection for people to take forward this cooperation in a meaningful manner (BWFPD representative, personal communication, 9 March 2018). This is suggestive of the fact that alliances and coalitions thus cannot be solely attributed to the interests of the actors but also need to be cognizant of how the multiple parts (human and non-human), as Haraway points out, work together to construct the cohesiveness and also a vision for the network. Consequently, power in networks is suggestive of collective power, which stems from processes of socialisation giving meaning to a more relational form of interaction, and are indeed an expression of solidarity in politics.

The discussion above shows the possibilities for activating and translating power through networks which can make way for feminist diplomacy. Feminist diplomacy thus can be approached in two ways. First, different aspects of power can be a means to achieving a specific end goal. This meaning of power is amplified through networks, where plurality and perspectives of actors are essential in building the cohesiveness of a network. Second, power, when studied through a networked lens, gives a distinct perspective to diplomacy, where processes become central to its analysis. How power can morph into bargaining power, social power, and delinking power through connections between both human and non-human actors can help us understand how shared ways of seeing and understanding things can evolve. Water diplomacy or transboundary water cooperation needs to go beyond the binary between water governance and water diplomacy and critically engage with situated perspectives from the ground. Network diplomacy can offer a way to give agency to these perspectives and enhance their capacity and actors through

alliances. Based on the analysis above one can argue that, thinking through a networked understanding of power will not only help broaden some of the arguments associated with power but also help us navigate feminist ways of engaging in diplomacy, which can enhance the emancipatory potential of diplomacy studies.

Notes

1 The Dublin Principles is a good example of "deepening" of water discourse, recommending action at the local, national and international level. Foregrounded in the vision of sustainable development, and emphasising the importance of translating the UNCED vision, it recommended four principal guidelines: (1) water being a finite resource, needs a holistic approach, (2) water management should be based on stakeholder inputs, (3) policies should be responsive to women's needs, (4) economic management of water shall expedite sensibilities towards water being a human right. (For further details see, The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development, www.gdrc.org/uem/water/dublin-statement.html)
2 Others have contributed to the debate, including Metzl (2001).
3 For a feminist critique of practice theory see Standfield (2020).
4 Zawalski (2019) has talked about relationality, which is more proximate to the understanding of processes of knowledge production in international relations. These processes, as she points out have led to the evisceration of feminine voices, and feminist ways of thinking in IR. The ontological focus on processes employed in this chapter is more about observing fluidity in processes, in which multiple actors (human and non-human) participate, which can give a distinct meaning to the understanding of power, security, order, etc.
5 Tracing the agency of women in early modern times, Sluga and James (2016) argue that the agency of women can be found in large social networks, where women had the ability to maintain friendships over large distances and were central to the roles as news gatherers and political intermediaries.
6 Social Network Analysis (SNA) and Actor Network Theory (ANT) are two distinct traditions. While both these traditions have a different ontological and traditional focus, significantly both offer distinct insights on the understanding of power – which is emergent, fluid, and explains how it is activated, maintained, and sustained. For instance, SNA employs quantitative methods, and is methodologically inspired by natural sciences. It not only helps one to understand different forms of power, but also how the meaning of power is dependent on the position of an actor in a specific network. Actor Network Theory on the other hand is more critical and qualitative in nature, focusing on an agentic understanding. Underpinned by network thinking, it understands power in relational terms. Thus, in both these traditions, even if they are based on different metatheoretical/methodological traditions, power gets a distinct and a nuanced meaning – a concept which has an emergent property, is fungible, and which is not captured through fixed attributes. (For work on networks and international relations, from the perspective of SNA and Ant, see Kahler 2009; Slaughter 2017; Nexon & Pouliot 2013; Barry 2013.)

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Part II

Gender Mainstreaming Policies in Transboundary Water Governance

Obstacles and Impact

6 Adopting a Transformative Approach to Gender Equality in the Nile Basin

Lessons Learned

Ellen Hagerman, Hellen Natu, and Christine Ochieng

Introduction

Within the male-dominated context of water resources management (WRM), women and other vulnerable populations are frequently overlooked. Women are often confronted with overwhelming obstacles (such as male resistance), making it difficult for them to actively participate in decision-making processes. Within the Nile basin's transboundary context, gender inequality and social exclusion manifest at different levels and across sectors. For example, women face challenges at different levels of decision making because of the presence of strong patriarchal values and the dominance of males as key decision makers. To respond to the obstacles faced by women, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), a basin-wide institution providing a forum to Member States for consultation and coordination, has undertaken several initiatives to promote gender equality. Together with the Nile Basin Discourse (NBD), a network of more than 600 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the NBI is seeking to overcome barriers to women's participation in transboundary water management by adopting a transformative approach towards gender equality.

This paper takes stock of the challenges of, and lessons learned from, implementing a transformative approach to fostering women's leadership and participation in transboundary water governance within the Nile basin.[1] The assessment contained in this paper was undertaken in the context of a broader reflection on transformative approaches to gender equality within the Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA) programme, a World Bank Group Multi-Donor Trust Fund that supports activities to address barriers to cooperative transboundary water management. The analysis draws upon semi-structured interviews conducted with ten key stakeholders working in the Nile basin, from both government and civil society at the regional and national levels. They work with organisations including the NBI, NBD, Global Water Partnership Eastern Africa, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The paper also draws upon the direct experience of the authors in their capacities as practitioners working to promote gender equality in the basin using the CIWA Gender and Social Inclusion framework (GESI)

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which is a direct application of the Moser and SDDirect (2015) framework (see Figure 6.1). Because interviewees were operating at both the institutional and project level, the analysis focuses on both. While secondary research was conducted to establish the approach to this chapter, the analysis draws principally on interview findings and the direct experiences of the authors. The chapter is divided into four sections, with each section highlighting key challenges as well as identifying concrete recommendations of what the NBI, NBD, and their partners can do differently to advance the gender equality agenda. The key challenges identified are the lack of an overall systematic approach; insufficient capacity on gender at all levels; inadequate representation of women; and insufficient incorporation of gender at the governance level.

A Gender Transformative Approach in the Nile Basin

Within the Nile basin, women are more likely than men to be extremely poor, are highly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, and often have less access to natural resources because of traditional roles and customs that favour men (NBI 2015). The importance of women's roles in managing water at the household level is slowly gaining recognition. There is also an acknowledgement that women's voices are needed at the highest level, both in ministries of water (and water-related ministries) and at the political level, to ensure the equitable benefit of water resources for men and women. The NBI, NBD, and their partners have therefore acknowledged that their efforts will be unsustainable if gender is not continuously considered at all levels of their programming (NBI 2015).

With support from CIWA, the NBI, NBD, and their stakeholders have developed a number of initiatives and strategies to mitigate gender inequalities. The NBI and NBD's focus on gender equality aligns with CIWA's long-standing commitment to ensuring that gender is effectively integrated into the

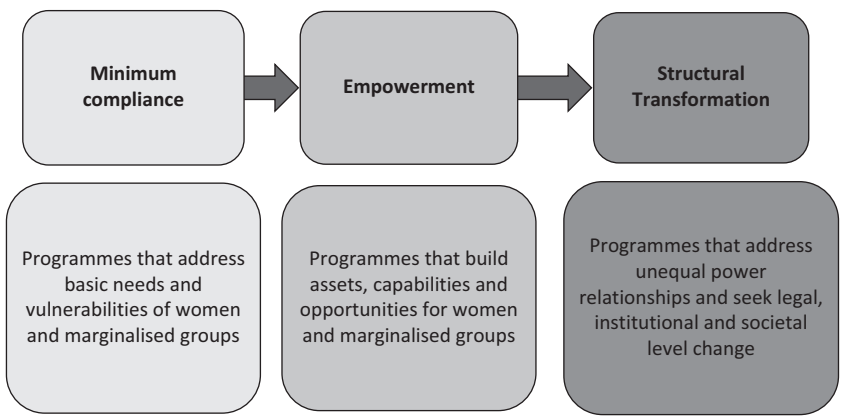

Figure 6.1 The gender and inclusion framework (GESI) (Moser & SDDirect 2015)

programmes and projects that it supports. The NBI held a landmark event in 2006 that launched its gender programme and acknowledged women as priority stakeholders resulting in the commitment of member states to prioritise access to safe and adequate water, sanitation, and food for every woman, man, and child (NBI 2015). The NBI's original 2012 gender strategy has further cemented its commitment to gender equality (NBI 2012). The NBI has also undertaken a number of activities at the institutional and programmatic level to promote gender equality including the promotion of policies aimed at ensuring that women are present at all levels, adhering to donor standards on gender equality as part of social and environmental safeguard processes, integrating sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators into monitoring and evaluation policy frameworks, and fostering advocacy and knowledge exchange through the NBI's Women's Forum. In addition to the NBI, the NBD has undertaken a number of gender mainstreaming activities including hosting a meeting in 2011 of gender-based organisations active in the Nile basin to jointly shape future gender work (NBD 2012). To facilitate a transformative approach, the initiatives involve collective action targeted at multiple levels and across multiple sectors through collaboration with a diversity of stakeholders including government, civil society, and the private sector.

Worldwide there is a growing recognition that the current approach to addressing gender inequalities is insufficient. This is due to a variety of factors including a focus on one-off interventions targeted to one level of a project, head counting at meetings to demonstrate results, and targeting women's groups rather than the broad spectrum of male and female stakeholders. A transformative approach is needed which means going beyond interventions that maintain women and men in their traditional roles (minimum compliance). The approach and framework were developed by Caroline Moser with SDDirect and are shown in Figure 6.1. It recognises that programmes that empower women to play a part in decision-making processes alone are not enough (empowerment). Ultimately it requires continuously tackling fundamental changes related to gender norms and values at all levels of society and across all sectors (transformation). While there is no single simple recipe, a transformative approach generally means simultaneously addressing access to and control over resources, gender norms and roles, power and decision making, and structural and institutional barriers. Practically, it requires allocating sufficient financial and human resources in a consistent and sustainable way to ensure that commitments translate into concrete actions.

To achieve transformation, it is not enough to call for women and men to be treated equally such that they all get a place at the wall (see Figure 6.2). While the middle image on gender equity acknowledges the need to undertake actions targeted to addressing barriers to participation, this is also insufficient. Transformation, or liberation, is the point where social norms and values have shifted to a place where there is a universal belief that women and men are equal, meaning that the wall is gone. In the case of transboundary water management, this means reaching beyond the typical representative organisations or ministries

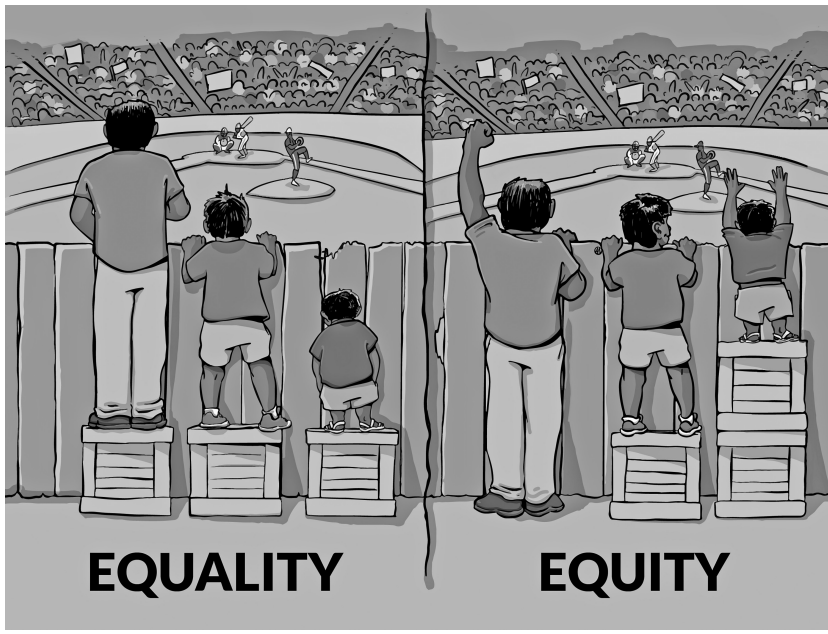

Figure 6.2 Illustrating equality vs equity (Interaction Institute 2016)

for gender equality, such as the Ministry of Women, towards undertaking measures to secure everyone's buy-in for equitable participation. Overall, it involves a shift from normal operations to a more in-depth confrontation with the structural and institutional arrangements that shape inequalities.

Despite efforts and achievements in addressing gender inequalities in the Nile basin, making a contribution towards a transformative approach is not without its challenges. It requires sustaining all actions and commitments with multiple stakeholders at multiple levels and countries, securing additional funding, ensuring a movement from commitments to implementation, and moving commitments from the grassroots to the leadership level. It also requires navigating resistance in what remains a male-dominated field. Whereas the NBI, NBD, and other actors have developed a number of key documents and activities on gender equality, the realisation of commitments and actions connected to the achievement of a gender transformative approach have been limited.

Challenges and Recommendations

The following section captures some of the challenges and lessons learned related to the efforts of the NBI, NBD, and their affiliates to collectively contribute to the movement towards a transformative approach to gender

equality while also noting recommendations to address these challenges. As stated above, it is based on interviews with key stakeholders and the practical experience of the authors.

Lack of an Overall Systematic Approach

A key challenge for organisations working in the Nile has been to establish an overall approach to integrating gender equality at all levels and throughout all relevant sectors. Inputs from interviewees show the need to move from a token approach to gender mainstreaming towards an institutionalised approach that is driven from the top, taking into account the key role that government ministers and senior bureaucrats play in influencing decision making as part of the NBI's transboundary negotiations. This means looking at structures and processes, as well as the overall dynamics that have the potential to foster fruitful debate and create agency for both women and men, thereby enabling them to jointly address transboundary water management. Professor Sumiah Elsayed of the Sudan Nile Discourse Facility (SDNF) believes it means moving away from a standardised approach to mainstreaming gender into documents towards making gender an issue for all programmes and policies (S. Elsayed, interview, 31 August 2020). This requires a holistic and tailored approach whereby gender is integrated into everything that the NBI and its partners do. This also requires allocating the necessary financial and human resources to ensure that words translate into results.

It also entails identifying critical entry points. However, even within the process of measuring the change, critical details are often overlooked. Donald Kasongi, Secretary General of the Nile Basin Discourse, shares: "If we want to transform, which is a very conscious change, there is a need to take time to do a proper analysis of the prevailing situation and how it is defined" (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020). This means establishing a baseline, agreed upon by all parties involved, for a measurable outcome for specific elements of a project.

For the NBI, it also involves navigating multinational, multicultural, multilingual, and other contexts where there are clear differences in gendered conditions and expectations. Professor Elsayed emphasises the importance of studying these different cultural contexts to better understand how they articulate gender inequalities and how these inequalities can be strategically overcome. However, for a variety of reasons, commitments do not always translate into implementation (S. Elsayed, interview, 31 August 2020). Gladys Wekesa, former Chair of the NBI's Nile–Technical Advisory Committee (Nile-TAC), has suggested appointing a champion at the top level of countries where they can influence the gender agenda, as well as offering opportunities for influential people to move the agenda forward (G. Wekesa, interview, 19 August 2020). Kasongi also recommends finding a way to encourage countries to set aside their cultural differences to work towards a common vision where women and men from all of the

cooperating countries are treated equally and are able to share the water resources in an equitable manner (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020) Inevitably any work that requires addressing cultural differences, also requires the investment of a significant amount of time and the application of an approach involving multiple interventions and liaison with multiple sectors to secure a common vision of gender equality. Adding on more time and interventions also requires that adequate funds are allocated to achieve long-term and sustainable results.

There is a need to crystallise the linkage between transboundary water and gender, and make connections to other sectors. As part of Gerald Kairu's work at Global Water Partnership Eastern Africa (GWP EA), he is developing a climate investment plan where he emphasises the importance of ensuring that other sectors are required to plan for and integrate a gender-sensitive approach to their projects. In related work on National Adaptation Plans, Kairu sees the potential for incorporating a gendered perspective that takes into consideration the fact that climate change impacts women more than men (G. Kairu, interview, 20 August 2020). Reflecting on this issue, Mubarak Mabuya, Program Manager, Gender Affairs at the IGAD Secretariat, an eight-country trade bloc that includes governments from the Nile basin, states:

> *You need to look at transboundary water resources and what is the nexus with other issues, such as peace and security, to understand how this impacts gender equality.*
> *(M. Mabuya, interview, 20 August 2020)*

To achieve a transformative approach to gender, Mabuya suggests that gender needs to be put on the agenda of all Basin discussions, such that men and women working in all Nile basin programmes and projects understand the gender issues and place emphasis on gender as part of their individual sectoral work (ibid.).

There is also a failure to conduct gender analysis as a matter of course for all projects and to develop a gender mainstreaming strategy as part of efforts to adopt a holistic approach. Strategies recommended by interviewees (G. Kairu, interview, 20 August 2020; S. Elsayed, interview, 31 August 2020; D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020; G. Wekesa, interview, 19 August 2020) to overcome these barriers include organising effective and participatory consultations which could include separate sessions for men and women, engaging community leadership to secure buy-in for women's inclusion, and devising and instituting monitoring mechanisms that can track whether actions identified at the project preparation phase are put in place at the implementation phase. To ensure that gender strategies are not "tick the box" exercises, Professor Elsayed also recommends conducting an assessment of gender strategies in terms of their content and their application to the project context to assess their effectiveness and application and to gather best practices and lessons learned (S. Elsayed, interview, 31 August 2020).

In response to the lack of a systematic focus on analysing and discussing gender issues, Fred Mwango, Regional Water Expert at the Water Unit in the IGAD Secretariat, has noted that there needs to be a focus on discussing gender at meetings as well as requiring that there is deliberate action at the country level (F. Mwango, interview, 20 August 2020). It is therefore important to invest in empowering the Nile Basin Initiative's desk offices to follow up on gender commitments, for instance by organising regular meetings that focus on gender. Mabuya suggests that the NBI Secretariat organise a dedicated Conference of Ministers Meeting to identify specific ministerial commitments and to set specific normative standards aligned to the NBI context. He also suggests packaging the transformative agenda as part of an awareness-raising process to educate people at all levels of the NBI and to facilitate conversations with the right stakeholders in the right places (M. Mubuya, interview, 20 August 2020).

Establishing an understanding of what gender equality means within the NBI context with relevant stakeholders is equally important. Drawing upon her extensive experience working on gender in Sudan and in the Horn of Africa, Professor Elsayed emphasises the need to understand how gender is defined within each country's context, including determining what is the most appropriate terminology to use. In contexts where it is needed, she suggests using terminology that may not be universally understood or accepted but is understood in the local context to facilitate discussions about inequalities. Strategies should be developed to enable different countries to unpack the terminology and adopt language that speaks to their own contexts (S. Elsayed, interview, 31 August 2020).

Kasongi, in speaking of his prior experience working with NGOs on gender, has noted that programmes like *Stepping Stones*[2] have potential for replication, particularly through NBD's work, since they create a safe space to discuss ways to shift cultural norms (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020). The programme seeks to foster joint decision making and collaboration by first establishing separate safe spaces for women and men to discuss their challenges and perceptions related to gender equality. The authors believe that initiatives such as "Women of the Nile" offer another model that could be adapted to the Nile's different working contexts. In this case, women are brought together to discuss their own problems as far as the management of the Nile basin in the absence of their male counterparts. This provides a separate space for women to discuss issues and come up with solutions. The authors note the importance of ensuring that solutions are embraced and supported by men, particularly since they are frequently seen as the gatekeepers.

Sustainability of efforts across the board is essential to fostering a transformative approach. Kasongi believes that a lack of access to financial resources should not be a limiting factor to sustaining efforts to incorporate gender into the NBI's work (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020). While some interventions can only be sustained with financial resources, social and institutional aspects need to feature at the beginning of the project to lay the

foundation for accessing these dimensions throughout a project or program. This multidimensional approach offers the potential to cover shortfalls when financing is absent. Before thinking about financial sustainability, Kasongi recommends thinking about social structures being built from the beginning to ensure that gender is entrenched (ibid.). It is also important to consider the institutional issues including ensuring that ownership of the project is owned by both women and men at the very beginning of the project. According to Kasongi:

> *This goes back to the issues of structures and are they trusted by the people. Are these committees owned by the people? When you try to look at a project and you think about how it can be sustained, you need to embed the ownership from Day One and have the institutions establish collaboration so that people feel ownership.*
> *(D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020)*

Insufficient Capacity on Gender at All Levels

In addition to reviewing and revising the approach to integrating gender considerations into the work of Nile partners, it is important to note that countries are at different stages and have different levels of capacity to fulfil their commitments. Some countries within the Nile basin have strong policies to mainstream gender and have the potential to serve as a role model and motivator for other countries. Countries that face capacity-related challenges need targeted support. Fred Mwango from IGAD has noted that the size and complexity of the Nile basin framework means that some countries will need to be supported in terms of sensitisation on a continuous basis (F. Mwango, interview, 20 August 2020). This requires conducting a capacity assessment to determine whether gender skills are accessible at the country level as well as to determine the level of openness and understanding about the importance of integrating gender considerations into the NBI project and institutional work.

The NBI, for example, has made some advances to build internal capacity through the provision of capacity building to staff on gender equality delivered by a gender specialist. However, the NBI's size and complexity make it difficult to build capacity of all stakeholders such that gender equality is mainstreamed at all levels and across all sectors where it operates (G. Wekesa, interview, 19 August 2020). Lack of capacity is thus an overall challenge for the organisation. At the Nile-TAC level, Gladys Wekesa notes a lack of capacity to ensure that gender issues are taken up by each country (ibid.). This is compounded by the absence of a follow-up mechanism. Sustaining the capacity is equally challenging. With the arrival of new Nile-TAC members, Wekesa identified a similar problem as Mwango, namely the turnover of staff. Also at this level, capacity building needs to be a continuous process (ibid.).

Building institutional capacity at all levels so that everyone has the same level of understanding to enable men and women to feel comfortable in raising their voices represents a critical point of departure to secure buy-in for

gender-sensitive interventions. Making it a requirement to have a 50–50 balance in meetings and programming and linking it to accountability was put forward as another way to open the space for women to gain skills and experience. However, the authors believe that reaching quantitative targets should be approached with caution, given the growing criticism of head count responses to gender equality. Ideally, this approach needs to include tailored approaches to overcoming barriers to participation and leadership in male-dominated spaces.

The authors also believe it is important that a quantitative focus on representation does not preclude ensuring a qualitative assessment that considers whether women's voices are heard, and actions are taken in response to issues they have raised. Aside from soliciting qualitative input from women about their experiences, it requires ensuring the creation of a favourable enabling environment for women such that their capacities to voice their concerns are met with a level of openness and understanding from their male colleagues. Given the strong patriarchal attitudes, Professor Elsayed emphasises the importance of setting up programmes dedicated to male perceptions. Capacity building focused on the development of strategies to change the mindset of men is therefore critical (S. Elsayed, interview, 31 August 2020). This could include strategies on how to engage men as well as to address male resistance to women's participation.[3] It will also require targeted training or awareness-raising sessions with men aimed at opening the space for them to discuss key concerns such as their misperceptions of gender as being only about women, understanding that gender equality need not be about men losing power, as well as fostering an appreciation that men benefit from women's inclusion and empowerment. The approach will therefore need to invest in understanding the different cultural contexts and the way that gender is understood and articulated. Given financial and human resource challenges in providing capacity building across so many countries and levels of operations, the authors believe it will require the adoption of a wide variety of approaches. Capacity building on gender equality should therefore look at ways to move beyond the conventional training model. Interviewees have suggested it should also happen within the working context such that more innovative approaches such as coaching or "learning by doing" are used (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020; G. Kairu, interview, 20 August 2020; S. Elsayed, interview, 31 August 2020). To ensure sustainability and a broad and transformative reach, this means going beyond delivery of one-off training to a limited number of staff.

According to Gerald Kairu of the GWP EA, the topic of gender has been talked about a lot in the region, with most countries developing gender strategies. When it comes to implementation, Kairu emphasises that this is where the challenges associated with a lack of capacity lie. Countries and the partners with which they engage often lack the capacity and priority to implement policy (G. Kairu, interview, 20 August 2020). Tabitha Ndegemo, a gender consultant appointed to provide gender analysis at the project preparation phase of an

NBI project, also confirms that there is insufficient follow-through beyond the project preparation phase. This is compounded by the fact that many specialists working on NBI projects have inadequate knowledge, expertise, or openness to apply a gender lens. Ndegemo also suggests that more work is needed to educate people about gender-based budgeting as part of the capacity building process as well as working with leadership at the country and Nile basin level to ensure that performance measures are in place to hold project implementers to account in integrating gender throughout the project cycle (T. Ndegemo, interview, 28 August 2020).

Inadequate Representation of Women

Within the water sector, women are frequently seen as resource users and not as key stakeholders. This has impacts on the potential to ensure their representation at transboundary water management meetings. According to Kasongi:

> *We sympathize with women as resource users, so we focus on how to alleviate their workload and getting infrastructure to do other household tasks, but we have not considered them as stakeholders.*
>
> *(D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020)*

Other barriers to women's representation include a failure to both involve women in the consultation process and address their obstacles to participation. This oversight means women are often denied an opportunity to articulate differences in terms of their ability to access and control water resources, as well as to be part of the decision-making processes that can determine whether they are able to provide enough water to care for their family.

Seeing women playing a role across the gender continuum from fulfilling basic needs to being empowered as decision makers and leaders requires leadership within the NBI and its affiliates to champion a variety of interventions that acknowledge these different roles. Some interviewees have called for the need to accommodate cultural differences in understanding gender. However, Kasongi believes there is a need to step away from individual units and countries falling back on pre-set cultural norms about the roles and relationships between men and women towards the articulation of a common vision that favours equal representation in discussions about equitable sharing of water (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020). According to Professor Elsayed, a starting point is to do an audit within countries. This would enable the use of evidence in the form of statistics to show that some countries are ahead in fostering women's voice and representation while using it to motivate other Nile basin countries to take action (S. Elsayed, interview, 31 August 2020).

While representation is critical, it is not enough. As was clarified by Peres Wenje of the Kenyan Nile Discourse Forum (KNDF), even when women are assigned important positions, their contributing position is often limited because

it tends to be linked to secretarial roles in contrast to men who are assigned responsibilities connected to impactful decision making. In the case of KNDF, it is usually the Chair and Secretary General, both of whom are male, who dominate discussions despite the fact that women occupy the important positions of Vice-Chair and Treasurer. Wenje explained that gender stereotypes also manifest in management roles at the project level. Women tend to be assigned the management of female-related water issues such as menstrual hygiene whereas men are responsible for major technical projects, further reinforcing men as the technical leads and marginalising women's role. Concerted efforts to involve women in projects that fall outside a woman's reproductive role is a critical first step. Encouraging men to take on typically female roles such as note taking offers another opportunity to shift gender norms by enabling men to go through the experience of their female counterparts (P. Wenje, interview, 24 August 2020).

According to the authors, the absence of women within WRM assuming technical and decision-making roles is nonetheless a key obstacle to ensuring that women are seen more as leaders. Women's absence in the field of transboundary water management is clearly linked to the challenges they face in acquiring technical capacity. Access to education represents a major obstacle to the acquisition of technical capacity. Many girls in the Nile basin region face cultural barriers to advancing to the necessary educational levels and are frequently discouraged from choosing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects which are critical for the study of subjects of relevance to WRM.

Even if women acquire the necessary technical background, Kasongi believes that measures are needed to deal with women's own internal barriers including a lack of confidence (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020). Capacity building targeted to developing critical soft skills offers an important first step. Mama Asia Kapande, who is Chair of the Tanzanian Basin Forum, clarifies that the forum has devised a strategy to build women's confidence as part of the projects they implement that offers a model for adaptation for the NBI's work:

> *To build confidence, we train them to believe they can do it and to understand that they can do what men are doing and even do better than men by letting go of their age-old beliefs.*
>
> *(MA Kapande, interview, 28 August 2020)*

Given that so few women are able to enter the field, the authors believe that the NBI and its partners need to identify role models and mentors to support women to stand up and be heard. There is also a need to deal with the existence of strong cultural drivers which affirm men as the leaders, thereby discouraging women from striving to secure positions in a male-dominated field. Kisolo has noted that women are told that they have the right to be elected to be a leader and that their representation is needed. However, she confirms that this often fails to translate into women's voices being heard:

> *Much as we have the documents including strategies and laws that talk about women's empowerment especially in transboundary water management, the voices of women need to be heard.*
>
> *(S. Kisolo, interview, 31 August 2020)*

It can also be problematic for many women to balance gendered family roles with professional progress.

Even if capacity building and mentorship are provided to build confidence, Kasongi emphasises the importance of considering the enabling environment to determine what is the best way to make it more responsive (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020). Too often mechanisms are set up, such as the appointment of Gender Focal Points, without ensuring that these people, many of whom are junior and most often female, are provided with the necessary support and capacity to play an effective role. The main role of a Gender Focal Point is to assist in activities associated with the mainstreaming of gender.[4] As Kasongi has noted:

> *We can end up with structures such as committees and we leave it there. We give the responsibility to a Gender Focal Point but how does the responsibility cut across the institution?*
>
> *(D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020)*

Revisiting the use of Gender Focal Points as a stop-gap response to addressing gender equality within institutions globally is now being requested by a number of organisations. The authors believe that women's representation needs to be more effectively embedded within the operations of Nile basin organisations to facilitate institution-wide acceptance that their rights to speak should be respected and taken into account by all relevant stakeholders.

Insufficient Incorporation of Gender at the Governance Level

According to interviewees, women who are brought into the Nile basin institutional context generally have a good understanding of the governance processes and structures. However, according to Kisolo: "Understanding how they work does not mean that these committees and related governance structures are designed in a format that is favourable to women" (S. Kisolo, interview, 31 August 2020). This is compounded by the fact that women tend not to be consulted to better understand what kind of structures they want or need to make it a productive environment. Kisolo also questions whether the ideas of women are accepted when they attend water committee meetings (ibid.). The context of meetings should therefore be built from a needs assessment that identifies the best approaches to maximise women's participation, given their own needs and commitments.

The NBI is an intergovernmental institution with its own approach to governance which can contrast with the NBD which operates as a civil society

institution. When Mama Asia Kapande was the Secretary General of NBD and was attending meetings of the NBI and NBD, she noted that there had been a lot of discussion about how to involve more women in these different governance positions. She specifically noted that the efforts were focused everywhere except for the critical position of Chairman (MA Kapande, interview, 28 August 2020). According to Kapande, this is linked to sheer numbers such that men, who represent a much greater number at meetings, decide through a voting process who is the leader. The fact that men tend to dominate in terms of numbers and key leadership positions within Nile basin meetings can also influence what issues are considered salient as well as how decisions are made (ibid.). For example, Gerald Kairu has noted that, since the governance structure of NBI and its affiliates are male dominated, male issues are prioritised because men's greater presence enables them to table the topics and to vote on the results (G. Kairu, interview, 20 August 2020).

The actual process of decision making and its connection to cultural beliefs about men as decision makers represents a big challenge for women's participation in governance processes. According to Kairu:

> *There is a tendency for people to think that men have more power than women, which sets up a misguided dynamic in terms of the approach to discussions, decision making and how relationships between males and females operating within the Nile Basin are forged.*
>
> *(G. Kairu, interview, 20 August 2020)*

Kairu emphasises that efforts need to be taken and processes instituted such that taking decisions that benefit both men and women is a necessary prerequisite. There is therefore a need to address critical perceptions around power as part of capacity building and awareness-raising processes. According to Kasongi, one of the ways to involve more women in these transformative processes is through engaging with the leadership to drive the transformation (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020).

Who has access to real decision making is reinforced by how the NBI and its affiliate countries look at decision-making practices within the organisation. These tend to be aligned to existing cultural norms that position men as the key decision makers. It is also connected to self-interest with men being reluctant to share power with their female contemporaries. Interviewees have confirmed that the male-dominated decision-making process persists in most of the countries where the NBI and its affiliates are working. Placing women in management positions can do little to overcome women's lack of access to decision making and to power. When given the chance, women are certainly able to hold their own when representing issues assigned to them. However, according to Kasongi, women are put in management positions, but their roles tend to be subordinate to the roles of men: "You don't see women presenting on the role of women in the value chain. They assume that men have the ideas" (D. Kasongi, interview, 26 August 2020). Kasongi emphasises that there

is an assumption that decisions will be based on equitable thinking. There is therefore a need to first do the background analysis and investigation of the existing governance structures within an organisation including consulting with women to better understand the kind of governance structures they want and believe will enable them to become active participants.

Cultural barriers also compound the potential for women to voice their perspectives in decision-making processes. Particularly at the local level where people often lack higher education, Kisolo has noted that women are frequently too shy to speak:

> *If women want to speak, the men prevent them from doing so. For these River Basin Institutions operating around the Nile basin, the most involved leaders were men and, in some groups, there were no women.*
>
> *(S. Kisolo, interview, 31 August 2020)*

The authors think that addressing women's timidity is not simply about training them to have the courage to speak up. It means tackling deeply entrenched cultural values that assert that women are meant to be seen but not to be heard. Working at the lower level requires engaging with men as the holders of power through actions such as awareness-raising, capacity building, and engagement in stand-alone consultation sessions. It also means looking for the best ways to facilitate a joint decision-making process that can contribute to reshaping more equitable cultural values and norms. Given the complexity and reach of the Nile basin, interventions may have to start at the home front before they seep into the public sphere where communities and committees meet as a collective.

Overall, this means there is a need for governance processes within the NBI and its affiliate organisations to stop isolating women from men and to move towards joint decision making. What is critical is to ensure that the topics discussed and the solutions identified get tabled at joint meetings rather than remaining marginalised within a women-only discussion space. For genuine transformation to materialise, it is therefore critical to ensure that joint conversations are fostered as part of governance and decision-making processes at all levels and across all of the sectors where the NBI operates. Referring to the *Stepping Stones* methodology which Kasongi has used throughout his career working with civil society, he reinforces the critical importance of fostering joint conversations through the creation of safe spaces where groups of men and women speak on their own to share their respective perspectives before creating a common space where men and women can come together to shape the narrative together.

Conclusions

While the results of interviews have uncovered a number of challenges in concretising a transformative approach to gender equality, the NBI, NBD,

and their affiliates have a number of opportunities to move forward in actualising the recommendations that have been put forward. Although they are operating in a region that is starkly patriarchal, countries within the region, as well as the continent at large, have manifested a political commitment to gender equality that can pave the way for moving from commitment to implementation. This includes the African Union Gender Policy, the African Ministers' Council on Water Gender Mainstreaming Policy, and the Gender Policies of IGAD and the East African Community. According to Mubarak, "You can start by empowering the Minister of Gender Affairs and ensure that the normative standards [can be fulfilled]. It will be a multiplier effect" (F. Mubarak, interview, 20 August 2020). However, empowering the Ministry responsible for gender issues is never enough. A transformative approach requires targeting all ministries and sectors associated with the Nile's mandate from climate change to agriculture. Most countries in the Nile basin also have national gender policies which guide the implementation of the gender equality agenda as well as the accompanying Gender Machinery; they are the formal government structures responsible for the promotion of gender equality that can serve as a reminder that gender is already an integral part of the way Nile basin countries have agreed to collaborate. What is needed as a first point of departure is a renewed commitment to operationalising what is captured in the commitment documents.

The upcoming release of the NBI's Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy, which at the time of writing undergoes its final review, also opens the door to a renewed consideration of how the words and intent of the document can lead to concrete actions. Leadership will be critical but will need to be followed by securing the buy-in at all levels and across all sectors where the NBI works. The variety of recommendations above, including capacity building and awareness-raising, together with drawing upon the experiences of other successful programmes, offer up some good ideas. Although the complexity and regional focus involved in working at the transboundary level can pose a challenge, there is also an opportunity to leverage the regional nature of transboundary water management, such as by drawing on and disseminating the best practices from some of the Nile Basin Member States that have been successful in implementing gender strategies. By exploring a more concerted partnership with NBD, the NBI can also leverage the knowledge, experience, and extensive network of CSOs, many of which have concrete experience in operationalising gender-sensitive programming. Furthermore, progress at the grassroots level has the potential to motivate change at higher levels.

While the transformative approach is an emerging approach, there are nonetheless tools and resources as well as innovative programmes, such as *Stepping Stones*, that can offer models for replication or adaptation to the Nile basin context, particularly in tackling the more deeply structural beliefs that drive gender inequality and prevent a transformation in relationships of power between men and women. It helps that key stakeholders affiliated with the NBI have already manifested an openness. The NBI and NBD are often cited as

playing a leadership role on gender equality within the world of transboundary management which offers a critical opening to capture and document their own journey towards transformation such that other transboundary water programmes can also benefit.

These experiences of developing the transformative approach to gender in transboundary organisations in the Nile basin can benefit other basin organisations working in these same thematic areas. The establishment and use of collaborative platforms provide the opportunity for structured and continuous learning among the sector institutions. In addition to providing technical and financial support to the NBI, NBD, and its affiliates to advance gender equality at multiple levels and across multiple sectors, CIWA has taken steps to crystallise its own commitment to adopting a transformative approach. They are undertaking a variety of activities including the drafting of a Gender and Social Inclusion Framework, developing tools and resources, and providing training and coaching to relevant staff and partners. This will be coupled with efforts to ensure that gender expertise is provided to all of the projects it supports. The World Bank's Equal Aqua platform offers another opportunity to promote a transformative approach by facilitating the deepening of dialogue on gender diversity in the water sector by connecting institutions (World Bank 2021). Such platforms adopted in transboundary water management will bolster the process of learning and information exchange in gender and other key thematic topics. To leverage the experience of promoting a transformative approach to gender in the Nile basin, CIWA has prepared a Learning Note that showcases the efforts and insights gained from implementing CIWA's commitment to gender equality through its support to the NBI, NBD, and its affiliates (CIWA 2022). This will enable CIWA staff and partners to learn from a transboundary initiative that has made significant strides in addressing gender inequalities at all levels of its work.

Notes

1 This work is a product of the staff of The World Bank with external contributions. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of The World Bank, its Board of Executive Directors, or the governments they represent.
2 First used within the HIV/AIDS context in South Africa, *Stepping Stones* offers an approach to HIV prevention that aims to improve sexual health through building stronger, more gender-equitable relationships with better communication between partners. For more information, go to: https://steppingstonesfeedback.org
3 For further information on strategies that have been developed to engage with men, please consult the websites of ProMundo (https://promundoglobal.org/) or Sonke Gender Justice (https://genderjustice.org.za/)
4 Each organisation provides different definitions and roles for a Gender Focal Point. For a good example, refer to the UN Women job description for a Gender Focal Point: www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gmfpdrafttors.htm

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7 In the Shadows

Gender in Transboundary Water Policies

Tobias von Lossow

Introduction

The link between gender and water has received increasing academic and political attention over the last two decades. Still, the related debates most often cover gender in a superficial manner and subsequent efforts and action remain at a rather modest level. Implementation of gender policies regularly suffers from simplistic assumptions, narrow definitions, and one-dimensional perspectives, such as equating gender with women, portraying women solely as water users and victims of bad water governance and management, or only acknowledging a gender dimension in water instead of addressing it.

Progress in establishing gender as a meaningful aspect in water governance and management has predominantly been achieved in specific local contexts, by thematically focusing on access to water and sanitation as well as embedding the role of women in broader peacebuilding efforts (de Silva et al. 2018; Best 2019). Various water-related commitments on international levels highlight that (good) water governance positively affects overcoming gender inequalities in various dimensions, such as decision making; the setting-up and establishment of inclusive and equitable rules; as well as policy implementation that affects livelihoods of vulnerable and marginalised groups (Earle & Bazilli 2013).

At the transboundary level, however, water management programmes, water-related law, or mandates of river basin organisations (RBOs) rarely reflect such a gendered approach. In the dominating discourses, narratives, logics, and mechanisms of conflict and cooperation at the basin level – hydropolitics, water diplomacy, and water management – gender is hardly considered. Instead, transboundary water politics and policies are still very much rooted in a "traditional-old school", masculine understanding of security politics, diplomacy, and hydro-engineering. The predominantly interstate nature of transboundary water issues reiterates a narrative of unitarian actors – of "us" and "them" – represented by strong national leaders and decision makers that protect the interests of their constituencies. Such narratives do not account for individual needs, roles, and rights. At the local level, women's participation in water management processes does play a role, though high-level positions, decision-making power, and political agenda-setting are

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dominated by men (de Moraes 2015; de Silva et al. 2018). As a consequence of these gaps, gender is widely neglected at the transboundary level or only addressed in a "checking the box" mentality. What is missing is genuinely mapping out the context-specific gender dynamics and harvesting on the benefits of the gender dimension. As a result, gender-related objectives in transboundary water governance often remain lip service paid with limited impact.

Despite overlapping with the broader discourses of conflict and cooperation in transboundary river basins, water diplomacy, and regional water governance, the number of studies and policies thoroughly addressing gender in transboundary water governance are rare. The few analyses and assessments of gender-related goals, efforts, and strategies in this field often focus just on specific cases or aspects (Earle & Bazilli 2013; von Lossow 2015; Carmi et al. 2018).

Gender awareness and perception, attention to disparities, the formulation of gender-sensitive policies, or gender-related goals in policy implementation are limited and differ from basin to basin. To get a better grasp of how gender is understood, considered, and addressed, this contribution sheds light on the political narratives and practical implementation of gender-related policies in five different river basins, namely the Nile, Jordan, Zambesi, Indus, and Danube. These cases are an illustrative selection of five large river basins from (a) different parts of the world, with (b) varying levels of regional political integration, (c) featuring a broad variety of institutionalised water interaction – different levels of conflict escalation and different forms of cooperation. As gender is addressed in very different ways, this analysis considers all gender-related efforts, such as promoting and implementing gender mainstreaming, addressing gender inequality, and closing gender gaps in the programming, just to mention a few.

This chapter provides a first assessment to identify the most relevant and noticeable programmes and actions related to gender and the most relevant and engaged actors by analysing gender strategies of RBOs, standards and principles of regional organisations, guidelines, and reports of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the national legislations of the riparian states. The case selection of the five large river basins – Nile, Zambesi, Jordan, Indus, and Danube – also serves more as an introductory overview than a representative, comprehensive, or in-depth analysis. Through these five examples, this chapter offers a cursory inventory of certain patterns, important key factors, and results of gender in water policies that can be found in transboundary basins around the globe. The analysis also contextualises these policies with regard to the dynamics of (water) conflict and cooperation in the basins. Based on this inventory, five factors that impact if, and to what extent, gender is addressed in each basin become visible. These include the scope of cooperation, the type and institutionalisation of transboundary water interaction and management, the degree of regional integration, the involvement of external actors, and the financial situation in the basin and/or of the RBOs.

Gender in Transboundary River Basins

Ways and means to discuss and address the gender dimension in transboundary river basins differ remarkably from basin to basin. While gender is, of course, highly contextual, universal principles, guidelines, or agendas that would serve as global or regional reference points are lacking. Instead, gender is placed – sometimes more squeezed in – in specific broader regional, basin-wide, or national (political) contexts. Historic, geopolitical, socio-economic, and legal factors, for example, are just a few drivers that form the broader setting in which gender relations are embedded and hence form the framework in which they could be addressed. This setting determines agency, institutionalisation, topics, and measures in transboundary water politics and policies, and subsequently also the conceptualisation and implementation of gender(-related) policies.

For the five selected cases – Nile, Jordan, Zambesi, Indus, and Danube – a short historic and hydro-political background is first outlined. In a second step, this chapter explores the political and institutional arenas for addressing gender basin-wide – before looking into the institutional setting and programmatic basis, including definitions, actors, goals, etc. of gender-related policies and politics. A broad range of activities and actions are considered, such as the formulation of strategies, the representation of women in transboundary decision making, and gender-sensitive project implementation, which form the basis for assessing actual achievements and visible results.

The Nile River Basin: Gender Stuck in the Shadow of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

The Nile river is among the most prominent cases of transboundary, interstate water conflicts. The world's longest river hosts 11 riparian states – among them the big rivals and regional powers Egypt and Ethiopia, as well as Sudan which is geographically and (hydro-)politically located in between the two. The basin has received renewed and particular attention over the last decade due to the increasing tensions related to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which was built by Ethiopia on the Blue Nile. As the conflict got more tense between Egypt and Ethiopia, the main focus in the basin has shifted from a broader, basin-wide water governance and management perspective towards trilateral negotiations between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt over GERD. Conflict-resolution efforts, mechanisms to reduce tensions, declarations, and statements have increasingly targeted the filling process of the reservoir and the dam's operational procedures rather than the broader Nile water question (von Lossow et al. 2020). Meanwhile, the more practical work on the ground has been continuing within the framework of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), which was established in 1999 (NBI 1999). NBI was supposed to transform into a permanent Nile Basin Commission, but the riparian states could not agree on a framework agreement over the distribution and utilisation of the shared waters. While the NBI failed in delivering on this political track, it

succeeded in becoming the central institutional body and facilitator for a basin-wide, cooperative project implementation on the practical level.

NBI's goal to foster a broader, basin-wide socio-economic development (NBI 2022) is the obvious framework for promoting, addressing, and implementing gender in the basin. In 2008, an assessment of the Gender Equality and African Regional Institutions (GEARI) project concluded "an absence of gender considerations [in NBI], in large part due to the absence of a policy framework and lack of strong and visible political will" (Nakafeero 2008, p. 1). Four years later, NBI published its gender mainstreaming policy and strategy (NBI 2012). This first major reference document names gender disparities in the riparian states, such as the "exclusion of women from participating actively in water related issues" or women's discrimination in water management as a result of "social gender power imbalances" (ibid., p. 4). The document also mentions that gender and women's empowerment had not yet been incorporated in NBI's policies, programmes, projects, and institutional procedures – despite efforts and will at the senior management level (NBI 2012).

The gender mainstreaming strategy strongly advocates promoting gender in the basin but attributes a main responsibility to the national level, where the riparian states failed to establish gender principles in water policies and legislation according to the document. NBI is portrayed as a regional supporter of national gender mainstreaming efforts, but it lacks explicit gender-related goals, specific practical recommendations, or a concrete strategic approach on how to achieve gender-related goals (von Lossow 2015). Except for some concrete institutional adjustments, such as introducing an NBI gender coordination point, the strategy provides a more generally formulated policy vision, mission, principles, and objectives (NBI 2012). At this point, gender did not receive appropriate attention in the basin – neither on the political nor on the practical level of project implementation. Women were "more often than not, […] left out of the Nile Basin Initiative programmes" underlining the necessity to better integrate women not only with regard to the "benefits of programming but also in decision-making for NBI as an organization" (NBD 2012, p. 1).

The situation changed in the following years, with gender equity and mainstreaming becoming more prominently on the agenda and also more concrete – within the core NBI structures, its policies, programmes, strategies, and procedures (World Bank Group & Nile Basin Trust Fund Partners 2015). Gender workshops focused on awareness-raising and capacity building, such as in the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program (NELSAP). NELSAP's goal was to provide "practical knowledge and skills in the methods, tools and techniques" to participants in order to integrate gender into projects and to increase the attendees' "understanding of the importance of gender mainstreaming in general, in organisation culture and in the project cycle in particular" (Randell & Kazimbaya 2013, p. 6). NBI also established women's networks – such as an advocacy group to ensure that NBI initiates projects that impact women at the grassroots level. In addition, NBI contributed to the development of regional,

gender-inclusive programmes and increased efforts to support national commitments on gender in riparian states (World Bank Group 2015).

Still, at the political stage, where tensions have been increasing in the basin over the last five to ten years, women are neither playing a prominent role in NBI – the women's groups are not prominently visible – nor in the trilateral talks around GERD between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan. The reappearing securitisation of the Nile water question(s) in the context of GERD – which also has been lowering the political standing of NBI – illustrates a partial roll back of gender mainstreaming specifically in the transboundary water settings. In the realm of interstate water politics, disputes, and conflicts, and the state-centric explanatory approach of "us" and "them", gender does not play any role.

The Jordan River Basin: Gender Forgotten in the Shadow of a Larger Conflict

The Jordan river is located at the epicentre of the Middle East conflict, hosting Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria along its banks. The highly politicised water question related to Israel's control over the resources at the headwaters of the Sea of Galilee, over the supplies in the Westbank and Gaza, and the unevenly distributed resources has repeatedly been seen as a central pillar in the overall conflict setting (see Haddadin 2002; Zeitoun 2012; Brooks et al. 2020). The Jordan river is the most important water resource in the region as the Westbank and Jordan have hardly any alternative freshwater resources available. Meanwhile, Israel extracts water from the Jordan river and the two big aquifers – the mountain and the coastal aquifers – and has managed to remarkably increase the amount of freshwater resources through desalination in the last years. The water demand and consumption in the Jordan valley has increased and drastically reduced the amount of water reaching the Dead Sea over the last decades.

The Red Sea–Dead Sea Conveyance (RSDSC) was one of the largest and most contested transboundary water projects in the basin – carried out mostly in Jordan but co-financed by Israel and international donors. Along the planned pipeline diverting water from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea, desalination was intended to provide drinking water to Israel, Jordan, and Palestine while the brine was to help to stabilise the Dead Sea's decreasing water table. Additionally, generated hydroelectricity was to meet the project's energy needs. Still the project remained highly contested: proponents highlighted the win–win–win situation for the riparian parties – drinking water, electricity, and ecological benefits serving the tourism sector at the Dead Sea – and the peace dividend of that cooperation for the whole region. Critics invoked the high costs: initial costs of up to 5 billion USD and similar costs for running the project in the first decade, as well as benefits unequally distributed and disadvantaging Palestine, among others. Amman finally withdrew from the RSDSC in summer 2021. A few months later, Jordan signed a big energy water deal with Israel and the United Arab Emirates according to which solar power from Jordan would be sent to Israel in exchange for desalinated water (Christou 2021).

In this politically highly sensitive region, there is no basin-wide political regulatory body or water management framework along the Jordan river that

would have the explicit or implicit mandate to address gender-related issues and implement respective programmes. Instead, various bilateral or trilateral negotiation processes, temporary agreements, cooperative efforts, or joint projects would be the platforms to take gender into account in the formulation of water policies, such as RSDSC. But even RSDSC – which underwent plenty of negotiation rounds and various assessments under regional and international observation – hardly addressed any gender issues. The updated Environmental and Social Impact Assessment for the project, for example, just highlighted existing unequal gender relations and that gender dynamics would need to be monitored during the project implementation (RHDHV 2017). So far, gender has not prominently appeared in official policy documents related to – usually undisclosed or at least confidential – water negotiations between Israel, Jordan, and Palestine.

Most of the water plans and strategies for the basin during the last three decades only indirectly address gender through the social justice or peacebuilding dimensions. The broader Middle East conflict and respective peacebuilding measures dominate the interstate water relations – another field in which women do not play a prominent role. On global average, women only constituted "13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators, and 6 percent of signatories in major peace processes" between 1992 and 2019 (CFR 2022). The Middle East conflict brought plenty of international actors – donors and partners, NGOs, and international agencies – to the region and the Jordan river basin, some of which have more elaborate gender approaches against the broader conflict in a place that touch slightly upon water questions and/or the Jordan river basin. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), for example, developed a Gender Equality Policy in 2007 that forms the basis for their three Gender Mainstreaming Strategies for 2008–15, 2016–21 and 2023–28. These strategies have focused on organisational as well as programme changes (UNRWA 2020; UNRWA 2021). Similarly, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) addresses gender in the wider region. In the ESCWA Arab Gender Gap Report 2020, the environment chapter focuses mainly on water – and here on access, sanitation, handwashing, etc. (ESCWA 2019).

With gender being absent in programmes and policies on the river basin level, the Jordan reflects several water–gender patterns in the region and beyond. Women are attributed an important role in water management and decision making at the household and community level, but they are mostly absent from high-level water negotiations or agreements (Wilson Center 2021). Moreover, it is widely acknowledged across civil society and state institutions that women are the most vulnerable to water-related threats while simultaneously being important actors in making water management more efficient. But the reality in the Jordan river basin illustrates that women hardly play any role in transboundary water management – neither when it comes to the region's most important surface waters nor transboundary water infrastructure projects.

The Zambesi River Basin: A Glimpse of Hope in a Strong River Basin Organisation

The Zambesi is the fourth-largest river basin in Africa, providing plenty of economic and ecological benefits for Southern Africa (Lautze et al. 2017). The level of cooperation in the basin is high, with well-established and, to a large extent, institutionalised joint efforts. As the Zambezi river basin is located in the area of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and with all riparian states being SADC members, the water governance of the Zambezi falls – as all river basins in the region – under the regulations of the revised SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses (SADC, 2000). The protocol is to "foster closer cooperation for judicious, sustainable and coordinated management, protection and utilization of shared watercourses and advance the SADC agenda of regional integration and poverty alleviation" (ibid., p. 3).

Consequently, the Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM) – one of the major RBOs in Africa – is in accordance with the revised SADC Protocol (SADC 2000). Based on the Agreement of the Establishment of the Zambezi Watercourse Commission (Zambezi Commission 2004), all eight riparian states established the RBO as an intergovernmental organisation in 2014 with the mandate "to promote the equitable and reasonable utilization of the water resources of the Zambezi Watercourse as well as the efficient management and sustainable development thereof" (Zambezi Commission 2004, p. 4). The backing by a broader political regional organisation gives ZAMCOM a comparatively strong agency. However, ZAMCOM is also politically accepted and supported by its member states, financially better equipped than other RBOs, and politically and financially supported from outside.

ZAMCOM is the obvious institutional framework for addressing gender-related issues in basin-wide water management and governance. It has a well-codified and consistent gender approach. The Agreement already states that the designation of the Executive Secretary and technical personnel shall reflect equitable representation of the Member states and a fair gender balance (Zambezi Commission 2004, p. 9). In addition, the organisation's Integrated Water Resources Management Strategy and Implementation Plan for the Zambezi River Basin of 2008, lists gender mainstreaming in Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) among the topics to be addressed (Euroconsult 2008). The 2018 published Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan provides a well elaborated framework (Munyayu et al. 2018). This document derives its principles on gender from the Dublin Convention principles and lists concrete goals and processes to ensure the progression of gender mainstreaming, among them five specified strategic objectives:

1. institutionalise gender mainstreaming in ZAMCOM through the creation of an enabling policy and organisational framework,

2. build and strengthen capacity to effectively mainstream gender in ZAMCOM through targeted, periodic education and training across all ZAMCOM organs,
3. strengthen gender equity in the establishment and operations of the National Stakeholder Coordination Committees (NASCs) and the decentralised basin management structures in the riparian countries,
4. integrate a gendered approach in programming and generate evidence on the merits of the approach, and;
5. develop and implement a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation system which enables effective tracking of gender responsiveness of policies, processes, programmes, projects, and related outputs and outcomes.

(Munyayi et al. 2018, p. 4)

The Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan sets out a system of accountability, including central organisation audits and data sharing between riparian states. In addition, it lists responsibilities for different layers of the organisation (from the secretariat to member states) in meeting these five objectives (Munyayi et al. 2018). Beyond its quite consistent policies, ZAMCOM has been quite visible with gender-related activities, for example holding a gender session at the 9th SADC River Basin Organisation's *Shared Watercourse Institutions Workshop* (Zambezi Commission 2021).

Comparatively advanced in addressing gender issues, the Zambezi river basin also benefits from SADC as second regional actor in the basin actively promoting gender mainstreaming and gender equality. The 1992 SADC treaty features a non-discrimination clause that lists gender at first, stating that "SADC and member states shall not discriminate against any person on the grounds of gender, religion, political views, race, ethnic origin, culture or disability" (SADC 1992, p. 7). Similarly, the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development aims to "provide for the empowerment of women, to eliminate discrimination and to achieve gender equality and equity through the development and implementation of gender-responsive legislation, policies and programmes and projects" (SADC 2008, p. 10).

With ZAMCOM and SADC, both likewise engaged in transboundary water courses and gender, two regional political bodies support and impact water policies related to gender as well as gender policies in relation to water in the basin – and even beyond.

Indus River Basin: Gender in the Shadow of a Treaty and National Gender Policies

The contested waters of the Indus river basin are another puzzle piece in the regional rivalry between the nuclear powers India and Pakistan. Conflicts over

the shared water resources have repeatedly intensified tensions between Delhi and Islamabad. With the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) (United Nations 1960), the basin hosts a frequently referred to model of conflict resolution and cooperation. While the arrangement has some outstanding features, such as the elaborated and regularly applied conflict–resolution mechanism, it does not foster proactive cooperation, basin-wide water governance, joint water management, or cooperative project implementation (United Nations 1960; von Lossow 2013). Instead, IWT de facto divides the tributaries between the two riparian states, accrediting rights for India over the Sutlej, the Beas, and the Ravi rivers (about 20 per cent of the Indus waters) and rights for Pakistan over the Indus, the Jhelum, and the Chenab rivers (roughly 80 per cent of the Indus waters) (Memon et al. 2019). While IWT is a more political and hard security-oriented treaty addressing water through the conflict–resolution mechanism, it hardly covers issues or development on the subnational, local, and individual levels. Socio-economic development, environmental protection, and gender mainstreaming do not play any role here.

Basin-wide policies and programmes on gender outside IWT are limited. Most programmes addressing gender are implemented by external donors and focus on only one, not both, of the countries, such as the Green Climate Fund's Gender Assessment and the related Gender Action Plan for the Indus basin that concentrate on activities led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on climate resilient agriculture and water management in Pakistan only (Green Climate Fund 2019). Other initiatives are knowledge and research networks, such as the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) Gender Resource Group Consultation or the Upper Indus Basin Network (ICIMOD 2020). Most of the studies and analyses deal either with the Indian or Pakistani perspectives and national policies. Here, participatory elements in the water governance are very limited and gender and women's empowerment has historically and politically never been on the agenda.

In Pakistan, women's role in water is basically granted from men as traditional norms still dominate gender perceptions (Minardi et al. 2021). Women usually have the operational management of agriculture, sanitation, and water collection for domestic purposes. However, water-related tasks are often tightly controlled by men. In recent years, attempts to modernise agriculture in the Indus region have mainly focused on men, such as the digitalisation drive (Green Climate Fund 2019). This is largely due to landowning rights being heavily skewed towards men. Regional governments are addressing this imbalance through the creation and allocation of land packages given to women but more than 90 per cent of the land in the basin is controlled by men and NGOs still struggle to overcome the strict gender traditions (ibid.). Multilateral and international organisations try to address gender and women, such as the Green Climate Fund's investment into women-only training and educational schemes around technical fields focusing on water, agriculture, and natural sciences, or targeting female farmers with the distribution of stronger seeds and agricultural information sharing (Green Climate Fund 2019).

India is more advanced in gender mainstreaming processes than Pakistan. On a national level, the government's tenth five-year plan mentions the need to integrate gender aspects into the management of water resources. Since the 1990s, regional efforts have attracted attention, such as the *Women, Water and Work* campaign, initiated by the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in 1995 (Panda 2007). SEWA, a membership-based organisation established in 1972, plays an important gender-related role itself – being the first union for self-employed women with more than 1.75 million members today (de Luca et al. 2013). SEWA aimed to accelerate the positioning of women in decision-making roles in local communities, spun off into over one hundred replica projects nationally, and is seen as a model of female rural empowerment. However, despite some political efforts in the private sphere, domestic abuse, neglect for female education, and male child preference are still rampant (Panda 2007). Finally, much of the work done in both the public and private spheres on gender mainstreaming in India takes place outside of the Indus river basin due to the contested geography of the river and its importance to Indian sovereignty. Criticism is problematic and the government refrains from opening the territories to NGOs. This results in Kashmiri women in particular suffering from some of the worst imbalances in Indus riparian water communities (Parvaiz 2017).

Gender mainstreaming in the Indus river basin has almost no presence in governmental and non-governmental channels. Both India and Pakistan have institutionalised legislation that discriminates heavily against women. Women have been relegated to roles of domestic water usage and organisations have few to no positions for women nor gender mainstreaming policies. NGOs and other private actors find difficulty in accessing the Indus river basin given the state of war between the nations and the heavy militarisation of the region and of the water issues (Price et al. 2014). In recent years hardly any gender achievements have been accomplished and gender is more or less kept off the political agenda. This is related to the national level in both countries, where the rather conservative societies do not consider gender a political priority. Consequently, it is not surprising that this context shapes a situation where gender is neither reflected in IWT nor in its implementation policies at national level.

The Danube River Basin: In the Shadow of Regional Integration

The Danube river basin used to connect the East and the West during the Cold War and was one of the few examples of an ongoing political cooperation across the Iron Curtain, particularly under the 1985 Bucharest Declaration (Varduca 1997). The basin stretches into the territories of 19 states before draining into the Black Sea. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the institutionalisation of water cooperation in the basin progressed remarkably – 11 of the Danube riparian states signed The Danube River Protection Convention in 1994 (ICPDR 1994). After coming into force in 1998, the International Commission for the

Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) was created (ICPDR 2021). Today, 14 riparian states are members of ICPDR – the cooperation was reaffirmed with its declaration in 2016 (ICPDR 2016). The developments and water politics in the basin additionally benefitted from the enlargement of the European Union (EU) and its neighbourhood policies – similarly as the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) has benefitted from regional political and economic integration processes since the 1950s.

While the highly institutionalised cooperation in ICPDR seems to be the obvious arena for addressing and implementing gender issues related to transboundary water politics and action, neither the convention nor the updated declaration mention gender, nor do they offer guidelines, principles, or strategies on gender (ICPDR 1994). This is related to the perception that many of the member countries have legislations in place that are supposed to uphold the role of women in society and the onus is on national governments to promote women's rights in leadership. As the Danube basin is a fairly developed region with stable water supplies, some voices consider gender mainstreaming to be less relevant for ICPDR, as gender equality was almost reached in the water sector (Negru 2016). On request, ICPDR promotes gender equality, but the absence of gender in the ICPDR mandate and documents weakens the organisation's ability to support and achieve gender-related goals across the basin. Interestingly, and despite the lack of a programmatic gender approach, ICPDR has achieved gender balance among the Permanent Secretariat staff (five women, five men) as well as in the Expert and Task Groups where there are five female chairpersons out of a total of eight (ICPDR 2020). This may be related to gender mainstreaming policies in the ICPDR member countries.

Beyond ICPDR, the European Union actively promotes gender equality, women's empowerment, and other gender-related action. With the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, gender mainstreaming became an official policy approach in the European Union, later being confirmed with the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon that once more promotes gender equality in the European Union (European Commission 2015). The strategy for equality between women and men for the period between 2010 and 2015, underlined the European Commission's commitment to increasing its efforts and activities related to gender equality. The Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2021 actively promoted the European Union's comprehensive approach to water, explicitly highlighting "an inclusive society that promotes gender equality and women's participation" (Communication Office 2021). As all transboundary rivers in the European Union, including those that run outside of its territory, fall under EU regulations, EU gender policies – related to water and beyond – also apply for the Danube. Besides the European Union, each national government has gender policies and programmes in place though few national programmes have a gender dimension incorporated in their domestic water policies. While gender is promoted in the context of transboundary water cooperation abroad, it is not addressed in intra-European water policymaking nor does the Danube feature a basin-wide gender approach.

The gender achievements in the Danube basin are rather limited. Referring to national legislations for promoting gender completely removes it from the regional, transboundary level. The Danube is an illustrative example that absence of gender in transboundary water issues is often not perceived as problematic. An interview with Simona-Olimpia Negru, Romanian Secretary of State in the Ministry of Environment, Waters, and Forests featured on the ICPDR website, highlights that "women are numerous in planning actions, including legislation, in deciding policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels water management" and that the educational systems in the Danube region achieved that "key positions in decision making and management in various economic and social fields are no longer the exclusive domain of men" (Negru 2016). According to her, "society offers everyone equal access to a career, a voice in leadership and the opportunity to really change something for the future" (ibid.). Instead of identifying gender gaps in the ICPDR or in the riparian countries, gender in transboundary water affairs was linked to insufficient water supplies and rather relevant for developing countries. In Africa, for instance, "[where] women are the ones responsible for carrying water over large distances […] [and] take care to conserve water when using it in the household for cooking, bathing and cleaning" (ibid.). Such statements on gender in transboundary water contexts are counterproductive to gender mainstreaming and gender equity. First, they ignore existing gender inequalities in Europe and prevent the ICPDR from benefitting from gender-sensitive policies. Second, such a narrow understanding promotes and reiterates simplistic and traditional perceptions of women and girls portrayed as a uniform, passive, and victimised group in the Global South, ignoring their potential as high-level decision makers. Third, considering gender mainstreaming as less important in Europe than elsewhere weakens the role and power of gender concepts. Instead, it promotes the perception of gender critics that see it as an imposed developmental programming by Western donors.

Factors Promoting Gender in Transboundary Rivers

The analysis of the five cases explored the most prominent gender dynamics related to transboundary water governance – resulting in a broad spectrum of gender-relevant aspects in water politics, policies, and management. While in some basins, for example, gender equity is addressed by reaching parity between men and women in decision-making bodies of an RBO, such as in the Danube, in other basins the focus is more on promoting gender mainstreaming in basin-wide programmes, such as in the Zambesi. The cases illustrate the differences and similarities in how gender is either pushed and addressed through treaties, organisations, policies, etc. in some cases or sidelined and ignored in others. Despite the broad spectrum of gender-relevant aspects in water politics, policies, and management, gender is often not appropriately addressed in transboundary water governance.

While RBOs do play a specific role in this context, gender remains a stepchild of their agendas, as women tend to be extremely underrepresented or even absent in the organisations' decision-making bodies. The assessment of the five cases in this chapter does not, of course, allow for generalisable findings. However, their analysis indicates certain dynamics, trends, and logics that play a role in successfully promoting gender and basin-wide gender mainstreaming and showcases patterns that are also found in other transboundary river basins.

Five important factors can be drawn from the analysis that can help to push gender mainstreaming or gender equality at the transboundary level; they can be observed across the five cases and are also visible in other basins. The assessments of the Nile, Jordan, Zambesi, Indus, and Danube indicate that the following aspects play a role in promoting and setting gender standards in transboundary rivers: more comprehensive cooperation approaches, institutionalised water cooperation, broader regional integration, external regional or international engagement (also guaranteeing adequate funding); and stronger political prioritisation of gender.

Generally, gender policies at the transboundary level often lack substance and implementation. Whether they exist at all and are codified and implemented is to a certain extent linked to the **scope of transboundary water cooperation**. Broader water governance and management approaches target the social, economic, and environmental development in a basin and are more likely to have developed a gender dimension, policy, or strategy. If riparian states de facto hardly cooperate over water or negotiate on a more ad hoc basis, such as in the Indus or Jordan basins, gender does not make it to the transboundary agenda.

Related to the scope is the **type of cooperation**. Here, RBOs are more institutionalised forms of cooperation, such as NBI or ZAMCOM which have a more elaborated approach towards gender in the Nile and Zambesi basins, respectively. Moreover, such organisations have further developed their gender approaches over the last decades. RBOs can play a specific, naturally mandated role in promoting gender mainstreaming and equity, as they are often mandated to promote broader developmental agendas in the basin (von Lossow 2015). While ZAMCOM and NBI have made some progress in addressing gender over the years, ICPDR does not consistently include gender aspects in its programmes – despite the high level of regional economic and political integration in the Danube basin. Limited agreements, such as in the Indus basin, or political sensitive, asymmetric, and partly ad hoc cooperation formats, such as in the Jordan basin, do not feature gender at all.

In other cases, **broader regional integration** processes favour dynamics related to gender mainstreaming and equity, such as in Europe around the Danube basin or in Southern Africa (i.e., the SADC) around the Zambezi basin. Broader regional understanding, consensus, standards, or harmonised policies related to gender drive gender policy implementation throughout the basins. But, in the case of the Danube, this regional dimension can also

result in gender de facto falling from an RBO's priority list, when related policies are considered to be sufficiently addressed on the national level. This has consequences for ICPDR's policy implementation and sends a fatal signal to other RBOs indicating that gender does not necessarily fall under RBOs' mandates. In the case of tense or hostile relations among neighbours – which prevents more far-reaching water cooperation – gender mainstreaming or gender equity does not play a role in the basin-wide water-related policies and decision making. That is a missed opportunity as in some regions national efforts in the riparian states fall rather short, such as in the Indus basin.

Partly linked to the aforementioned factors, **additional regional (non-basin-related) or international institutional engagement**, such as from the European Union (i.e., in the Danube basin), SADC (i.e., in the Zambezi basin), United Nations, or the World Bank, can work as promotion for the formulation of gender-related goals. The absence of such a regional body in Northeast Africa (i.e., the Nile basin) and South Asia (i.e., the Indus basin), and the limited power of international organisations in the Middle East (i.e., the Jordan basin), play a negative role. While gender is very often addressed as part of institutionalised cooperation and water management, there is a certain ambivalence as these efforts are often (co-)funded by international and Western donors. On one hand, adequate funding and international support make it easier to finance gender-related policies, while, on the other hand, it supports critics that consider gender as a concept imposed by Western or international agencies or, at least, a means to appease donors to receive aid (von Lossow 2015).

Finally, the **political prioritisation of gender on the national level** in the riparian states shapes gender policies in each of the river basins. This can pose a serious obstacle as these national policies and politics might be an excuse for not actively fostering gender in RBOs or other forms of transboundary water cooperation. In cases where gender issues are widely ignored or institutionally neglected at the national level, such as in the Indus basin, gender turns into a non-topic for transboundary water policies, politics, and subsequent cooperation. Additionally, political environments in which riparian states consider gender an important topic can similarly fail to adequately address gender, as seen in the Danube basin. In such cases, gender is deprioritised on the transboundary water agenda and cooperation by delegating it to other political levels and sectors. To successfully promote gender across these basins, it requires political prioritisation at both the national and transboundary levels.

Conclusion

The five factors promoting gender in transboundary river basins illustrate the various gaps and shortcomings in the basins that prevent addressing gender in an appropriate and meaningful way. At the same time, it becomes obvious that none of these factors alone are decisive or sufficient. For the Danube, for

example, four out of five factors are applicable, but de facto gender plays hardly any role in the mandate, programmes, or project implementation.

In some basins, gender approaches, strategies, and policies in place have not (yet) succeeded in bringing change. In cases such as the Nile, policies outline quite ambitious gender objectives but are insufficiently implemented, thus partly remaining lip service rather than action. Still, such strategies can provide an entry point and offer opportunities to start with more serious discussions on gender and its related benefits and approaches in and for the basins. Efforts need to go beyond acknowledging gender disparities and require more intrinsic initiatives from the basins, their riparian states, and the RBOs.

Transboundary water cooperation and RBOs have a specific responsibility as regional bodies in shaping a basin-wide understanding and development of gender standards as well as in harmonising national gender approaches. Awareness-raising, convincing narratives, and illustrative best case examples can help to push gender more effectively on the basin level where gender is still more absent than on the national or local one.

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Part III

A Gender Perspective on Transboundary Water Institutions and Processes

8 Gendered River Basin Institutions

The Chu–Talas Commission in Central Asia

Jenniver Sehring

Introduction

This chapter sheds light on how gender perceptions and identities are shaping transboundary water governance in the Chu–Talas basin in Central Asia. I look at the bilateral Chu–Talas Commission (CTC), a joint basin organisation established in 2006 by Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic. When conceptualising water institutions as "gendered", I build on Feminist Institutionalism which has shown that political institutions are not gender neutral. This also counts for water institutions (understood as the formal and informal rules and practices to govern water), including those at transboundary level. This lens shows how "constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily life or logic of political institutions", hence that gender relations are "embedded in particular political institutions and constraining and shaping social interaction" (Mackay et al. 2010, p. 580).

Data for this chapter has been collected as part of a comparative analysis of gender and transboundary water governance in three different river basins, which also includes the studies by ter Horst and Mattur on the Rhine basin (Chapter 9 of this volume) and of Said on the Nile basin (Chapter 10 of this volume).[1] They are based on a literature review, own participation in meetings of the CTC, as well as 17 semi-structured interviews with members of the CTC and water professionals in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.[2]

I first introduce the CTC and describe to what extent it is both representative and extraordinary for Central Asia. I then discuss how Feminist Institutionalism can help to unravel the gendered nature of transboundary water governance. I continue with a brief overview of gender relations in Central Asia to sketch the political context, and subsequently discuss the genderedness of institutions, focusing on three gendered norms and practices: duty travels, leadership norms, and negotiation styles. I finally reflect on how gender intersects with other relevant power relations, namely generational and urban–rural divides.

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The Chu–Talas Commission and Transboundary Water Relations in Central Asia

The vast landmass of Central Asia spans – depending on definition – the countries between the Caspian Sea in the West and China in the East, between Russia in the North and Afghanistan and Iran in the South. In this chapter, I use the term to refer to the following five countries: Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. They share a long, common history, being interconnected through the Silk Road, conquered by Russia, later integrated in the Soviet Union, and finally becoming independent nation states in 1991. The major basin that these five countries share is the Aral Sea basin, tragically famous for the environmental catastrophe of the Aral Sea desiccation. The efforts, successes, and failures of interstate collaboration in this basin, and the related political tensions, has attracted significant scholarly attention (e.g., Xenarios et al. 2020; Menga 2018; Weinthal 2002). However, there are also a few smaller, often bilaterally shared, basins in the region; between Kazakhstan and China, between Kazakhstan and Russia, and between Iran and Turkmenistan. Among these smaller bilateral basins are the Chu and Talas basins.

The Chu–Talas basins cover together an area of approximately 115,000 km^2 shared by Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic. The Chu and Talas rivers are the major rivers of the basins, which also encompasses numerous smaller rivers. The Chu river is 1,186 km long and the Talas river 661 km. A major part of the basins is located in desert or semi-desert zones in Kazakhstan, while the rivers originate in the Tien Shan Mountains in Kyrgyzstan, where most of the run-off is formed (UNECE 2011).

Most of the rivers' infrastructure was built during the Soviet period: two reservoirs on Kyrgyz territory to store water for irrigation (Kirov and Orto-Tokoi) and extensive canal systems for irrigation in Kazakhstan (By-Pass Chu Canals, Western Bolshoi Chu Canal, Eastern Bolshoi Chu Canal, Chumysh Hydrosystem). A 1983 USSR regulation determined that the Kazakh Soviet Republic would receive 42 per cent of the water resources from the Chu river basin and 50 per cent of the resources from Talas basin, and that the Kyrgyz SSR would receive the remaining percentage of the water resources from the Chu and Talas basins, respectively. In 2000, the governments of both countries signed the *Agreement on Utilization of the Water Facilities of Interstate Use on the Chu and Talas rivers*. The agreement confirmed the water allocation as established in the Soviet Union, and obliged Kazakhstan to contribute to the costs of operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation of dams and reservoirs located in Kyrgyzstan and serving irrigation needs in Kazakhstan. In addition, it stipulated the establishment of a permanent commission and the implementation of joint activities (Libert 2015; Ni 2018).

In 2006, the *Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic on the Use of Water Management Facilities of Intergovernmental Status on the Rivers Chu and Talas* – the official name of the aforementioned CTC – was established.

The CTC's mandate includes the approval of the allocation of water resources between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, measures to maintain and rehabilitate water facilities of interstate use, and approval of financial plans. The establishment and further functioning of CTC was supported by several international donors, including the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Asian Development Bank and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (Ni 2018; Wegerich 2008; Libert 2015).

The CTC's structure is defined and illustrated below (Figure 8.1). It is headed by two co-chairpersons, representing the main ministries in charge of water – currently Kazakhstan's Ministry of Agriculture and the Kyrgyz Republic's State Agency for Water Resources. A small joint Secretariat was established, co-headed by a Kazakh and a Kyrgyz director. The Secretariat is the CTC's permanent executive body that coordinates the work of the commission, prepares meetings, and follows the implementation of decisions taken at the meetings.

There are six thematic Working Groups (WGs) with experts from both countries to deal with issues such as infrastructure safety, legal and institutional matters, water resources allocation, monitoring and data exchange, as well as environmental protection (see Figure 8.1). Both WGs and CTC usually meet twice a year, with the respective delegations being nominated by the government. CTC members come from the respective line ministries, the foreign ministries, environmental and hydro-meteorological agencies, as well as provincial/district authorities. International and donor organisations participate

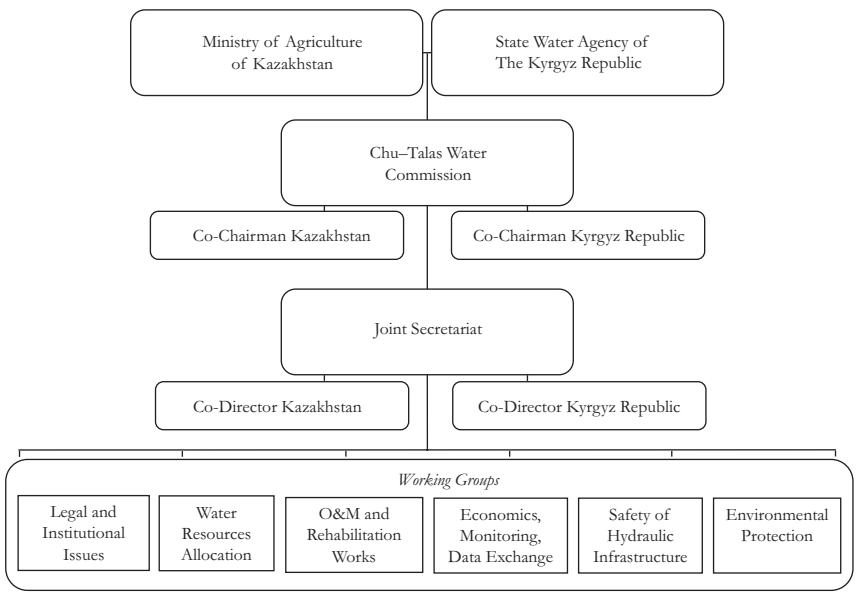

Figure 8.1 Structure of the Chu–Talas Commission (author's compilation)

as observers in the meetings. The protocol of each session with the agreed decisions is drafted, negotiated, finalised, and signed by the Co-Chairs after the meeting. Meeting locations alternate between Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

CTC is thus still a relatively young organisation. It was established in a region that is characterised by often occurring water tensions, lack or insufficient agreements for other basins, and usually tough and polarised water negotiations. In this context, CTC is often praised as an exceptional example for water cooperation in Central Asia (Libert 2015; Ni 2018). It has a clear mandate and procedures, can take binding decisions, and manages to maintain good working relations even in times of political disagreements or instability. Many members of CTC and its WGs have been involved for many years and have good personal relations. Interview partners explained this with a similar understanding of the issues at stake as well as with the close cultural ties, joint past, and shared mentality of the two countries. The Soviet period has many legacies, including Russian as a *lingua franca*, but more importantly a strong network and community of water experts jointly educated in the USSR. This provides them with longstanding personal ties and shared norms on water management, resulting in similar opinions on preferred solutions (Sehring & Ibatullin 2021).

However, there are also challenges. Neither the CTC nor the Secretariat have a legal status with implications for bank accounts, permanent positions, salary for the Secretariat staff, as well as receipt and transfer of funding, among other things. Much of CTC's work is dependent on projects funded by international donors. These projects do not only enable additional studies but keep up the normal functioning by paying the salary of key positions in the Secretariat and the costs of the bi-annual meetings, for example. As a result, the CTC's work remains unstable, lacks financial sustainability, and has been criticised for being donor-driven and lacking ownership (Ni 2018; Wegerich 2008).

Without doubt, factors like donor-dependency, type and robustness of an agreement, economic mechanisms, political interests, and relations between the two countries can explain a big part of the challenges, developments, and results of transboundary water cooperation in the Chu–Talas basin. But they overlook an important aspect, namely how the consistency, change, and outcomes of transboundary water institutions are impacted by gendered practices, routines, and norms of behaviour that enable or constrain constructive cooperation.

A Feminist Institutionalist View

New Institutionalism has put focus on how actors are being shaped and are shaping institutions, defined here as "a set of rules stipulating expected behaviour and ruling out behaviour deemed undesirable" (Streeck & Thelen 2005, pp. 12–13) in both formal and informal ways. Different schools (most importantly Rational Choice, Historical and Sociological Institutionalism)

put different weight on power, ideas, rational behaviour, or historical path dependencies for explaining the persistence or change of institutions. Feminist Institutionalism, which evolved in recent years as a dedicated school of New Institutionalism in Political Science, seeks to understand how gender impacts the way political institutions work, their outcomes, how they distribute power, how agency works within them, and how they do or do not change (Mackay et al. 2010; Chappel & Waylen 2013). Seeing institutions as gendered means to understand gender roles as not existing primarily at individual level and to emphasise that "constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily life or logic of political institutions" (Mackay et al. 2010, p. 580).

While looking at one specific organisation, namely CTC, the institutional perspective is not confined to formal aspects of the organisation but looks in particular at the often hidden aspects – informal rules and practices – and the impact they have on institutional design and outcomes as well as the interaction between the formal and informal (Chappell & Waylen 2013; Aggestam & Towns 2018). It thus requires looking at institutions in the broader sense, including daily practices within the organisation as well as the political and socio-cultural settings in which CTC is embedded.

Behaviours, roles, and identities of male and female water professionals engaged in transboundary negotiations are determined through processes of socialisation, norms, and practices in bureaucracies, resulting in certain expectations and patterns of acceptable behaviour for men and women (Mackay et al. 2010; Aggestam & Towns 2018). For example, certain masculine norms of leadership can be performed by both men and women, but are socially accepted only for men. At the same time, a male leader can show soft or feminine character traits, but runs the risk of being ridiculed. Chappell's (2006) concept of a "gendered logic of appropriateness" (p.223) can help to explain this. It builds on the work of Sociological Institutionalism scholars who argue that rules are followed and norms are powerful not only because of domination mechanisms, but because actors perceive them as natural and rightful, as appropriate in a given situation (March & Olsen 2013). In a gendered understanding, this logic "prescribes (as well as proscribes) 'acceptable' masculine and feminine forms of behaviour, rules, and values for men and women within institutions" (Chappell & Waylen 2013, p. 601).

Based on Chappell and Waylen (2013) as well as Lowndes and Roberts (2013), I look at gender in the CTC along two dimensions:

1) the nominal dimension, which refers to the participation of men and women, and can show the historical and ongoing dominance of men in positions of power in CTC and other relevant water agencies in the basin; and
2) the substantive dimension, which refers to the hidden gender bias in supposedly gender neutral formal and informal rules, norms, and practices, like dress codes, negotiation styles, meeting agendas and timing, wording used, etc.

The Chu–Talas Commission as a Gendered Institution

Before looking at CTC as such, the next section gives a brief overview of the gender relations in the political and socio-cultural context of Central Asia in which the CTC is embedded.

Gender, Water, and the State in Central Asia

The liberation of women was one of the prominent objectives of the Soviet restructuring of society. Soviet policies promoted the empowerment of women in the public sphere, and women have worked in all economic sectors, overcoming earlier gender divisions. This was achieved through giving women access to education and training as well as family and child welfare policies. In Central Asia, the dependence on kinship ties, religion and gender-restrictive traditions was pushed back – at least on the surface (Kandiyoti 2007; Constantine 2007; Ishkanian 2005). Women were encouraged to take up technical professions and work in fields traditionally occupied by men – with the result of female engineers, hydrologists, and similar professions being much more common than in other world regions.

Many of the women in senior water management positions today were educated and started their professional life in the Soviet Union, and in their perception, gender did not matter: "*We weren't divided back in Soviet times – in female, male. Somehow, we were all of the same sex, somehow taking responsibility for ourselves, maybe even more than we should*" (Interview 11, 19 December 2019). Still today, many of them would insist that they are first and foremost professional experts, and that this counts more than their gender.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought independence to the Central Asian Republics. It led not only to major rivers becoming transboundary and the subject of negotiation between the states, but also to altered gender relations. In Soviet times, women were expected to contribute to society through work (as a farmer or an academic, for example), whereas the modern Uzbek woman often fills the role of young wife with familial and household responsibilities (Constantine 2007). This interpretation applies to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as much as it does to Uzbekistan and resembles the revival of patriarchal, traditional, and religious norms seen since independence (Kandiyoti 2007; Ishkanian 2005). Several interviewees shared the perception that the relative gender equality of Soviet times has declined in current society. These changing socio-cultural norms impact the professional perspectives of young women, and they are exacerbated by the gendered effects of the economic crisis during the transformation period and the decline of the education system (Sahvaeva n.d.). The following quote from a male Kazakh CTC member illustrates this:

> *Previously, qualified women used to work in the water sector. They were not inferior to men. Today, there are fewer such women as knowledge is insufficient because of the education system, which is in decline today. Women have given up a little in*

> *terms of knowledge, because there was a downturn in the economy and women were feeding their families by working at the bazaar. And men, where can they go? They can't do anything else. So men mostly stayed [in the water administration], women fed [their children] and were the keeper of the hearth.*
>
> (Interview 2, 19 September 2019)

The empowerment of women in the Soviet economic sphere was not reflected in the political sphere. While there was a quota system, which guaranteed women 33 per cent of seats in political bodies, leadership in the Soviet Union was male and continued to be so in the newly independent states. After independence, "symbolic 'masculinization' of national representation" (Kudaibergenova 2016, p. 4; see also Franke-Schwenk 2013) became an important element of official state- and nation-building discourses – resembled for example in the national heroes (e.g., Manas in Kyrgyzstan, Golden Man in Kazakhstan) that replaced the statues of the male Soviet leaders. In the post-Soviet time, female politicians are a minority; after the elections in 2005, there was not a single woman in the Kyrgyz Parliament. This is perhaps due to the fact that politics is often perceived as something rude and therefore not appropriate for women (Ishkanian 2005). Nevertheless, there are a few notable exceptions, like Roza Otunbaeva, Kyrgyzstan's president in the transition period after the 2010 uprising, and female relatives of male politicians (like the daughters of Kazakhstan's first president). These few female leadership figures in contemporary times as well as historical figures were referred to by female interviewees as role models to affirm the scope of agency women had and have in society and show how tradition can be evoked in different ways (see also Beyer & Kojobekova 2019).

Representation of Men and Women in the Chu–Talas Commission

A first step to analyse the impacts of gender on the working of CTC is to look at the participation and roles of men and women across levels and thematic areas.

At the highest decision-making level, the two Chairpersons have always been men. At the same time, the two directors of the Secretariat have been two (and the same) women since its establishment. In WGs, women constitute about one-third of all members. Among WGs, gender composition differs per group. Interestingly, the share of women is particularly high in the WG on Environmental Protection.

In CTC meetings, it is mostly men who speak. This is due to protocol and hierarchy as the Chairs and Head of Delegations, who mainly speak, are men. Women speak in the meetings if given the floor as WG members. However, many women have supporting roles in WGs and the Secretariat that should not be underestimated, and prepare the documents presented and statements made in the meeting. These roles are less visible, but not necessarily less important.

Compared with other transboundary water bodies in the region, CTC has a relatively gender-equal composition. In all the main bodies of the Aral Sea basin (namely the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC), and the Basin Water Organizations (BVOs)) the Chairpersons as well as national representatives, Heads of scientific centres and Secretariats have been almost exclusively men, as well as the majority of the staff. Notably, the Secretariats of the ICWC (until recently) and of the Chu–Talas Commission (until today) have been headed by women – but these are administrative more than political bodies.

Members of CTC come from national and provincial water and environmental agencies. The majority of the senior and high-level professional and technical positions of the state water administrations, including ministries, agencies, and basin management, are held by men. The same holds true for foreign affairs. A few women in Deputy Minister or Director positions are exceptions. Nevertheless, compared to the water agencies in the provinces and in operational management, there are relatively more women in the ministries and agencies at the national level (Akylbekova 2017; Musabayeva 2014).

Caution is required in counting increased numbers of women as a sign of women empowerment or more gender equality. Rather, it is important to look at the changed role and status of the water sector. The water sector used to be a highly prestigious sector in the Soviet Union with an enormous and powerful bureaucracy, research institutes, huge infrastructural projects, and well-paid jobs. After independence, funding, power, and prestige declined. The preferred profession was no longer engineer, but businessman. One male interviewee explained the high number of women in the WG on Environmental Protection by the fact that its members are coming from national hydro-meteorological services and environmental departments with low salary and status:

> *Now we have a 50–50 workforce. When I started working, there were probably 10–20% men, mostly women worked here. It is more balanced now […] Salaries are low, so it was not prestigious for a man, as a breadwinner, to work for such a salary. […] Now of course salaries have gone up a little bit, but at that time they were lower.*
>
> (Interview 14, 19 December 2019)

In this respect it is to be noted that the two Co-Directors of the Secretariat, due to the previously mentioned unresolved legal status of CTC, did not receive a permanent salary from the governments until recently but were dependent on temporary contracts under the international projects. This forced them to work without payment between projects. A Central Asian water expert not involved in CTC therefore noted:

> *Probably it [CTC] would be headed by men if the Secretariat had a sound structure and good money. But it is in a very unstable position, no budget, just a name. Probably therefore women are heading the Secretariat, no one else wants it.*
>
> (Interview 17, 08 July 2020)

Looking at it from this perspective, a relatively high number of female members might not be a sign of gender equality, but of reduced significance and economic attractiveness. In those transboundary commissions in the region where water governance is still an issue of high politics, namely IFAS and ICWC, women do play a much less visible role than in CTC. On the other hand, one male Kazakh water expert noted that the gender balance is different in different bilateral settings: In negotiations with Russia, China, and the Kyrgyz Republic, both sides have relatively many women in their delegations. In negotiations with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, the other side would be mostly represented by men, and so also Kazakhstan would have more men in their delegation (Interview 2, 19 September 2019). The gender balance might thus be both the result of hard vs soft politics as of diplomatic intuition in anticipation of gendered expectations of the other party.

Gendered Practices and Norms within the Chu–Talas Commission

Regarding how the daily routines within CTC are gendered, I look at three seemingly neutral practices and norms, that are at closer sight highly gendered: duty travels, leadership norms, and negotiation styles.

Duty Travels

One example of a supposedly gender-neutral practice that has gender-specific implications is the need for regular duty travels. Being a CTC member implies regular travel to the meetings that alternatingly take place in the two member states. Similarly, the work in the respective national ministries and agencies involves field visits. Many of the female interviewees stressed that for them duty travels are no problem, for example:

> *I like travelling a lot. I have no problem travelling – I deal with water issues. We are dealing with wastewater treatment plants, water supply, drainage issues. I can go to the South [of Kyrgyzstan] without any problems, this is not a problem for me.*
> (Interview 13, 19 December 2019)

But at the same time, the very same woman said:

> *This work, you see, it covers economic entities far in the mountains, different regions, constantly on the move, so therefore it is male, it's a man's work.*
> (ibid.)

In a similar vein, a Kazakh female water specialist said:

> *At middle level [positions], there are mostly women, at higher levels there are fewer women, I won't lie. But this also depends on women themselves. Many women have families and so on. For example, in the Basin Inspectorate there were always*

> *business trips. Women with small children attending kindergartens and schools – they cannot travel. They are not eager to. But I became the boss because […] I don't have anyone. I could easily spend 10 days or 20 days wading through riverbeds. So this is why it is like a man's work, all the time on a business trip, many business trips. And you can't do our work in the office if you haven't been on the ground, seen what's going on there.*
>
> (Interview 5, 19 September 2019)

For both women, though themselves travelling a lot, it is the duty of travel that prompts them to equate their work to men's work. It comes with two important implications: first, not being able to travel will prevent a professional from reaching higher level positions, and second, it is not related to the nature of the work itself, but that duty travel conflicts with care work that is mostly expected to be done by women.

The latter aspect requires having a close look at the gender division of labour in the two basin countries. While the Soviet Union promoted women's role in economic and public life, this change did not take place equally in the private sphere – an issue discussed as a double burden in the late Soviet Union where care duties continued to be the primary responsibility of women (Ishkanian 2005). Also, in independent Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, women spend between one and a half to two and a half times more than men on unpaid labour related to care for children and the elderly, housekeeping, etc. (Khitarishvili 2016). Unsurprisingly, both male and female interview partners mentioned care work as a hindering factor for women to get into decision-making positions, and one where women depend on the role and support of their partners, as these two experiences show:

> *She [a woman] knows the job. She can manage. But not when the kids are little or they go to primary school, then you have to look after the kids too. I don't know about your men, our men don't [help in the household]. He comes home, he lies down. He's like a piece of furniture.*
>
> (Interview 5, 19 September 2019)

> *If you are a water professional, your job involves frequent trips, business trips. For example, if everything is normal in the family, if the other half [the husband] allows you to travel, then, please, why not work? I also have frequent business trips, but my husband also understands me, he also worked in the same field, so he does not mind.*
>
> (Interview 12, 19 December 2019)

This shows the interwoven nature of private and professional life, of social norms about care and participation of women in political decision making, and thus the gendered impact of a key practice in transboundary water governance.

Leadership Norms

Ideas about what makes a good leader are strongly gendered and impact the perceptions of women's suitability for leadership positions. Often, favoured

leadership styles are at odds with norms of appropriate behaviour for women (Due Billing & Alvesson 2000; Lowndes 2014).

An obvious pattern in the interviews was that (male) water diplomats are expected to be strong leaders and that being a strong leader is seen as something masculine. Among female interviewees, leadership was commonly associated with male behaviour and male character, like here: "*The male logic is to govern, to command*" (Kyrgyz female water expert, 19 December 2019). The characteristics that are considered as needed for being a good leader, like making clear decisions and giving commands, are associated with men. And even when talking about female leaders, as here about a senior official in the water ministry, their masculine characteristics were brought up in relation to their leadership styles:

> *She was a good deputy director. Well, she was like a man. Honestly, we were all afraid of her. A very strict woman. […] If a woman, for example, has a male character, then she makes a good leader. But if a woman is, so to speak, soft, she will not be suitable for a leading role.*
>
> (Interview 12, 19 December 2019)

If leadership, strong will, commanding personalities, and making decisions are seen as male characteristics, what are considered female characteristics? A common assumption in the interviews (both of men and women) was that men are better leaders, and women more accurate workers: "*A woman is more assiduous and does more analytics. And men mainly command*" (Interview 2, 19 September 2019). This was also given as an explanation for why there are many women at mid-level but not at high-level positions:

> *The middle level is the heads of departments. In this range, the executives, the heads of departments are mostly women, because paperwork can only be scrupulously done by a woman. […]. Where you need to count a lot, [work] with papers, with numbers.*
>
> (Interview 5, 19 September 2019)

These perceptions reinforce the dominance of men in leadership positions:

> *In my opinion, for solving the tasks of water diplomacy at a higher level, men who can take responsibility for making decisions are more suitable. Women are better suited for tasks requiring diligence and daily performance, for example, to fill out daily reports, to keep various materials in order, etc.*
>
> (Interview 12, 19 December 2019)

However, there is another narrative, and this relates to how women (are expected to) behave when they are in leadership positions. It is assumed that they would not pursue their own power interests but take this role out of responsibility and care:

> *A woman, of course, knows better all the details, and more – she feels everything. […] and regarding leadership roles of women, they will always try to do good not only for themselves but for you and for someone, because children are in the first place for her. She does not say this is my child, this is your child. For her, this is a child as a whole. Yes, a woman thinks about everyone, right?*
>
> (Interview 4, 19 September 2019)

In the idea of masculine leadership, it is essential to keep the image of being strong and powerful. For women in leadership positions, however, it is considered inappropriate to show this. As illustrated in the following quote:

> *I am a doctor of science, and my husband is a candidate of science. I will never tell him, you are a candidate, I am a doctor. Never, he will be offended. I do not say that I have a higher salary than he. He turns away, he feels bad and is offended. This topic is painful for him, so I try to somehow not touch these things.*[3]
>
> (Interview 4, 19 September 2019)

Thus, if women are in leadership positions, they are assumed to be less self-interested, more caring, and modest – characteristics contrasting the masculine leadership ideal of strong men. While there are obvious examples of female leaders who are as tough as (or even tougher than) their male colleagues, these cannot (yet) challenge the internalised gender stereotypes. One male interviewee, when asked about a previous female water diplomat in a leadership position who was known for her uncompromising attitude, simply said: "*she is no good example*" (Interview 15, 23 September 2019).

This shows that leading, commanding, and excelling is not considered appropriate for women. Such ideas about norms of appropriate behaviour were by the interviewees often linked to what they referred to as "mentality", meaning traditional attitudes of society. One Kyrgyz interviewee stated: "*many women want [leadership positions], but stereotypes prevent it*" (Interview 10, 19 December 2019). While some interviewees accepted this mentality as part of their living conditions, others stated that it would be relevant only in private contexts or in rural areas – and would not affect them as urban, educated professionals (see section intersectional aspects on page 141). Additionally, others referred to their national traditions and mentality in a positive way: in comparison to the other countries of Central Asia, Kazakh and Kyrgyz female interviewees perceived women of their countries as more active and independent, often referring to the nomadic culture and a few important female leadership figures in the past and present. This shows that, while cultural norms were often mentioned as obstacles, they are dynamic enough to be used by women to support their active roles.

Negotiation Styles

In an earlier paper (Sehring 2021), I have differentiated between confrontational practices (involving talking aggressively, swearing, being uncompromising, or

walking out of negotiations) and collaborative practices (like avoiding open confrontation, seeking compromise, using informal and technical levels to find common understandings, and respecting different perspectives) in water negotiations in Central Asia. The first, confrontational negotiation style aligns with the aforementioned description of the strong, masculine leadership norm and can be often observed in Central Asia. For CTC, however, many interviewees stressed the constructive atmosphere in which the meetings usually take place. Nevertheless, one female interviewee also noted: "*And then there might even be some problems, men immediately start swearing, but women will be uncomfortable*" (Interview 12, 19 December 2019). The interviews showed that some women consider arguments as inappropriate. For example: "*It is not very diplomatic, not very correct to discuss raw data and even more to argue right there at a meeting of the commission*" (Interview 9, 19 December 2019).

In contrast to this, the interviewed women saw themselves as working more collaboratively. One interviewee mentioned her women-dominated Working Group, which would not present two separate national reports at the meeting but coordinate and agree beforehand and present a joint report, as an example of this. One of the female members of the same Working Group remarked: "*we always try to find some kind of compromise*" (Interview 13, 19 December 2019).

But it is not only that men and women are perceived to have different negotiation styles. Several interviewees noted that the negotiations between men become less confrontational when women are attending the meeting. There is a strong social norm for men not to swear in the presence of a woman. For example:

> *The [effect of] participation of women in such commissions is, first, probably, tact: Men also try to behave, probably be diplomatic among themselves. Because, I also saw such situations when there were very controversial moments. Men do not hold back, but when there are more women participating, they all nevertheless, probably, think and try to somehow behave more diplomatically.*
>
> (Interview 13, 19 December 2019)

This shows that the appropriate behaviour for men and women can change depending on the setting, and that more female participants in decision making can change the practices of negotiation.

Intersectional Aspects within the Chu–Talas Commission

Many scholars have pointed out how gender intersects and combines with other structural power relations, such as race, sexuality, or class and that it is important to acknowledge that these other factors might have an equally or even more important effect. It reminds us that women and men are not uniform categories. In the last section, I want to focus on two factors intersecting with gender that appear to be relevant, and these are generational and urban–rural (North–South) divides.

Generational Divides

Perceptions of gender inequalities differed between older women (those who started their career in the Soviet Union) and the younger generation. It also became clear that the latter face different challenges. This was evident for example in the assessment of the family situation, which was perceived as challenging by younger women but not by some of the older generation of women who started their career in Soviet times, when care duties were partly taken over by the state. Due to the declining quality of education, several interviewees, in particular Soviet generation female technical experts, complained about the low level of education for young specialists, including lack of field work and exposure to technical sites. Besides this lack of access to knowledge, some older women also perceived the younger generation as less responsible and diligent, but more demanding in professional settings. This shows that gender is not a unifying factor per se, but that women from different generations have different experiences and attitudes which can lead to friction amongst them.

Urban–Rural Divides

Many women interviewed identified themselves as urban, educated women; as professionals who are respected and treated based on their expertise and not their gender. In their view, gender stereotypes and patriarchal mentality would not concern them, but were phenomena of rural areas, thus affecting female heads of farms or Water User Associations, for example. In Kyrgyzstan, this difference is not only felt between rural and urban areas, but also between the North and South of the country; with the South seen as more traditional and religious. Indeed, this is visible in women's participation in local political bodies, and in staffing numbers of the central and basin water administrations in Kyrgyzstan. While in the central administration and the Northern provinces women make up around one-third of the staff members, in the basin level organisations in the South of the country, it is only around or even less than one-tenth (Musabayeva 2014). The aforementioned strengthening of certain patriarchal cultural norms in both countries affects all women, but not all equally. Consequently, the life of an educated, working, maybe unmarried, woman in the city is very different from a young daughter-in-law in a village, also affecting their potential involvement in managing water differently.

Conclusion

The bilateral CTC in Central Asia has existed for 15 years and during this time evolved into not only one of the few well-functioning transboundary water bodies in the region, but also one with higher women's participation than others. This makes it an interesting case to study how gender affects transboundary water governance; keeping in mind that gender is just one factor

among others. But as it is one often neglected, it is worth highlighting how daily practices and social interactions within a transboundary water governance arrangement are gendered, and what effect they have. Hence, what can the perspective of Feminist Institutionalism tell us about transboundary water governance that other approaches cannot?

First, it helps us to situate a joint water governance body in its context, and here – as other political analyses of transboundary waters do – not only the context of political relations between the riparian states, economic and strategic interests, or power asymmetries, but also the socio-cultural setting where the professionals practising water diplomacy are socialised in and have learnt expectations of appropriate behaviour that impact how they approach water-related challenges.

Second, it can unravel the gendered norms and practices and show how they affect men and women differently in terms of access to and performing work on transboundary waters. In this chapter I have illustrated that duty travels led to water governance perceived as a man's work, leadership norms were strongly associated with masculinity, and prevalent negotiation styles appeared as uncomfortable for women. All this is closely related with the gendered division of labour and cultural norms. At the same time, simply increasing the number of women might not necessarily be a sign of more gender equality, but might rather reflect the societal status of certain sectors and positions. However, we can also see how women make selected use of cultural, historic, and political incidents of female agency to strategise their own room for manoeuvre in this masculinised field.

These insights add one piece to the puzzle explaining the challenges and dynamics of transboundary conflict and cooperation, gaining a deeper understanding of the politics of water.

Notes

1 This research was executed in cooperation between IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, the Netherlands, and the Stockholm International Water Institute, Sweden, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2 Most of the interviews were conducted in Russian. The quotes in the text have been translated by the author and anonymised.
3 In the former Soviet countries, candidate of science is the first doctoral degree (equivalent to a PhD), and doctor of science is a higher degree (equivalent to a "habilitation" in some European countries).

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9 Assessing Transboundary Water Governance in the Rhine Basin through a Gender Lens

The International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine

Rachana Mattur and Rozemarijn ter Horst

Introduction

> "*I've seen the [negotiations in the] '90s and there were all men with a tie and a suit, and everybody spoke in a very mechanical way, reading the speech. The atmosphere was cold and very, very formal. It changed because the world is changing, but also because of the influence of women*".
>
> *(7m, interview, 12 December 2019)*

The quote above reflects the experiences of someone who has observed the transboundary water governance processes in the Rhine for over three decades. It specifically details the dynamics in negotiations held over 25 years ago in the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR). It shows a glimpse of a time where negotiations over the Rhine were done differently, and a time when women were only present in the negotiations in supporting roles, such as secretaries and interpreters. In line with other people we interviewed, it shows how transboundary water governance has changed from a cold to a more amicable atmosphere; from women in supporting roles like secretaries and interpreters, to women being in the majority of leadership and scientific positions.

Although the ICPR as a River Basin Organisation (RBO) stands out with a majority of women in leading positions, gender has not been addressed in the many studies done on water governance and water cooperation in the Rhine basin (Becker et al. 2007; Dieperink 2000; Huntjens et al. 2017; Lagendijk 2016; Mostert 2009; Pfeiffer & Leentvaar 2013; Schiff 2017; Verweij 1999). The remarkable change in the number and roles of men and women in the ICPR over the past decades draws our attention to the gendered nature of the transboundary water governance in this RBO, and how this has influenced who has access to decision making and who is excluded, whether and how the rules of the game for men and women are different, and how this influences the interactions over transboundary waters in the Rhine. Analysing the ICPR through a

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gender lens invites us to go beyond analysing states, and to concentrate on those who make up the institutions through their experiences and everyday practices.

The aim of this descriptive single-case study is to identify how transboundary water governance in the Rhine, and specifically the ICPR, is socially constructed, how this creates barriers and opportunities for those who participate, as well as how individuals navigate these, with a specific focus on women's participation.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Organisational structures are not gender neutral, although they are often presented as such. Gender, the distinctions between male and female, masculine and feminine, is an integral part of organisational and societal processes, although often invisible, and it shapes "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity" (Acker, 1990, p. 146; Acker, 1992, p. 565). The ideas on how women and men should behave, and that define relations of power and hierarchy between individuals, are socially constructed and culturally variable (Acker, 1992).

Oftentimes it is difficult to see how our social practices are gendered, or how they create advantages and disadvantages, as these are the processes that we are used to. They are more visible to those who fall outside of the norms, or are forced or nudged to change their behaviour to fit in. We apply the feminist theory of organisations of Acker (2012) who identifies four substructures that produce and perpetuate gendered assumptions and power relations, which guide our research on the oftentimes invisible gendered processes. The first substructure is called organising processes; these are concrete practical activities that make up an organisation, including job descriptions, wages, hierarchies, what the workplace looks like, as well as norms and rules on how to behave in the workplace. The second is organisation culture, which refers to beliefs about gender differences and (in)equality. The third, called interactions on the job, looks at how the relationships between people who work within the same organisation, or within the context of an RBO, can reinforce or create differences between men and women. The last substructure is called gendered identities, which are ideas of an individual about what it means to be a man or a woman, influenced by – and in turn influencing – their direct environment (ibid., p. 215).

These substructures are highly interrelated and mutually influence, enforce, and challenge gendered relations. For our research in the Rhine, we identify not only how these substructures perpetuate gendered assumptions and power relations, but also how they contribute to changing these assumptions and challenging power relations, especially as the number of men and women in the ICPR secretariat and the delegations has changed so significantly over the past 20 years.

Data for this chapter has been collected as part of a comparative analysis of gender and transboundary water governance in three different river basins,

namely the Nile, Chu–Talas, and Rhine basins[1] and in the context of an MSc research (Mattur 2020). For this chapter, delegates from France, Germany, and the Netherlands who are part of the Strategy Group of the ICPR (five interviews) and people involved in the ICPR secretariat (four interviews) and interviews with members of Working Groups for context (two) were selected. The interviewees agreed to be anonymous. To provide a fuller understanding for the reader we have indicated the sex of the interviewees in the references to the interviews (m/f), followed by an identification number. In acknowledgement of the progress made in discussions on sex and gender, we feel it is important to note that we have not encountered people who transitioned or identified themselves other than male/female and therefore feel comfortable in using the m/f distinction. We will further reflect on this in the conclusion. Based on these interviews we do not claim a full understanding of gendered practices within the ICPR and ministries that send delegates. However, we aspire to contribute to a discussion on how gender plays a role in transboundary water governance in general, and particularly in the Rhine, with the insights provided.

We continue this chapter by providing background information about the ICPR, after which we discuss the four substructures, namely organising processes, organisation culture, interactions on the job, and gendered identities, in the context of the Strategy Group of the ICPR.

Introduction to the Case: the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine

The Rhine is one of the most important rivers in Europe. It provides drinking water, infrastructure for transport, energy, and opportunities for tourism (Tockner et al. 2009). The Rhine catchment area is about 170,000 km^2 connecting nine European countries, namely Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Liechtenstein, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

The countries that share the Rhine river have a long history of cooperation and conflict over the use, quality, and quantity of its waters. Agreements on navigation date back to 1815, and in 1869 the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland agreed on the protection of the river's salmon population (Frijters & Leentvaar 2003). The pollution in the Rhine was quickly identified as an important contribution to the deterioration of the salmon population but did not fall within the scope of the agreement (ICPR 2020; Mostert 2009). To specifically address this issue, and to provide a platform for the riparian states to meet, discuss, and devise strategies to resolve the problems in the Rhine basin, the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine against Pollution (ICPRP) was created in 1950 with a secretariat in Koblenz, Germany. It was later renamed as International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) to acknowledge the other issues at stake in the river (Dieperink 2000; Ruchay 1995). It is important to note that this cooperation started soon after the Second World War, constituting a first rapprochement

between the basin states who were at opposite sites during the war. In the early years, the ICPR focused mainly on data collection and analysis to invest in shared knowledge, baseline information, and the harmonisation of monitoring programmes and methods. A majority of the RBO's work remains directly or closely related to monitoring and analysing water quality and quantity. A sign of the good relations is the merger and joint exploitation of the monitoring stations by Germany and the Netherlands at the border between them at Bimmen (Germany) and Lobith (the Netherlands).

The legal framework for the ICPR was developed not only by the organisation itself through the Convention on the Protection of the Rhine, which serves as its legal basis. As all basin states, apart from Switzerland, are currently part of the European Union (EU), relevant European law is also part of this framework, including the European Water Framework Directive in 2000, and the Flood Directive after 2006 (Disco & Heezik 2014). Between Switzerland and the European Union specific bilateral agreements are made. Hence, the European directives have a harmonising effect that further facilitates cooperation in the basin.

Although agreements on water quality date back to 1869, little changed in improving the water quality of the Rhine, until the Sandoz incident in 1986. Due to a fire in a chemical factory in Switzerland, harmful pesticides were discharged into the river which killed fish and other organisms downstream, all the way to the Netherlands (Mielnik 2018). This resulted in enormous pressure from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and governments in the basin to bring back the salmon in the Rhine. The joint problem created a unique window of opportunity for the ICPR to adopt an ambitious common strategy that addressed water quality and re-opening the salmon migration routes, mainly blocked by dams (ICPR 1987). Since then, the ICPR has made tremendous progress in maintaining the Rhine's water quality and salmon population through various programmes such as the Rhine Action Programme (1987), and the Action Plan on Floods, Rhine 2000, Rhine 2020, Salmon 2020, and Rhine 2040 (ICPR n.d.-a). The ICPR is proud of the progress made in terms of cooperation, as shown by the following quote on its website: "Today, international cooperation in environment and water protection is considered to be obvious" (ICPR n.d.-b).

Currently, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the European Union are the members of the ICPR. Belgium, Austria, and Liechtenstein along with intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental organisations in the basin have an observer status. Italy has a nominal position as it does not use the Rhine's resources (ICPR 2020).

Currently, the ICPR is organised as depicted in Figure 9.1. The Plenary Assembly meets annually to prepare resolutions for ministers in charge of the Rhine (ICPR 2018). The Conference of Rhine Ministers is organised intermittently, with the last one hosted in 2020. During this Conference decisions are taken based on the resolutions prepared by the Plenary Assembly. The ICPR is supported by a Secretariat based in Koblenz, Germany, with currently

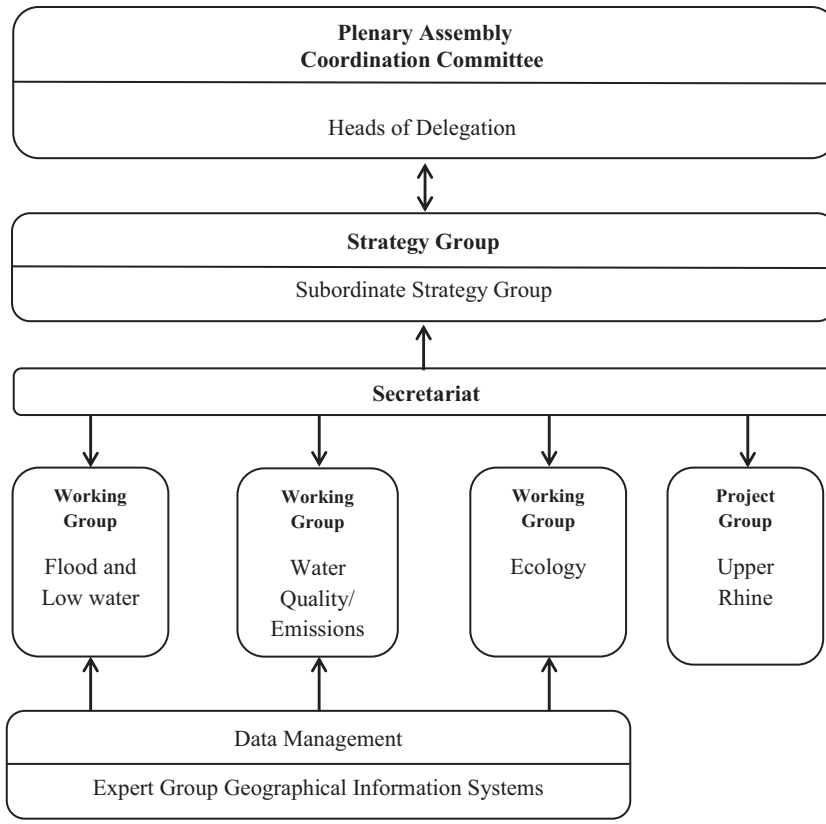

Figure 9.1 Structure of the ICPR (figure compiled by authors)

12 staff including secretaries, scientific assistants, translators, the Executive Secretary, as well as the Chair. The latter is appointed by the six member states on rotation. The Working Groups, supported by expert groups, deal with technical work, and provide input to the Strategy Group. The Strategy Group subsequently prepares decisions for discussion in the Plenary Assembly, the Coordination Committee of Rhine, and for the Conference of Ministers. The Strategy Group can be seen as the engine of the ICPR. Its delegates are civil servants with senior positions within the Ministries of Environment and Water and other related ministries in the Rhine basin countries. This group consists of a delegation of two to three people from each country, mostly appointed by Ministries of Environment, Water, and/or Foreign Affairs. In this chapter, we focus specifically on the Strategy Group and Secretariat of the ICPR.

Men were in majority in the Strategy Group, Plenary Assembly, and the working groups, but those who have been involved for more than two decades with the ICPR shared in the interviews that a change could be observed around

2005. Slowly, more women were included in the delegations, starting with the Netherlands, after which Germany, then France, and then Luxembourg followed. Switzerland remains the least gender-balanced delegation.

We continue our analysis by concentrating on Acker's (1992, 2012) four substructures to better understand how gender plays a role in the Strategy Group of the ICPR. We first discuss organising processes, after which we continue with organisation culture, interactions on the job, and gendered identities.

Organising Processes

Organising processes are practical activities that make up an organisation, including job descriptions, wages, hierarchies, what the workplace looks like, as well as norms and rules of how to behave at work (Acker 1992). Here we focus on the organising processes in the organisations that mandate people to the Strategy Group of the ICPR as these processes define who is involved in negotiations. Thereafter, we briefly discuss the process of selection of the Executive Secretary.

In the past, delegations were composed of a Head of Delegation and three or four experts (Disco & Heezik 2014; Ruchay 1995). Until the 1970s, the Heads of Delegation, delegates, and experts were all high-level civil servants (Disco & Heezik 2014). Presently, the delegations of the member states are made up of the delegates appointed to work in different organs in the ICPR, such as the Strategy Group or the different Working Groups. There is no limit to the number of people representing a member country, but each country has only one vote regardless of the number of delegates. Based on the interviews, we see that for those who are delegated to the Strategy Group, the organising processes within their home institution are of most influence (2f, interview, 24 January 2020; 9F, interview, 19 December 2019).

It is important to note that ICPR has no full-time delegates, as the delegates interviewed were only utilising 30 per cent of their time for the ICPR. Except for the Secretariat, the delegates in all the groups work in their respective national organisations. The work at the ICPR was therefore a contributing factor, but not a main factor, in the selection of the delegates. Except for one person who worked as Scientific Assistant for the Secretariat, all other interviewees were above 50 years of age, all were white Europeans with a university education. This is already a sign that there is a limitation in diversity, either in selection processes or of people available to do the job of negotiating on behalf of their country in the ICPR's Strategy Group. In the past, there was even less diversity with only male representatives in the ICPR bodies. This has changed in the past 20 years, as remembered by an interviewee:

> *I think the change came in, in Germany in 2005, with the female head of delegation, and at the same time in the Netherlands, and also France around that time.*
>
> (8f, interview, 13 December 2019)

Two interviewees who were interviewed at the same time reflect on the participation of men and women in the ICPR (6m and 7m, interview, 12 December 2019):

7m: "It was not slowly, it was quite quick. It's an accelerating process. Women are now at every level, every stage, interested in all sciences. They are coming up in research, development. I think there's no special place where you meet only men".
6m: "But I guess there are certain issues, like for example I'm working on floods, and there historically, but also still now, there are a bit more men, and in dikes too".
7m: "And chemicals, also men".
6m: "But like the biology group has more women. But it's changing".
7m: "We also have traditional roles, traditional groups".

Especially related to the composition of the Working Groups, interviewees indicate that the traditional roles of men in engineering and women in more integrated studies, such as biology, are clearly visible. The composition of the delegations in the Strategy Group is also affected by the fact that the job requirements in the water sector in general, and the ICPR specifically, have become more diverse. Interviewees mentioned that an engineering diploma is not an entry requirement for a job in the water sector in the Rhine basin countries anymore, as also expressed in the following quote:

> *Before it was building dams, building sluices, building wastewater treatment plants and everybody needed engineers, and they were men. And then ecology became more important, and the persons who had the expertise were women. So it was that all the countries had to employ biologists and the best biologists on the market were women.*
>
> (5m, interview, 23 January 2020)

This experience is supported by research, for instance by the European Commission (2019), that shows how some disciplines, such as environmental studies or law, are more popular with women than men in Western Europe. The changing job requirements consequently have a positive effect on the number of women in both the delegations, as well as in the Secretariat of the ICPR.

Another organising process that is strongly related to the work of the delegates is the regulations of the home institution – for how long a person can remain active in the same position and function. These rules differ per country, as illustrated below, and influence who is chosen as representative, in turn affecting the work done by the ICPR. In countries with little or no rotation of roles, delegates remain in the ICPR for a longer period and those who remain in the ICPR longer may also have more conservative views on how women and men should behave. The following two quotes exemplify this

> *The Dutch I think were the first; it was normal in The Netherlands, much more normal than in other countries. I think there are more changes in the staff, and they*

> *change their posts often. And this is also the case in France, but not in Germany, Luxembourg, and Switzerland. And then it was more senior experts [who] are allowed to go to the international meetings.*
>
> (7m, interview, 12 December 2019)

> *I have to change jobs every seven years. So if my behaviour is not well, the next job will be down. It's very easy. [If a person] stays until the pension, then that makes the country not very flexible. That's why old behaviours can stay.*
>
> (1f, interview, 10 January 2020)

Gender quotas are also of influence, especially according to the Dutch and German interviewees. One female interviewee reflects:

> *Maybe I'm very lucky […] because sometimes there was this that they said, we need a female now. And then I was around.*
>
> (1f, interview, 10 January 2020)

A male interviewee shares that a gender quota has had influence on his career as well:

> *Being a man restricted me two times getting a job. But this was not due to soft skills but due to regulations which said [that] if there are two equal qualifications, the woman had to be taken.*
>
> (5m, interview, 23 January 2020)

A final example of an organising process in the ICPR is the selection of the Executive Secretary. As shown in Figure 9.1, the ICPR's Strategy Group is supported by the Secretariat and chaired by the Executive Secretary. The Executive Secretary has a central role in the ICPR, such as preparing meetings and agendas, as well as engaging with the different delegations to prepare joint decisions. In the past it was agreed that the Executive Secretary was not proposed, but directly appointed by the Netherlands' delegation as a downstream country (8F, interview, 13 December 2019; 11m, interview, 19 May 2020). This resulted in Executive Secretaries being selected from a pool of Dutch water experts, that were, and are, predominantly male, and where most were educated as engineers. Currently this rule is no longer used, and the Dutch delegation can only propose the Executive Secretary and cannot appoint them directly – now included in ICPR's Rules of Procedure (ICPR 2018 Art.10, Para. 6). After these rules changed, the next Executive Secretary was a woman, appointed in 2015.

Organisation Culture

The next substructure we discuss is organisation culture, which refers to beliefs about gender difference, equality, and inequality within an organisation, and

that are embedded in societal and cultural beliefs that differ per country, region, and social group (Acker 1992). The interviewees have made references to norms and culture with regard to the Ministry or organisation at which they work, as well as the culture within the ICPR. There are several telling references on expectations of the employees and what is needed to advance in an organisation, and how this impacts men and women differently. We discuss clashing expectations between professional and home life and the expected behaviours of self-promotion. Additionally, we explore beliefs about what constitutes a good team, as examples of chances for advancement for men and women can be different, or more equal, based on beliefs about gender differences.

Expectations of how to behave as a professional may clash with expectations of how to behave at home. The female interviewees with children indicate that when their children were young, they were the ones who were expected to take a more active role in caring for them. The male interviewees did not mention that such a dynamic had an influence on their careers. One female interviewee shares how she dealt with this:

> *So I worked four days and then I tried to do it so that people didn't notice. […] So I always tried to be, let's say, definitely reachable. So even if it was my day off, if the phone went, I took it. Because if you are known as the person who's never there, then the promotions won't be for you.*
>
> (1f, 1nterview, 10 January 2020)

Being asked about the number of men and women in high-level positions, three interviewees indicate that a main reason women are not in high-level positions is that there is a culture of women not standing up for themselves, while men are found to be more confident in self-promotion (4m, interview, 17 January 2020; 8f, interview, 13 December 2019; 9f, interview, 19 December 2019). An example:

> *We are perhaps too humble often, it's sort of the case for [many] applicants. But men think I could do it, I could do it. And we are more perhaps [like]: the other is better than me and so on.*
>
> (9f, interview, 19 December 2019)

A commonality in all the interviews was that the interviewees mentioned that they had not thought about gender consciously before, and that they did not experience it as being of influence on their work. Additionally, several interviewees stated that they do not see intrinsic differences between men and women delegates, especially in terms of work capacity. But as the interviews progressed and more questions probed into gendered ideas and behaviours, it became clear that gender does indeed have an influence and those ideas about what it entails to be a man or woman were different amongst the interviewees. For instance, a statement on equality and sameness of men and women was to

be followed up by a list of how a man behaved in a feminine way, or a woman in a very masculine way, which emphasises differences.

Through these opposing behaviours the interviewees unconsciously conceded that there are differences between men and women which have unique outcomes in the ICPR and they shared their generalised ideas of masculine and feminine behaviours, beyond what they thought is socially acceptable. Another example is that in all interviews with women, the idea that there are no intrinsic differences between men and women was later contradicted, for instance through statements such as women are better negotiators than men as they are better listeners and more prone to look for opportunities for cooperation instead of having an adversarial approach that they perceive men to have. This relates strongly with gendered identities, which we discuss later on, again emphasising how the different substructures are interrelated and enforce each other.

The reflections on organisation culture show how subconscious biases exist that clearly influence the career prospects of -especially- women due to ideas of how men and women, as well as water professionals and diplomats should behave. For instance, several interviewees shared their personal opinion that women are less often selected for a position as they are generally less prone to self-promotion than their male counterparts. Within institutions these unconscious biases can be surpassed through quotas that help to counter the effects of these biases in hiring processes. These are in effect for those working within the Secretariat of the ICPR due to German labour law.

Interactions on the Job

Interactions on the job entail exchanges between individuals that can reinforce or create differences between men and women in the work environment (Acker 1992). With regard to this substructure, we have chosen to focus mainly on negotiations within the ICPR, as the interviewees have mainly reflected on interactions between men and women in this context.

As indicated before, the ICPR is proud of a long history of cooperation, and interviewees who have been part of the Strategy Group for over ten years share that they experience an atmosphere of cooperation (7m, interview, 12 December 2019; 8f, interview, 13 December 2019; 9f, interview, 19 December 2019). However, in the past, negotiation strategies were experienced as much more aggressive:

> *It's an easier atmosphere I think, but it's also the growing trust in the commission and it's more normal to work with the neighbours and other countries.*
>
> (8f, interview, 13 December 2019)

> *The focus of the ICPR is slowly changing. In the past, we had topics which were more of a conflict of sorts. For example, with salt from France or pollutants coming from the Swiss chemical industry. The topics could be a reason why people were knocking each other.*
>
> (7m, interview, 12 December 2019)

Thus, issues discussed in the Rhine basin are not as contested and securitised now as they were in the early stages of the ICPR. The history of cooperation has contributed to a level of trust in constructive outcomes as most members believe that, although some topics may be contentious and take time to be resolved, a resolution will be found over time (7m, interview, 12 December 2019; 8f, interview, 13 December 2019; 9f, interview, 19 December 2019). This provides the possibility for individuals to develop different negotiation styles: *"So there are discussions where I would not say people get a bit more rude, but very open"* (9f, interview, 19 December 2019)

Interestingly, those who indicate that the atmosphere is friendly and open have been part of the ICPR community for over ten years. Newcomers sometimes experience a different atmosphere in which they have the feeling they must earn their position to be taken seriously. For those delegations that change often, it is also more challenging to become part of this seemingly close-knit group. This also may be an advantage in negotiations, especially at times where the mandate of the home ministry goes against the wishes of the majority in the ICPR; from a more distanced position it may be easier to be firm. Those who mention they experienced challenges as newcomers to the ICPR were all women.

With regard to interaction on the job, it is interesting to note repeated references to so-called animal behaviour when it comes to describing the negotiation style of men, especially in the past.

> *In the past, there would be explosive people. People were shouting in conferences. Not aggressively, but just to focus or emphasise interest. It is what men in the past used, like a gorilla.*
>
> (7m, interview, 12 December 2019)

Currently, this aggressive behaviour is suggested to be rare, but still experienced as troubling:

> *This approach is really vanishing, you know. It's also a generation issue, you know younger men they do not have this behaviour. It's the older elephants, you know, which are dying out. Luckily? Yeah.*
>
> (9f, interview, 19 December 2019)

Several interviewees indicate that they believe that the presence of women helps to reduce aggressiveness in negotiations:

> *I think the presence of women helps to not let things escalate you know, which of course the risk is not so high that things are escalating, but you never know. And I think the presence of women helps that things are not getting too rude or too open.*
>
> (9f, interview, 19 December 2019)

Related to the interaction between men and women it is notable how all interviewees stress that gender balance is important for each delegation, and how

they take this into account when constituting a team (1f, interview, 10 January 2020; 2f, interview, 24 January 2020; 8f, interview, 13 December 2019; 9f, interview, 19 December 2019; 10m, interview, 29 April 2020; 11m, interview, 19 May 2020). This is also supported by policies and quotas in different basin countries, as is discussed under the organising processes section. It shows how these different structures are closely interrelated.

In interactions on the job, there are notable differences between men and women in terms of experiencing interactions on the job. For instance, behaviour that is seen as aggressive and unacceptable by three female interviewees (1f, interview, 10 January 2020; 2f, interview, 24 January 2020; 8f, interview, 13 December 2019), is commended by a male interviewee who indicates that this behaviour is something that is part of the job: "*You have to play that role. You have to earn it*" (10m, interview, 29 April 2020)

Those who indicated experiencing differences between women and men which in turn impacted their behaviour were female interviewees, while most of the male interviewees did not experience any differences. This also results in different behaviour of men and women, also influencing their interactions:

> *You always have to choose 50–50, and you find women are the best. They are, not only in soft skills but in hard skills as well. Because maybe some of the male candidates rely on their authority of being male and they are not well prepared for these talks you ask them, what do you think? And then they tell, I really don't know what I should say? And women are well prepared.*
>
> (4m, interview, 17 January 2020)

Gendered Identities

Gendered identities are the ideas of individual/s about what it means to be a man or a woman. The interactions are influenced by the organisational culture and by individual characteristics, and they are socially constructed and culturally variable (Acker 1992). All interviewees shared that they try to facilitate a mix between men and women in their team, and state that they do not see general differences in capacities between people based on their gender. They say that in teams they aim for a balance and that individual personality matters the most, beyond being a man or a woman.

> *But trust, knowing each other, knowing why you react the way you react. That is much more important than – at least here in the Western European situation – whether that is brought forward by a man or a woman.*
>
> (10m, interview, 29 April 2020)

> *It doesn't really matter whether in the discussions itself whether you're a man or woman, no. It really depends on if you have the best background and the best arguments.*
>
> (8f, interview, 13 December 2019)

Female interviewees were especially open to sharing their perception on differences in behaviour between men and women when negotiation styles were discussed, as presented in the previous section. In other instances, both female and male interviewees refer only unconsciously to differing expectations for men and women, also resulting in contradicting statements during the interviews. An example of how subtle these expectations are is shared in the quote below.

> *But for example, I think another woman might have left the table when the [nationality] guy did what he did […] But because I'm me, and I'm quite strong, the opposite happens. I think: "I'll never let you win". That's what I think.*
>
> (1f, interview, 10 January 2020)

By analysing herself as a strong person, the interviewee also shares that she estimates that other female colleagues may not be able to withstand aggressive negotiating behaviour, expressing an underlying gendered idea generalising women to be weak; also portraying oneself as strong, differentiating from other women.

Another issue is that each of the female interviewees indicated they had the feeling that they had to work harder than the men to prove themselves as being capable of their job.

> *"I think you have to do, to work harder than men".*
>
> (8f, interview, 13 December 2019)

This illustrates how water diplomacy is still considered a masculine world, where for those who benefit most from the status quo it is difficult to discern power imbalances, as well as to recognise what it means to have less power.

Also, female interviewees expressed that they had to adapt their behaviours while working in the ICPR. One of the interviewees took an acting class to learn masculine traits to help her be taken seriously by her male colleagues:

> *If you want to negotiate in a male fashion, for example, you start to sit like this (casually with wide legs). You let the other one talk, you lower your voice, and you don't start to look for a compromise. You just look the other way. That's what I learned in acting class, because I thought if I want to survive in this world, I have to learn another way of acting? I don't like that. But I can use it.*
>
> (1f, interview, 10 January 2020)

This adaptation becomes necessary to meet gendered expectations of a woman as well as a diplomat. It can be an inconvenience and hinder the efficiency of the work of those who must adjust, but adaptation can also be used as a strategy to effectively navigate a gendered world, as shown above.

Conclusion

"When women enter politics, particularly in areas of foreign policy, they enter an already constructed masculine world where role expectations are defined in terms

of adherence to preferred masculine attributes such as rationality, autonomy and power" (Tickner 2006, p. 39). This quote from Tickner represents the findings of this research well. Through the interviews with members of ICPR, it becomes clear that, even though women are in a majority in the Strategy Group, there are still different expectations from men and women that influence their professional lives. The male interviewees indicate that they do not experience any differences between their male and female colleagues, while women were able to pinpoint clear differences in their male colleagues' behaviours and interactions with them.

Although some of these experiences, especially the negative ones, are labelled as "a thing of the past" (8f, interview, 13 December 2019), the women in ICPR are still impacted by their legacy. This analysis shows that even in an RBO where women are equally represented, gender still plays a role in the complex power play between countries and individuals. Beyond an insight into how the ideas about how women and men should behave influence transboundary water governance in the Rhine basin, feminist theory of organisations, as operationalised through the four substructures identified by Acker (2012), provides useful guidance in researching how norms, values, national policies, and cultures within organisations affect interactions over water in an international platform.

Related to the substructure of organising processes, it is clear how important the concrete practical activities of the ministries that appoint the delegates are. These include the composition of the delegations influenced by quotas and durations of appointments, the changing job requirements in the water sector, and ideas about what a water professional needs to know. These practical activities differ between countries and change at different rates. The substructure of organisation culture refers to beliefs about gender differences, equality, and inequalities. It became apparent from the interviews that not only expectations related to a job, but also gendered expectations regarding private life, can be contradictory. Interactions on the job, the third substructure discussed, relate to interactions between people at work. In relation to work on the ICPR, interactions during negotiations were highlighted, in which especially women referred to animal behaviour when it comes to describing the negotiation styles of men. Especially in the past, a confrontational negotiation style was more accepted. Interestingly, the presence of women was identified as a factor that made this negotiation style less acceptable. The last substructure relates to gendered identities, which relate to the ideas of an individual about what it means to be a man or a woman. Although these ideas only became distinguishable through unconscious remarks of interviewees about differing expectations for men and women, it is clear that gendered identities do shape the activities of those who are active in the Strategy Group of the ICPR. For instance, there are strong ideas about the value of mixed delegations in terms of gender.

Interviewees mentioned several times that they had not thought about gender within the context of the ICPR, but that they found it valuable to reflect on and share their everyday practices. Through a discussion on these everyday dynamics, it was possible to connect in the interviews to the deeper

reasoning, beliefs, and assumptions of the interviewees about what being a woman or a man entails or should entail. However, this requires a high level of reflexivity of both the interviewee and interviewer that is crucial for this type of interview-based research. We saw contradictions in the narratives of the interviews between socially desired answers given by the interviews, and ingrained ideas on how a man and woman should behave that were more unconsciously mentioned, and sometimes were the opposite of the socially desired answers. It reminded us of how challenging it is to analyse and study norms, values, and ideas about how the world, as well as norms and values, guide practices. To exemplify, we observed female interviewees who provided a generic testimonial that they do not see any differences between men and women, but then contradicted themselves with real life experience where their gender has influenced their experiences on the job; for instance, by juggling expectations of their tasks in their household and tasks on the job, or expressed through ideas that women are better listeners and negotiators, while also having to work harder than men to prove themselves worthy of the job.

This paints a picture of women being in two negotiations at the same time; first, representing their country and country's interests as a water professional and a delegate, and second, attempting to be heard and accepted irrespective of their gender. Some of the female interviewees indicated that this feels unfair – this tension between the expectations related to being a water professional working in a transboundary setting, as well as expectations related to being a woman. On the other hand, the male interviewees represented in the Strategy Group expressed they never experienced differences between men and women. Being part of the status quo makes it difficult to see how this situation affects those who are different from the norm. The contradictions that arise from the personal experiences as well as organisational structures provide opportunities for reflection, and possible avenues for more gender equality. Already, an established idea is that a delegation should be gender balanced, but our research also shows that it requires effort to truly provide a level playing field.

As authors, our different backgrounds have proven valuable in data collection and interpretation. One author grew up in the Netherlands and is familiar with the case study analysed in this chapter. The other author grew up in India and contributed an outsider's perspective. During the development of interview questions, the interviews, and the analysis, our different gendered experiences in personal and professional life were helpful in identifying and questioning the status quos; what was experienced as usual and normal by one was received as surprising or different, or even strange by the other. This collaboration greatly enriched our understanding of the case. On the other hand, it may be that female interviewees felt more at ease in sharing their experiences with a female interviewee than the men did, but it remains interesting and could also be a topic for further research.

This research provides an entry point in understanding the intersection of ideas of gender, water organisation, and diplomacy. Also, it provides a

noteworthy case study from Western countries, where the geographical, social, cultural, and even individual customs and norms influence those working in an RBO. We hope for further research on comparative case studies, as well as those with different geographical, social, and cultural contexts, and see value in an intersectional approach that brings up questions on differences that stem from diverse gender and sexual identities as well as from race, class, and age in international water organisations.

Note

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10 The Role of Gender in the Transboundary Water Governance of the Nile Basin

Alexandra Said

Introduction[1]

The Nile river is the world's longest river at 6,695 km long, and with a drainage area of 3.2 million km^2 it covers almost 10 per cent of the African continent (Nile Basin Initiative 2016). The river has several tributaries, the White Nile originating in Burundi and Rwanda, and the Blue Nile originating in Ethiopia are the main tributaries. The White Nile and the Blue Nile meet in Khartoum, Sudan where it then flows to Egypt. The Nile basin connects the 11 states of Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Water flows across man-made borders, which calls for the establishment of a basin-wide organisation. The first, and currently only, multilateral governance mechanism for transboundary water management in the Nile basin is the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) (Salman 2018). NBI is considered an interim intergovernmental organisation. When it was launched, NBI had a membership of 10 out of the 11 basin states, namely Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Currently, Eritrea participates in the NBI as an observer. The NBI institution consists of three centres, the Nile Secretariat (Nile-SEC), the Technical Advisory Committee (Nile-TAC), and the Nile Council of Ministers (Nile-COM) which is the highest decision-making body on transboundary water management of the Nile basin. Nile-COM consists of ministers responsible for water in each of the basin states. Nile-COM is advised and supported by Nile-TAC in their decision making. Each member state has two representatives for Nile-TAC, meaning that there are 20 members in total (Nile Basin Initiative n.d.). This study focuses on NILE-TAC and the decision-making processes within it, as the members of the Nile-TAC, being technical experts, inform and influence the decisions of Nile-COM.

At the decision-making table of Nile-TAC, there are few women present. This study aims to get a better understanding of why there are few women at the high-level positions, how the experts experience gender as a factor in the transboundary water management of the Nile river, and finally, which factors enable women to reach decision-making positions in the transboundary water management of the Nile river.

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Why Gender Is Important for Transboundary Water Governance

Women play a critical role in water diplomacy, water governance, and the management of shared water resources. Yet, the discussion and focus of research or development projects is often on the household or community level and rarely on regional or international level. The discourse on the intersections of gender and water governance has mainly consisted of highlighting women's roles as water providers at the local level for their households and communities in the last few decades. This narrative has often depicted women as victims of their gendered responsibilities (von Lossow 2015). Although the role of women in transboundary water governance is gaining more attention by academic researchers and practitioners in recent years, there are still gaps in academia that focus on these intersections. In the following section I will reflect on relevant research previously conducted on the theme.

Bazili and Earle's study in 2013 was one of the first which examined the role of women in transboundary water management. In this study, the authors argued that women's inclusion at the local and national levels had made some progress, but this progress was very limited. They found that if the international agreements did not consider gender as a factor, this would also be seen in the national and subnational governance, which in turn would affect the local level governance (Bazili & Earle 2013).

Von Lossow (2015) examined the lack of women's participation in decision making at the international level and concluded that although there exists some gender sensitivity in water management, the discussion is framed in the context of women and children's vulnerabilities as water providers for their communities and households, not as decision makers. Von Lossow (2015) found that NBI is one of the few cases where gender is considered at all, where the NBI Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy is highlighting gender as key for institutionalised cooperation and basin-wide management, yet the policy fails to include the approach or tactic needed to implement the strategy, hence the policy lacks implementation. Further, the author concluded that the NBI Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy was most likely due to Western donor-driven commitments, which demonstrates that the goals of the donor community could be a way to bring gender to international water politics, though policymakers should be careful to avoid including gender as just a box to tick (von Lossow 2015).

De Silva et al. (2018) also examined gender and transboundary water management, and found that the literature mainly consists of two themes: either the focus was on women's health in relation to water access and water quality, or the role of women as water users (de Silva et al. 2018). The authors were unable to find any studies or reviews examining the role of women as agents of change or as decision makers in the transboundary water management field, except a few in "focusing on specific developing countries and women as direct water users" (ibid., p. 212).

In the study published by Carmi et al. (2019), the current challenges that women face in attaining high-level positions in water diplomacy in Jordan, Lebanon, and the State of Palestine were examined. The factors which the interviewees emphasised as key issues were motherhood, lack of opportunity, lack of support from peers, lack of comprehensive skills (technical, managerial), and lack of confidence or fear. The authors concluded that patriarchal societies and a general negative perception of female decision makers/politicians are two main factors which inhibit women in these states to reach senior decision-making positions in transboundary water management.

This study aims to build upon the aforementioned research, and contribute to increasing the understanding of the role of gender in transboundary water management of the Nile basin, as there have been only a few studies conducted on the intersections of gender and transboundary water management generally, and even less in the Nile basin specifically. This chapter will identify the challenges that women face in attaining decision-making positions in the transboundary water management of the Nile basin, to add knowledge to the existing gap on gender and transboundary water management. Further, this chapter will explore how gendered perceptions, as well as how societal expectations on the role of women and men, affect the inclusion of women in high-level decision-making roles in transboundary water management of the Nile basin to highlight the voices of the women in a male-dominated field. Finally, it will identify some factors that the female interviewees stated as enabling elements in their career development to attain high-level decision-making positions, which could be of guidance for relevant decision makers for gender mainstreaming and inclusive decision making.

Methods

The data collection method for this study was semi-structured in-depth interviews. The choice of a semi-structured interview design was chosen as this is the preferred data collection method when the researcher's objective is to understand the world from the point of view of the interviewees, and to give the interviewees the opportunity to "freely present their life situations in their own words" (Kvale 2006, p.481). As this is a qualitative study, the semi-structured interview method was chosen, because structured interviews are better suited for quantitative studies (Bryman 2012).

The choice of interviewees was limited to professionals with relevant experience in the negotiations of transboundary water management in the Nile basin. The interviewees are nine professionals working directly with or who are representatives of Nile-TAC. One-third of the interviewees are male, the remaining two-thirds are female. One-third of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, while the remaining took place over the phone. The nationality of the interviewees is not included, as indicating their nationalities would jeopardise the anonymity of the interviewees. The sex of the interviewees is marked by M for male, or F for female. The analysis is exclusively based on the interviews of this study.

Decision Making in the Nile Basin

The Nile river is home to approximately 257 million people, which is more than half of the entire population of the 11 basin states (Nile Basin Initiative 2016). Covering such a vast area, the basin area includes various climatic areas, although the area mainly consists of arid and semi-arid zones. Considering the many states that share the river, a rapidly growing population, and urbanisation, combined with the added uncertainties of river flow due to climate change, the governance of the Nile basin has proven to be difficult and multifaceted due to a complex geopolitical history (Cascão & Nicol 2016). The first international technical cooperation in the Nile basin started in 1967; this project was called the Hydro Meteorological Surveys Project of the Upper Nile (Equatorial Lakes) Catchments (HYDROMET), and lasted until 1992. Following HYDROMET, from 1993 to 1999 was the Technical Cooperation Committee for the Promotion of the Development and Environmental Protection of the Nile. Lastly, in 1999 the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) was initiated with the support of the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, and other donors to promote cooperation and sustainable development across the basin states (World Bank 2019; Salman 2018; Cascão 2012).

An additional objective of NBI was to establish a Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) for all the basin states, which took approximately ten years of continued work. Currently, the CFA has been signed by six basin states (Salman 2018) and, until it has been accepted by all basin states, the NBI is currently the only basin-wide decision-making institution on the Nile river's resources and management. The CFA's objective is to establish a framework to promote integrated management, sustainable development, and harmonious utilisation of the water resources of the basin (Nile Basin Initiative 2019).

Which Factors Affect Women's Opportunities in Reaching High-Level Decision-Making Positions?

Although women are increasingly attaining high-level decision-making positions in several of the Nile basin states (Schwab et al. 2020; Jeffrey 2020), they are still a minority across all states except Rwanda (Schwab et al. 2020). A decade ago, there were only men in Nile-TAC. Interviewees indicated that there are more women at the negotiation table today than a decade ago, as more and more of the basin states have a female and a male representative for the two positions allocated per state. This section will emphasise the key factors of culture, household responsibilities, and gendered work experiences which the majority of interviewees stated as reasons for the lack of women in the transboundary water management of the Nile basin.

Culture

Culture emerged as a causal explanation of why there was a lack of women in senior positions. Although the Nile basin consists of states which vary

considerably in culture, religion, development, and ratings on the gender equality index, interviewees from different countries referred to culture as an explanation as to why there are few women in Nile-TAC. The assumptions here were either that female students do not study technical fields because the culture does not encourage them to opt for such disciplines, or that women did not get advanced degrees due to gendered notions of what is suitable higher education for male or female students. The interviewees maintained that there are very few women who study the technical fields, and because the technical fields have dominated the transboundary water management of the Nile basin, there will be noticeably fewer women in the water management field, and therefore also in the decision-making positions.

> *Even in higher education like in the universities, you would find quite a lot of women in the social science and very few in the engineering. Yeah, so you can see those who would graduate would continue. So, if there [are] only five people who studied engineering, they will only hire five women at the ministry.*
>
> (F1, 11 February 2020)

> *No one encouraged the females to become in higher level or to study more.*
>
> (F3, 27 August 2019)

> *Maybe a little bit of both [culture and biology]. The majority of men are engineers and work with the technical. But this is started already in the school age.*
>
> (M1, 24 March 2020)

Since few women study the technical disciplinary fields which are valued for decision makers in transboundary water management, the interviewees saw it as an explanation as to why there were generally few women in such positions. All interviewees, both male and female, maintained that there are currently more women than men employed at their respective ministries, but that most of these women work in administrative or support role functions.

> *Yes. Because every woman in how do you call it […] in the supporting there are quite a lot of women. So as secretary, assistant, cleaner […]. In a professional level, then that's like ten per cent.*
>
> (F1, 11 February 2020)

> *Usually, when the woman is there, she does mostly the administrative.*
>
> (M2, 23 April 2020)

Thus, there is a general perception that culture has an impact on women not studying the right field, or not getting the right qualifications to become decision makers in transboundary water management, and thus, women would automatically be confined to administrative or support role functions.

Household Responsibilities

Women's role at the household or family level and their obligations to their families as caretakers were given by several interviewees as key factors for the lack of women in high-level decision making at the transboundary water management level. Both female and male interviewees explained that because women have additional family duties, especially in comparison to their male counterparts, they are not always able to participate in field work, duty trips, or negotiations:

> *I can tell you some of the negotiations it can go up to 3am, you're a married woman, you have a responsibility […] Because they have other roles […]. Okay, so women have more responsibilities which makes it hard for them to maybe do field excursions or like to travel for work or stuff like that.*
>
> (M2, 23 April 2020)

> *So you limit yourself and think this is not a very good job for me to take if I have to protect my marriage and my children.*
>
> (F4, 26 August 2019)

From one male interviewee, the family duties of women would be a factor in the hiring process, with a preference for hiring a male rather than a female applicant for the job:

> *I may also be biased on that but I think if I'm in that, I might appoint a man. Maybe I don't have a good reason for that, […] I think so often ladies have more excuses than men at work.*
>
> (M1, 24 March 2020)

This highlights that the responsibilities of women in terms of household duties are likely to reduce their opportunities to participate in high-level decision making. Whether these responsibilities are a reality or a perception, it is leading to a viewpoint of women not being able to do the work of high-level decision making. It shows that the societal expectations of women's responsibilities in the household could in fact be a hindrance to their career advancement. This would imply that to substantially increase the number of women at the higher levels of decision making, one must also address the gendered roles of men and women within households. Otherwise, career advancement becomes something only for those who have support from their partners and/or the financial means to hire domestic help.

Gendered Work Experiences

The female interviewees gave clear examples of how gender was a factor in both their professional and personal lives. Gendered experiences are understood

as something that they experienced due to being a woman working in a male-dominated field. Examples include being mistaken for administrative staff or not having needs taken into consideration by interviewees F1, F2, and F4. This was explained by the interviewees as something inherent in the organisational culture of their respective ministries, and in the culture of the country.

> *I actually got a little bit of scrutiny with my colleagues saying that "How did you manage to get there?" like as in the negotiating team [due to being female].*
>
> (F1, 11 February 2020)

> *Men, they don't trust us. Yeah, sometimes you go to attend the meeting. And then they're still, you know, oh you are administrating […] Taking notes and what, they don't consider that you're part of that meeting.*
>
> (F2, 22 January 2020)

Male interviewees did not mention any gendered experiences. This could mean that for the male interviewees, they haven't considered their gender role as a defining factor in their lives. Whether this is due to their own lack of awareness or the societal privileges that enable men's career advancement, it shows a clear difference in how the female and male interviewees perceived gendered work challenges.

The conclusion one can draw from the three themes discussed above is that culture, household responsibilities, and gendered work experiences all affect the opportunities available to women to attain high-level decision-making positions in transboundary water management.

Would the Inclusion of More Women Influence Decision Making?

In this section I will discuss the patterns which emerged when I asked the interviewees if they observed that the inclusion of women at the negotiating table had any effect on the atmosphere or outcomes of discussions. This is to identify whether the interviewees experienced a difference and if it supports the study's question of women's contribution leading to positive outcomes of multilateral negotiations.

Interactions between Men and Women

All interviewees highlighted that the interactions between the sexes – so, between men and women – are different from those within the sexes – so, between men or between women. The overarching premise emerging was that men tend to act differently when a woman is in the room, but also that women interact differently with each other compared to their interactions with men.

Men and women are perceived by the interviewees as being fundamentally different, and therefore they believe communication is more difficult between the sexes; here, men are understood as being harsher towards each other than towards the women present in the room.

> *You'll find, you know, people acting differently when there is a woman, they wouldn't be their true selves. They would respect people, they will try to behave in a certain way that wouldn't disappoint a woman. And there are people who would be dismissive, but in general, I would say they will try to behave.*
>
> (F6, 18 March 2020)

> *I could observe that the men were so harsh. But whenever I interjected, there was some level of respect and withdrawal.*
>
> (F4, 26 August 2019)

> *If there is a conflict in the office between men and then if a woman steps in they are more careful to have a physical fight because they do not want to fight a woman.*
>
> (M2, 23 April 2020)

Thus, the interviewees state that having women at the decision-making table would mean that the male colleagues would be less inclined to be harsh or aggressive towards each other. All male and female interviewees indicated a perception of women's participation in meetings and negotiations as having a positive effect on the atmosphere of the meetings.

Female and Male Leadership

Although the interviewees stated national culture and organisational culture as reasons why there was a lack of women in the transboundary water management field, interestingly, they also claimed biological reasons for the difference in men and women's leadership styles. The assumptions were the general one of female behaviour, such as women being more patient, compromising, and softer.

> *I think it's our nature. Nature has given us to be how we call it […] well, like maternal, like we have maternal instincts in a sense, we wouldn't want anything to be in a bad position right. We want to compromise who wants to strategise, and we want everyone to be happy.*
>
> (F1, 11 February 2020)

> *Firstly it is an inborn character of a woman. No, I'm not sure if I'm right. But for me another thing that it is an inborn thing. Sometimes we can even consider other things. But for men, you know, they don't consider that much.*
>
> (F2, 22 January 2020)

In terms of the difference in leadership style between men and women, the female interviewees indicated that in their experiences, men would focus on one thing only while women could consider several things at once, and that women would have a higher social interaction than men and therefore be better negotiators.

> *The woman is more related with social, even for social interaction. Even the life system and the social interaction of women and men is completely different.*
>
> (F3, 27 August 2019)

> *If they [men] think about some issue, they can only think about that issue. The women think about many issues.*
>
> (F5, 23 April 2020)

> *I would say women have a lot to offer compared to men. Because we are not irrational people, we are very rational.*
>
> (F1, 11 February 2020)

> *They [women] are more flexible. Yes. More compromising.*
>
> (F2, 22 January 2020)

The reason for women having more social interaction and a better sense of negotiating was illustrated by one interviewee as due to the fact that women have to negotiate every day of their lives, whereas men stand their ground and refuse to budge.

> *Women are very good in negotiation. I think we negotiate every day of our lives, men don't talk so much like women do, so we experience and get exposed to a number of things that you must make decisions or good decisions.*
>
> (F4, 26 August 2019)

Both female and male interviewees had assumptions about male and female behaviour and characteristics. Women were described as more rational due to their maternal or inborn nature; in terms of how this could affect negotiations at the transboundary level, the assumptions were that women would be more willing to listen to the other side, and that women would be more understanding. Although the female interviewees stated that men are stubborn and not willing to compromise, only one of the male interviewees made such statements, the other two maintained that there wouldn't be any difference if there were more women at the negotiation table.

How Do We Ensure Space and Opportunities for Inclusion of Women at the Decision-Making Table?

In this section, I will discuss the key factors which the interviewees specified as contributing factors to their careers, as well as the actions needed to increase

the number of women in the higher levels of decision making in transboundary water management of the Nile basin. It is important to highlight these enabling factors as they could provide guidance for relevant stakeholders who aim to increase the number of women in high-level decision making.

Mentorship

When asking the female interviewees what helped them in their career advancement in a male-dominated field, they all gave explicit examples of mentors, particularly male mentors.

> *I think in professional, my current boss has always been my mentor […] like he used to give advice whenever we need. He used to nudge us to do certain things and has always been positive, things like that.*
>
> (F5, 23 April 2020)

> *I felt that he thought this woman needs to have more responsibility. So, that's what I felt like.*
>
> (F1, 11 February 2020)

> *At the beginning, we had difficulties, but eventually he discovered my potential. And we became friends and we were working very well in supporting, so and also participation, you know, articulating your message in meetings and putting your view across without reservation and really working to know that you are there because you deserve it.*
>
> (F2, 22 January 2020)

> *My boss was giving me new tasks and assignments which helped the career development.*
>
> (F6, 18 March 2020)

The importance of a male mentor was highlighted by the women as a key factor in their career advancement, in particular having a male director/supervisor who encouraged them to take on new tasks and additional responsibilities. As most directors/supervisors are men in the field of transboundary water management in the Nile basin, the conclusion one can draw is that it is equally essential to train male colleagues on gender mainstreaming and female empowerment. This is also highlighted in the following section on awareness-raising. As there was no mention of female mentors, the conclusion one can draw is that there simply weren't any female mentors in this male-dominated field to inspire or support the interviewees of this study.

Awareness-raising

According to the interviewees, awareness-raising about gender mainstreaming was important to ensure that women are included in decision-making roles

and promotions. They mentioned times where awareness-raising was needed to ensure that those with staff responsibilities understood the importance of including women in high-level decision making.

> *Yeah. So what I think we need to give info […] I don't know, what can I say, maybe we need to give more trainings to women whatever chance we have. It also needs to bring more awareness to those decision makers when, when – at any chance we have. Let us just tell them how important women are.*
>
> (F2, 22 January 2020)

> *Not only to women, even to men, of course, making them aware that women can do better.*
>
> (F5, 23 April 2020)

One interviewee stated that the reason women are not included in the decision making at transboundary levels is because no one is attentive to it. She claimed that when it comes to the village level, decision makers are aware of the need to include women because it is women who are responsible for household water supply in many communities.

> *Having men or women in that point I think nobody cares. Nobody gets time to say, do we need, do we need this in an increasing number of men, or ladies in this area. So it was like nobody's seeing that something's not happening because it's not there. So nobody cares. It is different from the water supply in the village. Everybody is concerned that ladies spend much time looking for water.*
>
> (F2, 22 January 2020)

Some interviewees stressed the lack of awareness from directors/supervisors on the importance of enabling female staff members to attain senior positions, indicating that there is a need to train directors and supervisors on gender mainstreaming and female empowerment. Others argued that, in fact, women are not taking up space because they are not aware themselves that they also have an important role to play rather than leaving it up to their male counterparts to take on more responsibilities and climb the career ladder.

> *Still for everybody, but the issue of bringing ladies, I think it's very important, because we have still a long way to go. […]. I don't know whether it's awareness, empowerment, but there's still a lot that we need to do and perhaps they [women] are not aware. They're not aware that they have a role to play, they have completely left it to the men.*
>
> (F4, 26 August 2019)

The conclusion one can draw is that there is a lack of awareness among directors/supervisors when it comes to women's inclusion in transboundary water settings. At the household level, the role of women in water fetching has

been highlighted in numerous reports and studies, and thus has also received attention by policymakers. Because the lack of women at the transboundary water management level is not noted publicly, the decision makers are also not aware that women are not included, and of the importance of including women in decision making at the national and international levels.

Sisterhood

When asking the interviewees if they would hire a man or a woman who had the same merits for a job, the responses differed between the male and female interviewees. In the interviews with the female interviewees it was brought up consistently that they would prefer to hire a woman. One explanation for why the female interviewees would prefer to choose a woman was that they would like to increase the number of women in transboundary water management as it is currently a male-dominated field. I framed this as sisterhood.

> *Not only because of the policy or for another reason, so you would do it because you think she's, like, qualified but also because you want to help her as a woman. So it's both.*
>
> (F6, 18 March 2020)

> *I'm always biased, I would just choose a woman. But, you know, for me, I always see that women are fewer […] so if I get chance, I prefer to give chance to ladies.*
>
> (F2, 22 January 2020)

> *I'm affirmative of women. We are still missing from the table.*
>
> (F4, 26 August 2019)

Contradictory to statements that women are better at negotiating, which emerged earlier in the interviews, the female interviewees didn't highlight that as a factor for preferring to hire a woman. Rather, the factors mentioned were to help another woman because women are judged harsher than men, therefore describing a need to raise other women to reach positions of leadership.

> *So, we need to encourage women to be strong and not give up. You know, sometimes we give up and put ourselves back. If they put you back in to the meeting just learn to make sure that you learn next day they'll need you, they'll forget something, you remind them, you know that the last meeting was like this. So, they are starting seeing your importance. The next time they make sure that you are there, not administrator sitting back, making sure that you're participating.*
>
> (F2, 22 January 2020)

> *So now little bit things are changing […] so we can capacitate and raise different women to become encouraged, different women to become higher position and also to work later with transboundary issues.*
>
> (F3, 27 August 2019)

Although all female interviewees clearly stated that they would prefer to hire a woman, the male interviewees did not share the same view. Two of the male interviewees stated that the sex of the applicant wouldn't matter, and one stated that he would prefer to hire a man because of the household and caretaking duties associated with the female gender role.

Discussion and Conclusion

Although there are more women in water diplomacy and transboundary water management of the Nile basin today than 30 years ago, women are still underrepresented. The vast majority of women working at a Ministry of Water (or equivalent) in the Nile basin hold administrative and secretarial positions, according to the interviewees; thus, the perspectives of women are not included in the decision making across the basin. Although one can argue that men and women are capable of representing each other, these interviews provide ample evidence that diversity and inclusion could lead to more sustainable agreements.

In the first section, I analysed the interviews to identify what factors are mentioned and recognised to affect women's opportunities in reaching high-level decision-making positions. From interviews across five of the Nile basin states, it became apparent that culture affects women's opportunities. Girls are not encouraged to study technical fields and the organisational culture is that women hold positions of support and administration rather than decision making, decreasing the opportunities for women to reach the higher levels of decision making. Another factor that was identified by the interviewees as standing in the way of women's advancement to decision-making positions was the family and household responsibilities placed on women. To include more women in decision-making positions, there must be a societal change on what we consider male and female roles at the household level. Through sharing the burden of household and familial duties including child-rearing, space is opened up for women to take on more responsibilities at work, allowing the possibility that the number of women in decision-making roles could increase.

In the second section I examined the interviews for statements which convey whether or not the inclusion of women would affect decision making in the transboundary water management of the Nile basin. According to the interviewees, the inclusion of more women will influence the decision making. The perception from both male and female interviewees was that women are more rational, cooperative, and willing to listen to the other side. Whether or not this is a reality or a perception is hard to say; however, one significant report from the United Nations on the Women, Peace & Security agenda states that "the most repeated effects of women's involvement in peace processes was pushing for the commencement, resumption, or finalization of negotiations when the momentum had stalled or the talks had faltered" (O'Reilly et al. 2015, p. 41). Thus, including women in the decision making of the transboundary water management of the Nile basin could lead to increased

basin-wide cooperation. This is significant, especially as the negotiations in the eastern Nile region have been stalled for years due to the construction and filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (BBC 2020).

In the final section, I identified the key enabling factors that the female interviewees maintained facilitated their career advancement. The female interviewees highlighted that having a male mentor that supported their career advancement was a key factor. A prerequisite is that male mentors encourage and support their female colleagues by giving them the opportunities to take on more responsibilities and thus build their capacities and work experience. This in turn allows openings for female colleagues to get promotions to senior decision-making roles. Sisterhood was mentioned often by the female interviewees as a way to help more women get these roles. Recent research indicates that networking activities are also crucial to eroding gender disparities and advance women's careers to more senior positions (Uzzi 2019). Enabling networks for women could be a way to increase their chances of reaching decision-making positions.

Awareness-raising was another key enabling factor identified by interviewees for the inclusion of women in decision-making positions. There was consensus by both female and male interviewees on a general lack of awareness by male counterparts and directors/supervisors on the importance of women's inclusion in the higher levels of decision making. This stands in contrast to the study by Carmi et al. (2019) where the women in the study highlighted capacity building as a key factor. None of the interviewees, male or female, indicated that there was a lack of professional competence as a hindrance to women's participation in decision making. Rather, it was gendered norms and expectations that stood in the way for the interviewees in the Nile basin, such as household responsibilities and lack of encouragement for female students to study technical fields. This emphasises the importance of researching across various cultures and regions, as each region will have its own cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors which enable or hinder women's inclusion to decision-making roles.

In the Nile basin, and across the world, gender norms and perceptions still shape societal expectations of women. The interviewees highlighted the factors discussed above as key barriers for women in achieving senior decision-making positions in the transboundary water management of the Nile. Often the focus is on increasing women's capacities and on their shortcomings, for example their lack of technical education, rather than focusing on the structural and systemic barriers that prevent women from reaching and holding positions of power. If societies aim to have meaningful gender equality and parity, perhaps the focus for the future should be on ensuring that men are taking more responsibilities on the household level as well. Additionally, that male colleagues, in particular male directors and supervisors, are trained in gender mainstreaming. Perhaps the solution should not only focus on what women can do, as an additional burden on them, but should also redirect some of the responsibility of including more women on those with decision-making

power. In this case, it is the men in a male-dominated field who need to take more responsibility for advancing women to decision-making positions.

Note

1 The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

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11 Negotiating Water

Lived Experiences of Female Practitioners

Rozemarijn ter Horst, Maria Amakali, Anamika Barua, Nadia Gefoun, Heide Jekel, and Pilar Carolina Villar

Feminist theories have contributed to international relations (IR) by opening the door to discuss how the personal is political and the political personal (Ackerly et al. 2006; Aggestam & Towns 2019; Enloe 2014). However, gender still receives little attention in IR studies (Aggestam & Towns 2019), including those on transboundary water governance (de Silva et al. 2018). In this chapter, we contribute by showing the personal in the political by sharing experiences of women doing transboundary water governance. We share accounts of five female water professionals from Southern and Northern Africa, Europe, South America, and Southeast Asia, who reflect on their education, work history and discipline, interactions with (mainly male) colleagues, and challenges and opportunities related to being a woman working in transboundary waters. It is important to remember that masculinities cannot be understood without understanding femininities (Enloe 2004). As the experiences of women have been underrepresented, these accounts form a contribution to studies on transboundary waters.

The chapter is based on interviews conducted by Rozemarijn ter Horst with Maria Amakali, Anamika Barua, Nadia Gefoun, Heide Jekel, and Pilar Carolina Villar, respectively. To do justice to the experiences of the authors and to provide context to the reader, we chose to give space to each of the authors to elaborate on their experience one by one. Each author's section is made up of an introduction to the speaker and an edited transcription of their interview with ter Horst. The chapter ends with a reflection on the lived experiences, taking existing similarities and differences into consideration.

Maria Amakali: Experiences from Namibia

Introduction to the Contributor

Maria Amakali is Director of Water Resources Management Directorate and Acting Deputy Executive Director of the Department of Water Affairs at the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Land Reform in Namibia. Trained as a mathematician and chemist, she started her career as a surface water hydrologist, carrying out research and investigations regarding the occurrence,

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quality, and sustainable development of water resources in Namibia. She has been working in transboundary water governance since 2004 and was part of the team that reviewed Namibia's water sector to develop national water policies and legislation after the country's independence in 1990. She currently serves as Commissioner and Leader of Namibia's Delegation to the Orange–Senqu River Commission that includes Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa, and contributes as a member to other transboundary river basin commissions of which Namibia is a member.

Edited Transcription of Amakali's Experience

Namibia shares all its perennial rivers with neighbouring countries. As the use of water from these rivers is governed by international protocols and agreements with other riparian states, Namibia is party to six watercourse or river basin agreements. The Department of Water Affairs in the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Land Reform is the host and coordinator of these commissions, and as such we have the staff in the Department assigned to different commissions. The commission is structured so that the country delegations are made up of Commissioners, mostly three, and Technical Task Teams. The Orange–Senqu River Basin Commission (ORASECOM), for instance, has Technical Teams responsible for water resources (surface and groundwater, water quality), legal, finance, and communications. In our river basin commissions, we have started to take an interdisciplinary approach, where we not only have engineers, or "water people", but also people from international relations for protocol issues, from the Attorney General's office for legal issues, and from the environment sectors, to make for integrated water resources management. The financial and planning sectors are not currently represented but will become crucial as we move to developing our shared water jointly.

For years, the water and engineering sector in Namibia has been male dominated and so has been the representation in the delegations to water commissions. As more women are entering the sectors and getting appointed to positions, that representation is changing. Currently, out of the 18 delegates (three per commission), we have seven women. On a political level and in line with the gender policy goal to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women in the socio-economic, cultural, and political development of Namibia, we have adopted "zebra-lists" in parliament, where women and men are alternatingly represented. As such, Namibia's delegation to the transboundary river commissions has more women in comparison to other riparian member countries. There is often only one woman, if at all, in the other delegations. And there are no delegations with only women. When you come to think of it, why not? Especially where women and men have similar expertise and experience?

My involvement in transboundary water governance started at ORASECOM, where I more or less forced myself in because after the water sector review that I had done, this topic became interesting to me. When I

joined, I was the only woman among men, from Namibia or other countries. As I said before, the water sector is an engineering type of sector, where you traditionally have engineers who have been mainly men. I managed to get a position as an ordinary team member in the Technical Task Team, and around 2007 I was next in line to become Head of the Namibia Technical Task Team.

I joined the Department of Water Affairs at the end of 1991 as a hydrologist, after Namibia's independence in 1990, and in my position and division I was the first Black woman. I remember then, when I came out of the office building and stood outside waiting for my lift, I was often asked, as a new recruit, whether I was someone's secretary. But you have to keep in mind that this was just after the independence of Namibia: just coming out of the apartheid system, and in addition to being a woman, Black people also did not have the same opportunities as other races. Therefore, people were not used to a Black professional woman in a white man's world. I was lucky because I also escaped the Bantu education system practised in Namibia and South Africa's apartheid era. I attended a private high school and was allowed to take science courses such as mathematics, physical science, and biology, which were not encouraged much at state-run Black schools. After obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics and Chemistry in the United States, I got a job at the Department of Water Affairs, then went to IHE Delft Institute for Water Education. With this education, I had the right background to step in after independence when water managers were needed.

In the negotiation setting, being a woman can definitely affect the dynamics of negotiations so you need to have some negotiations skills. For instance, if you have a technical point to make and just need some clarification to finalise your point (e.g., on how much water is allocated to the environment), there will be a male engineer who will explain it to you as if to a toddler: how water moves from the dam, through the river to the river mouth. I do not know if this is what they call mansplaining, where issues you know are explained to you and the explanations have nothing to do with your question, thus derailing the question and prolonging the negotiation process. Even if you are not an engineer, as a woman more efforts need to be put in reading the reports and understanding the issues being negotiated. The different delegations have people with different disciplinary backgrounds, and many of us know the river system very well. We also invest in the teams' capacity. It is important to prepare for negotiations, ensure the team members know the country's position, make sure women especially are trained both in technical aspects and in negotiation skills. Also, you discuss the key issues and views as well as learn and observe the other teams' dynamics, even designate and support one person to communicate our positions.

Women are hardly assertive or aggressive during negotiation, and I noticed that other delegations will bring in a new member, coming in loud, and try to push their agenda on you. You have to work hard to make sure your point comes across so that the conversation won't go in circles. Similarly, I have also noticed that the point I have raised is better received if the same point is

repeated by another male person. A man would point it out by saying "that's exactly what I said", but women prefer to pick bigger battles; I suppose that is being less aggressive from our side. And when I think of it, why is it that when it comes to me, it does not carry the same weight? We are still seen as the ones to call the meeting and coordinate logistics, but at the same time we also have to be the one who takes the decision. So, in the end we do more work. We need to stand our ground and stop these stereotypes; we have other important things to do. It is also a cultural thing that we are slowly trying to move out of. We try more and more to emphasise the role of women in STEM and gender equality at the university level.

Things are slowly changing, with the concepts and approaches of gender mainstreaming everywhere. We send staff out in the field, it does not matter whether they are a man or a woman. As long as this is your area of training and expertise, do it! So we do not discriminate much, and I hope going forward, we do not have to discuss it anymore in such a way, but focus more on the expertise each person has, not whether that person is a woman or man.

Anamika Barua: Experiences from South Asia

Introduction to the Contributor

Dr. Anamika Barua is a professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG), India. Trained in Ecological Economics, her research interest lies in understanding how political, social, and economic factors shape environmental decisions and change, particularly related to water. For the last ten years, she has been involved in academic and consultancy projects related to water issues in South Asia. Since 2013 she has been facilitating a dialogue project called Brahmaputra Dialogue, which aims to create a platform for the Brahmaputra riparian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, and India) to find avenues for co-management of the Brahmaputra River.

Edited Transcription of Barua's Experience

The Brahmaputra Dialogue is aimed at supporting the riparian countries, China, India, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, to discuss and identify how we can equitably share the benefits that the river provides. So, my work revolves mostly around understanding the enabling factors that could lead to cooperation at the basin level, and the incentives for the different riparians, who are at very different stages of development and have very diverse interests related to this river. It is of course not so easy to just ask countries to come together, even just for a dialogue, unless they have enough incentives to do so.

For the Brahmaputra Dialogue, we try to bring in different stakeholders with diverse views, with the aim to make the decision makers aware of the concerns and issues that exist in the river basin. And, of course, gender has

always played a very important role, especially making sure that there are enough women participants. But it has been always a challenge to get women to participate in these dialogues because the water sector, particularly in South Asia, is an extremely male-dominated sector. In order to ensure that the voices and concerns of women are discussed, even if we have very few women in a male-dominated platform, we make sure that gender concerns are included in the discussion, looking at how men and women are differently affected by the construction of dams or any infrastructure projects including irrigation projects, for example. So, we do make sure that we keep the gender lens in our dialogue.

But there are several challenges, some of which I will highlight here. The reason why transboundary water governance is so male dominated is related to the way we look at certain disciplines – as being "soft" or "hard". Such bias towards disciplines influences our day-to-day life including the career path we choose. Water resources departments are dominated by engineers, and engineering is a masculine domain, even today. It is about controlling, taming, and managing the river, which suits a man more than a woman. If you ask a family who has a boy and a girl, they will prefer that the girl chooses a soft discipline, like humanities or social sciences, but not so much Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine (STEM). This societal way of looking at the disciplines has had a huge impact and has created a big void – the absence of women in certain fields of science and technology. Of course, things are changing, there are a lot of incentives now to bring girls into STEM, as there is a realisation that this gender gap needs to be bridged. But it will take time to see real change on the ground; hence, ensuring gender-sensitive policies and a gendered approach in the water sector, including transboundary waters, will remain a challenge for some time.

Another challenge is to appreciate the need to have a gender lens at the transboundary scale, as it is considered to be gender neutral. If you look at domestic water issues, you do see a lot of women appearing in both the discussion and the policymaking. There are several programmes, too, which specifically target women to enhance access to water at the household level. This is because there is a strong realisation that women and domestic water are closely connected and women are the providers/caregivers at the household level, so water scarcity will increase their burden at home. But the problem in such a view is the acceptance of the relationship between water and women through the lens of caregiving, and that puts women again in the private space – the home. But when it is about linking water to productive usage, such as irrigation, access to energy, livelihood security, we do not see the role of women. This is because now water takes a public space, it becomes a matter of sovereignty, autonomy, power, security, and global politics, where women do not seem to have any role. This has led to women's marginalisation from the arena of high politics such as transboundary decision making and the assumption is that the reality of women's day-to-day lives is not impacted by, or important to, international relations. This became very evident to me while

facilitating the Brahmaputra Dialogue, as I heard a lot of men, and even women for that matter, asking "how do you bring gender into transboundary water cooperation? How does gender matter when two countries do or do not sign a treaty?". So, there is a lack of understanding of the whole gender dimension of water diplomacy, and its significance in the dialogue and negotiation process.

The third aspect that makes it challenging for women to be part of transboundary water governance has to do with the social and cultural norms within our societies, again particularly in South Asia. Interestingly, in South Asia, there are now quite a number of young women trained as engineers from reputed engineering colleges, and who have probably done better in academics than their male counterparts. But that achievement does not lead to their participation in the labour market. They may be highly qualified, but that does not necessarily mean that they can choose their career over their domestic caregiving role. While women in South Asia have started to share the office and public space with male colleagues, their traditional role at home has not changed much. They need to manage both home and office, which does not allow them to take up positions with larger responsibilities, those that demand more time and effort. Hence, there is a lack of women in the high-level positions, where women would have the power to make decisions and also be a part of high politics such as transboundary dialogues or negotiations. And therefore, incentives are simply not enough to attract women to these sectors; we need an enabling environment where women and men share the responsibilities equally. A big effort is needed to make sure that these very capable women come to the forefront.

I have also seen a hierarchy of disciplines. In Brahmaputra Dialogue meetings, disciplines such as engineering are on the top, then you move down to other disciplines such as economics, and if you are a political scientist or sociologist, you are even further down. And if you are a woman and a social scientist, apart from your gender, your discipline also does not favour your position, it makes it even more challenging. But if you are a woman and an engineer, then you are slightly better off because there is an understanding that you speak the same language as the male technocrats. But even then, we realised that there is a difference. In the meetings we organise, the women are always in minority. So even when you understand how the river system works, you understand the hydrology, you understand the technical ways of managing a river, you may not even get a chance to speak when all men are speaking. Unfortunately, there is no realisation that the (male) majority needs to create a space for the (female) minority to speak. And that is very irritating, because at times you may have to raise your voice and say "Well, listen, I also have something to add which may add value to what you are discussing!".

But I would like to highlight another interesting fact here. It is not always enough to just have a lot of women, who the women are and their understanding about gender also matters a lot. I have found many women who are a product of a patriarchal society, their understanding or thinking is probably exactly the same or even more traditional than many men. Interestingly, I

have found many men who challenge the patriarchal norms and who basically have stood up to say that we need more women in these male-dominated professions. There are men who have very clearly told us that they will not participate in any all-male meetings or all-male panels. Further, there is also a stereotypical way of looking at a woman, that they are sincere, hardworking, and honest. I have experienced this myself during a Brahmaputra Dialogue meeting. Many commented that the dialogue was successful because it was moderated by a woman; emphasising that women bring peace and cooperation and dislike conflicts. Since the Brahmaputra Dialogue meeting was moderated by a woman, attendees noted that it was not possible for the men to be rude. These assumptions about women are so strong that many say that if transboundary dialogues are facilitated by women, it may bring more cooperation. Looking at it from a positive aspect, of course, sometimes it helps to be the only woman in these meetings, and people do feel that they should provide all the support and they do listen to you, and appreciate the hard work you have put in. Hence, there are both positive and negative sides to it!

Heide Jekel: Experiences from Western Europe

Introduction to the Contributor

Heide Jekel works at the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety, and Consumer Protection. She is Head of the Division "Cooperation in International River Basins, Freshwater Management Conventions, International Freshwater Protection Law". With a background in law, she has been working on transboundary waters for 20 years. She has extensive experience representing Germany in multiple international and bilateral river basin organisations of which Germany is a member, including the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine and the International Commission for the Protection of the Rivers Mosel and Saar. She also functions as Co-Chair of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management under the UNECE Water Convention.

Edited Transcription of Jekel's Experience

In Western Europe, I think women are keeping up. So have more women, and more women in strategic positions. But sometimes I have the feeling that the older generation are still a bit reluctant about this. Sometimes you feel you are not taken completely seriously. It's not that they exactly doubt the experience or technical knowledge – and in my position I do not need in-depth technical knowledge – but I realise that I can sometimes surprise people with the fact that I am both a lawyer by training and understand the technical issues. Sometimes there is still a bit of awkwardness in the relationship between older male colleagues and women. And this also depends on age. I think of myself as an older woman now: more centred and with more proven experience, which

also improves relationships. But sometimes, I feel I am not on the same island, even if I have the same experience and knowledge, and of course that disturbs me. It does not hold me back though; I say what I think I have to say.

This also differs per country and per river basin commission or transboundary interaction. There are countries where men are still better represented than women, especially at the higher levels. Though it is improving, there are still more men than women, especially in Eastern European countries. There, women are getting more and more of these positions, but my impression is that it is happening slower than in Western countries. However, the attitude of people from Western European countries can also be more male-focused, such as in Switzerland and France, from my point of view. It is all about socialisation, and differs from person to person. There are rituals and etiquette that can be country specific, or a certain sensibility with regard to issues that you may just not know, or are not aware of. For instance, I do not know what attendance to certain high-level education institutions, like the National School of Administration (ENA), which is an elite academic institution in France, means, but I know it influences people's chances to gain certain positions. I also get the impression that some women become strong in their position because they have had to fight for it, and sometimes you can notice this in the way they act.

This influences my work as well; I have to take into account with whom I am talking. Sometimes I try to be more feminine to level with the expectations. In a way we all play roles, often not consciously. I have enough experience to understand how to level with others, namely men, or to live up to what I think is their view of how things should be. And although I do not become this "little woman", I cannot fake it, I do become a bit more flattering and more polite, and I become conscious of what I say. I do not become a different person but instead use different mechanisms. I hold on to etiquette more strongly in these situations. And of course, you get direct feedback to check whether you have assessed a situation in the right way. On the other hand, my counterparts in negotiations have to realise that I am also a strong player, and that they cannot try to tell me stories. It is a learning process for both sides.

Of course, the interactions also depend on the basin organisations. Some are like a small family that works together on a day-to-day basis. But there are others that have more pre-described roles in which you either fit or do not fit. The Mosel–Saar river basin commission has a joint secretariat and only three member countries – Luxembourg, Germany, and France. It is small and cooperation is uncomplicated. In the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) there are many more countries and it has a different setting with different issues to discuss. In the ICPR France holds a much more formal position than in the Mosel–Saar basin, for example. The same person acts in different ways. And again, this is the same for the Meuse Commission that is much more formal from my point of view. The sensitivities, mentalities, working atmosphere, and composition of the delegations are all different. This all influences a person's behaviour. For me it may be the same.

Sometimes these underlying rules can only be learned by being in the relevant commission for a longer period of time.

We have a saying in Germany "you are always on the wrong side in the beginning". You have to learn the underlying rules. But I think for women, it is still even more complicated because men are more forgiving about mistakes made by men than mistakes made by women. I notice this especially when comparing reactions of colleagues when the same thing is said by two different people, for instance a man and a woman. It is very complex to determinate exactly, but you will learn how to deal with it and get what you want in spite of it, the longer you work somewhere. Personally, I like this game and learning the "secret" rules. I have never felt uneasy. But for others it might be more difficult because you have to actively find your role and place, that is very important.

In the end, when you are in an organisation for a longer period, it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman. For newcomers, yes. But my feeling is that gender becomes more irrelevant the longer you are in an organisation. I also think there has been a clear development, due to younger colleagues. Older generations retire and new generations have come in with stronger ideas about equality between men and women, and I think the situation on gender equality will improve further in future years.

Nadia Gefoun: Experiences from Northern Africa

Introduction to the Contributor

Nadia Gefoun is a diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sudan. She is a former Ambassador of Sudan to Norway and Denmark, Deputy Head of Mission of Sudan to Sweden, Chargé D'Affaires of Sudan to Malaysia, member of the Sudanese Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, and Press Attaché for the Sudanese Embassy in Cairo. The last post before her retirement was as Deputy General Director for Global Issues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sudan. Currently she is Vice President of the Arab Human Rights Committee of the Arab League. She is also part of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network in the Nile.[1]

Edited Transcription of Gefoun's Experience

When I started working on water, I was already in the middle of my career as a diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working as a counsellor in the early 1990s. I worked with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and with the head of the Department of Water and Environment, and later on as general manager for the Global Issues Department of which water is also a part. But I have to be honest that, also, during my work as ambassador in Sweden and Norway, and deputy ambassador in Malaysia, or during the five years I worked as a diplomat in Cairo, and in the total 40 years of my career, water was always part of my

work. It is part of life, and important for us (Sudan) as a nation. During the 1990s, I started working on the revision of the water agreements between Sudan, Egypt, and Ethiopia, and I worked on the bilateral and preparatory committees. But the big concern came later, also related to the Declaration of Principles on Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam, signed in 2015 by the three riparian countries.[2]

Personally, during my career as diplomat and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I did not observe a lot of discrimination related to whether a person can join certain departments or not, though this may be not the same for other ministries. Traditionally, women were not part of the top leadership in anything related to natural resources, for example roads, mining, oil, and also water. And part of this has to do with education, as men traditionally follow higher education for these professions, and women are rather new to these kinds of professions. Most of the experts on water I know are men. I have not seen a woman in the top leadership in water in Sudan, and I think it is the same for the other countries in the basin. It is not specific for Sudan, but I do think there is a chance that this will change. Since the revolution in 2019, women are part of every aspect of life. They played a leading role in the revolution and the prime minister has already appointed women in important positions, and cares about this, so I hope this will change.

Related to the work on the Nile, we had two women in my delegation of at least 25 people. I saw the same in the Egyptian and Ethiopian delegations. We were sometimes with one, sometimes with two women. But the women in the delegation are equally important. I represent my ministry, and my minister. If the minister is attending, I am his support. In the job itself, I have not felt discriminated against. In case a smaller delegation is chosen to discuss a specific issue in the corridors, I have oftentimes found myself part of this smaller delegation. In our profession, I do not think that gender influences the way that we behave. My colleagues respect me as I am, as member of a delegation, or Head of Department, so I will do what I have to do, equally.

Being a woman has impacted me though. Being in a position to negotiate on vital resources for the country has given me more confidence, and also helped my career. It has certainly benefited me, and attention is paid to me, to what I do, and I feel I can be an example for other women in my country and in the region. For instance, *Al-Jazeera* interviewed me, and seeing me as part of a delegation inspires others in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Pilar Carolina Villar: Experiences from South America

Introduction to the Contributor

Pilar Carolina Villar is Professor of Environmental and Water Law at Universidade Federal de São Paulo and Executive Director of the International Water Resources Association (2022–24). She has been working on transboundary waters since 2009 and researches and advises on legal frameworks related to

national and international transboundary waters, notably on the La Plata Basin, shared by Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina, and the Guarani Aquifer System, shared by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Edited Transcription of Villar's Experience

I must be honest; I never thought about the relation of gender in the context of transboundary waters before this interview. I work with water management and legislation on a national and international level. On transboundary waters, I have worked specifically with the Guarani Aquifer and the La Plata Basin and gender has never been an issue. On a national level, the gender debate is much more concrete, participation of women defending their rights is more visible, and it is clear to see that women are much more vulnerable when there is a lack of water. But when it comes to transboundary waters, this connection is not so clear, at least not in my experience.

Personally, I am not part of negotiations but I have provided specific advice on water and environmental legislation to international projects conducted in the La Plata Basin. In addition, I do scientific assessments on transboundary waters as part of my job as Professor at the Federal University of São Paulo. I have a law degree, and during my Master's and PhD in Environmental Sciences I studied the governance structures related to the management of the Guarani Aquifer from a national and international perspective. In my experience, when women talk about transboundary water, it's not like they're talking as the voice of women's rights. In this position, women participants have to be thought of as men, with a very serious, assertive, and technical attitude. My participation was limited, defined by the terms of reference for consulting services. Normally, a gender perspective is not included in these terms and gender does not play a large or explicit role in my experiences.

In South America, or at least in the case of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, the transboundary water debate is not open to society or stakeholders. It is a debate that is restricted to the Ministry of International Affairs (MIA), and in many cases the diplomatic bodies do not consult related ministries or sectors. If someone outside of the MIA is invited to participate on such level of discussion, it is because a very specific type of information is required. In my case, I provided information about international treaties over the La Plata Basin and water legislation of riparian countries. So, you need to present a very objective position over a specific topic – it's not an open debate.

Normally these technical discussions over transboundary basins and aquifers are mainly dominated by engineers and geologists, so sociological aspects including gender were not explored as they should be. The main issues are related to basin characterisation, water quality and quantity, land use, climate change effects, and human impacts on the basin. The space for discussions on sociological aspects is very limited or superficial.

My personal experience in transboundary water discussions is positive, and the participants were more polite than in national discussions. As I shared

before, I participated as a technical expert, so my expertise was previously recognised. There is also more participation of women working on transboundary water issues than in other sectors such as energy or mining, which seem to be very male-dominated. In addition, there is a very limited number of professionals that work in my field of expertise, and to improve my analysis I have always tried to exchange knowledge with professionals from different backgrounds. So, that helps to be respected and to be considered part of the experts who work on transboundary waters.

Despite the gender debate being stronger on a national level, I have already suffered and witnessed disrespectful behaviour towards women in different situations, such as in technical meetings, basin committee reunions, or public audiences. Usually, the disrespectful conduct arises when a woman presents a point of view that contrasts with the consolidated position of a group or a particular individual. The reaction is to offend and discredit her in a personal way, rather than to present arguments against her position. Young women are most often the targets of this type of action.

Gradually, women have sought to combat and denounce these practices. They have also gained the support of public agencies, international organisations, economic actors, and epistemic communities (networks of people with recognised expertise and knowledge in a certain domain, sharing normative and causal beliefs, notions of validity, as well as sharing similar world-building goals (Haas 1992)) to promote more balanced gender relations. All this movement will certainly impact transboundary water negotiations and management.

Reflection and Conclusion

This chapter started with an observation on how feminist research has contributed to IR studies by showing how the political is personal, and how the personal is embedded in the political. This chapter provided insights on what this looks like in practice, through accounts of lived experiences from five female water professionals from Southern and Northern Africa, Europe, South America, and Southeast Asia. As there are few stories and reflections shared by women who work on water diplomacy, it is worthwhile reflecting on the differences and similarities in their experiences. This is no attempt to draw generalisable conclusions but the intention is to highlight how relations between countries are managed by the people who, with their own experiences, wishes, values, and ideas, work in gendered social systems that affect men and women differently.

A first aspect that we highlight is the hierarchy of knowledge present in the water sector, with engineering and hydrology favoured over other fields of study such as economy or biology, as well as local knowledges. As engineering and hydrology are highly male-dominated fields, this hierarchy of knowledge does perpetuate and strengthen gender inequalities (Rap & Oré 2017; Zwarteveen 2017). In some organisations this hierarchy is changing,

making space for women to study and contribute to subjects and sectors they were previously not welcome in and impacting the relative number of men and women involved in transboundary water.

The effects of the hierarchy of knowledge are experienced by most of the contributors to this chapter, influencing who is hired for positions on transboundary water governance as well as who is heard in the preparations for meetings and at the negotiation table. Some stories give the impression that the hierarchy of knowledge can also be misused by those who find themselves higher up, for instance based on their engineering background. This can happen either very direct and consciously or indirect and unconsciously driven by internalised ideas on what a water diplomat should be and do. As narrated in this chapter, this leads to situations where women experience that someone is explaining to them what they already know, and where they feel the need to set clear boundaries, speak up louder, work harder, prepare better, and think more strategically than their male colleagues.

There are also very different experiences, from those who are or were able to benefit from their exceptional position. Being a woman helped when, as a discussion moderator, it coincided with generalised ideas on the abilities of women to listen and facilitate cooperation better than men. Being a woman in a delegation where the vast majority are male also helped them to be noticed and be given the chance to contribute. These experiences can be highly empowering when acknowledged as personal achievements but can feel belittling when it is assumed that the opportunity was given solely because the individual is a woman.

Ignoring the personal in the politics of transboundary water governance erases the inequality in experiences, and obscures possible ways in which these inequalities can be addressed. Stories matter, and therefore this chapter acts as an open invitation to others to share stories about their gendered experiences in water negotiations and transboundary water governance. Perhaps in the future there will be delegations that consist of women only. In the words of Maria Amakali, "When you come to think of it, why not?"

Notes

1 See for more information at https://siwi.org/swp-women-in-water-diplomacy-network/
2 The Declaration of Principles was signed on 23 March 2015, showcasing an agreement between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt on ten principles that would function as a framework for further cooperation.

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12 Conclusion

Insights on Gender Dynamics in Transboundary Water Governance

Rozemarijn ter Horst, Margreet Zwarteveen, and Jenniver Sehring

Introduction

Animated by concern about the near absence of women in transboundary water governance, this book has brought together scholars, activists, practitioners, and policymakers to document the extent of this absence, to reflect on its causes and effects, as well as to draw attention to how female practitioners navigate this masculinised field. Attention to questions of gender in transboundary water is relatively new and may need explaining and justification, as the masculinity of transboundary water governance often continues to be taken for granted. It is seen as something that does not need to be noted and opened up for questioning. To date, there have been relatively few studies about the genderedness of transboundary water governance. In Chapter 3 of this book, Priya and Debnath show that none of the 105 articles written on transboundary waters in South Asia from 2000 to 2020 discuss questions of gender. Their finding underscores the conclusion of an earlier study by De Silva et al. (2018) that women as decision makers are generally absent in studies on transboundary water management.

This perhaps is no surprise when looking at the separate scholarly fields that transboundary water governance brings together, international relations (IR), and water resources management, which both are rather masculine fields. Yet, in IR, there is a steadily growing stream of feminist scholarship, with work that sets out to identify, make visible, and challenge gender-based hierarchies and power differences (see e.g. Ackerly et al. 2006; Aggestam & Towns 2019; Enloe 2014; Tickner 2006). Gender also assumes a more prominent and accepted place on foreign policy agendas, with some countries even having adopted explicit feminist foreign policies (like Sweden, Germany). The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSC 2000) may have helped here; it raises the importance of questions of equal participation and full involvement of women in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. In the field of water, there has been quite some research and policy attention to questions of gender, but this has tended to focus on women as water users and the genderedness of local water management systems, with most work done on the so-called domestic sphere – the

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sphere traditionally associated with women. There is nevertheless a small body of work on the genderedness of water bureaucracies and the water profession (see Chapter 1), while there are also some – often donor-sponsored – initiatives to make the professional water domain more diverse.

This book, then, combines these two fields to expand the exploration of gender dynamics in transboundary water governance. The different chapters examine how water governance is gendered, why this is so, and how it matters for the effectiveness of transboundary water governance processes and outcomes. The book brings together a diverse set of authors who write and analyse differently, each having different assumptions, aims, and ambitions. They also use different methods and theories, with some contributors sharing their experiences and reflections in less theoretical ways. We acknowledge and appreciate this "discursive virtuosity" (Kunz et al. 2019, p. 5), seeing it as itself partly stemming from how and where the different authors are positioned. After all, most of those who study gender in transboundary water governance (including most of the contributors to this volume) are not just concerned about producing more accurate and complete representations, but are also motivated by the desire to transform transboundary organisations, institutions, and processes – making these more hospitable to women, and more attentive to gender or feminist concerns. How to do this effectively partly depends on one's position and action perspective. For instance, for relative outsiders who depend less on the approval and appreciation of those studied, it may be easier to be explicitly critical than for those collaborating with or perhaps even depending on the people they study (see also Resurrección & Elmhirst 2020). Gender or feminist research, in other words, is often contentious and may be met with resistance. Doing it well requires cautious strategy and learning how to deal with backlashes. For instance, about which terms to use (gender, feminist, women?), or which entry points to choose (equity, justice, the effectiveness of negotiations?). In our attempt at synthesising the chapters in this conclusion, we signal some of these differences. Perhaps the most obvious one in terms of positioning is that between those *doing* transboundary water governance – practitioners, those tasked with *supporting* those doing transboundary water governance – often in the context of development cooperation, and those *studying* transboundary water governance.

Seeing Women or Gender in Transboundary Water Governance: Definitions and Framings

Several chapters (3, 4, and 5) in this book try to explain why gender is not more prominently discussed in scholarship on transboundary water governance. Mostly based on critical reviews of the available literature, these chapters show that ontological and epistemological choices or preferences in academic studies importantly co-determine how easily or well gender can be seen in transboundary water governance. Hence, Priya and Debnath, in Chapter 3, first examine whether there is a relation between the gender of

the researcher and the chosen theoretical approach. While they do not find a strong correlation, they do note that most of the articles they reviewed adopt what they call a state-centric approach – which means that the analyses focus on the behaviour of states, rather than on that of individuals – and treat transboundary water governance in a rather technical manner. Transboundary water governance, then, is defined as everything that happens in the public and formal sphere, a definition that is itself based on the assumption that it is possible (and useful) to distinguish between what is public (or formal) and what is private (or informal). When asked, most of those working in water diplomacy or involved in transboundary water organisations will be quick to point out that such a distinction will always be arbitrary. They acknowledge that what happens behind the scenes – in what perhaps are the more informal or private spheres – is as important as what happens in official meetings. Priya and Debnath show that limiting the study of transboundary water governance to what happens in the formal, public sphere also makes gender either disappear or seem irrelevant, as the distinctions between formal and informal or between public and private are often drawn through gendered associations. Hence, when what women do tends to be associated with the private, informal sphere (as often happens), it automatically ceases to matter for the analysis of transboundary water governance. They conclude that "seeing" gender in transboundary water governance requires critically re-thinking ontological categories and definitions.

One effort to do precisely this is presented by Bisht in Chapter 5. Like Priya and Debnath, she takes issue with how dominant approaches to studying transboundary water governance make actors' behaviours disappear – something that also makes it difficult to see and question gender relations. She associates this with a tendency of studies to take scales of governance as a given. Bisht instead proposes an approach that foregrounds the networks through which states, organisations, people, and things are connected. This allows recognising that scales of governance are constructed (also see Norman & Cook 2016); networks are made, re-made, and broken, by a variety of state as well as non-state actors (Hocking 2006). Bisht suggests that a network approach not only allows recognising that diplomacy processes are not always linear, but – by foregrounding processes, actors, and relations – also helps make intersecting relations of caste, class, and gender become more visible (Gillman 2016). To examine gender dynamics in transboundary water governance, it is, therefore, a more useful approach as compared to conventional approaches.

Offutt in Chapter 4 also stresses the need to go beyond the transboundary level and look at different scales in order to fully understand the complexity of gender in water-related conflicts. In her review of the existing literature, she mobilises the four elements of gender proposed by El-Bushra & Sahl (2005) – gender roles, identities, institutions, and ideologies – to reveal how the different studies represent gender in water-related conflicts. She finds that there are few studies that address multiple scales, and that there are distinct ways of

approaching gender at different levels. At the local scale, the analysis shows that women appear mainly as victims of water insecurity. In studies on regional levels, women appear as leaders and participants in revolts. In particular, and confirming the findings of some of the other chapters, she notes that women and gender are absent in the academic literature on water conflicts at the transboundary level.

Empowering Women or Mainstreaming Gender in Transboundary Water Governance

Some chapters (6 and 7) present and reflect on systematic efforts to mainstream gender in transboundary organisations, decision-making spaces, and processes. Hence, Hagerman et al. in Chapter 6, examine how gender policies were developed within the context of the Nile Basin Initiative and the Nile Basin Discourse, a donor-funded project in which the authors were involved. Von Lossow, in Chapter 7, discusses gender-related policies in five different river basins – the Nile, Jordan, Zambesi, Indus, and Danube. Based on a review of both academic literature and policy documents, he compares policies concerning gender with implementation on the ground. The planned efforts that both chapters describe as part of gender mainstreaming are long-ranging, from support for women interested in entering the masculine spaces of transboundary water governance by building their leadership skills, to making transboundary water governance more hospitable to women. Doing this, as Hagerman et al. show when discussing the need for (and challenges of) a transformative approach, entails more than just bringing in more women: it also requires changing the spaces in terms of how they are organised and what is discussed, the norms of engaging and behaving, and how authority and expertise are defined and valued. Both chapters are energised by the hope that increasing the number of female leaders and decision makers will contribute to wider feminist transformations in society, beyond positive change in transboundary water governance.

The chapters also invite reflection on how those engaged in gender mainstreaming strategise to make the topic of gender in a transboundary water context more widely accepted. After all, and as some of the other chapters show, many of the men and women working in transboundary water governance do not readily see or admit that they work in a deeply gendered environment. This means that those tasked with gender mainstreaming risk being dismissed, ignored, criticised, or ridiculed. Worse still, those doing gender work may be resisted because they are perceived as challenging hegemonic norms and values (Kunz et al. 2019). Wielding the financial, political, and institutional support needed to effectuate real change, therefore, is a careful balancing act between continuing to be accepted by the representatives and supporters of the status quo, while at the same time nudging them towards adopting different behaviours, policies, and programmes.

Gendered Dynamics in Transboundary Water Institutions and Processes

The book contains three chapters (8, 9, and 10) that provide a more in-depth investigation of the genderedness of transboundary water governance institutions and processes, by zooming in on what happens in specific river basins: the Nile, the Chu–Talas, and the Rhine. Through interviews and observations, the authors of these chapters try to lay bare how gendered norms and values legitimise often unequal distributions of income, resources, labour, and power (among others) between men and women. They also focus on what happens during the interactions between men and women during negotiations, as this is where differences and possible hierarchies become visible. Hence, in Chapter 8, Sehring studies gender dynamics in the Chu–Talas Commission (CTC) that facilitates water cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan focusing on three sets of practices: duty travels, leadership norms, and negotiation styles. She mobilises theoretical insights from Feminist Institutionalism to help identify how "constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily life or logic of political institutions" (Mackay et al. 2010, p. 580). This happens, for instance, through how boundaries between the "formal" and the "informal" are mapped onto what is considered as "masculine" and "feminine" to create a partly implicit hierarchy of appreciation that makes it easier for men to be seen as performing well than for women. Sehring borrows the notion of a "gendered logic of appropriateness" (Chappell 2006, p. 223) to identify the resulting "acceptable" masculine and feminine forms of behaviour.

In Chapter 9 on the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR), Mattur and ter Horst's analysis starts from the premise that organisational structures are not gender neutral. They mobilise Acker's (1990, 1992) feminist theory of organisations and the four substructures identified as producing and perpetuating gendered assumptions and power relations: organising processes, organisational culture, interactions on the job, and gendered identities (Acker 2012). In this chapter, interviewees tell the story of the ICPR as one that gradually became more hospitable to women resulting in similar numbers of woman and men, something they attribute to a gradual broadening of the field of water management. In particular, the involvement of biologists and geographers – fields that are much less strictly defined in masculine terms and that are traditionally less dominated by men as compared to hydrology and engineering – made it easier for women to enter the field. Yet, during the interviews it became clear that a masculine legacy – ideas, values, and principles – continues to shape and colour how water governance is done. This is most clearly shown in the different answers men and women gave when asked about how they behaved to be (seen as) professional. Most women were able to pinpoint how they adjust their behaviour in this respect, while most men emphasised that interactions in ICPR were gender neutral.

In Chapter 10, Said shows how the barriers for women to reaching decision-making positions in transboundary governance institutions of the Nile are deeply

embedded in cultural norms and related gender roles. The effect is that only a few women are represented in transboundary negotiations. Interestingly, both male and female interviewees stated (experienced as well as expected) positive effects of more gender-balanced teams for negotiation dynamics, sometimes paired with rather essentialist and positive assumptions about female leadership styles. Finally, Said reflects on what could help to overcome those barriers. Rather, or more, than capacity development for women advocated by some studies and programmes, she emphasises increased awareness and mentorship of male colleagues. This aligns with the transformative approach promoted by Hagerman et al. in Chapter 6.

These three chapters show that gender differences and inequalities do not always manifest as outright discrimination, statistics, or legal barriers. On the surface, both the CTC and the ICPR appear to be gender-equal organisations. Yet, when digging a bit deeper, it is possible to discern how more or less institutionalised and seemingly gender-neutral ways of appreciating and valuing behaviours – as seen in definitions of "good professionalism" or "leadership", for instance – continue to be gendered, making it easier for some (conforming men) to be seen as successful than for others (women and men who display less conforming behaviour). Becoming aware of and noticing these more invisible norms and definitions is challenging, as they are often part of what is considered normal and form part of deeply engrained routines. Indeed, "silence on gender is a determining characteristic of institutions of hegemonic masculinity" (Kronsell 2006, p. 109) and makes researching those institutions challenging.

In CTC, for example, the female committee members interviewed were cautiously reluctant to explain their professional achievements and career trajectories by referring to gender. They instead preferred to highlight their expertise, underscoring that they are and can perform as competently as their male colleagues. In general, there was little enthusiasm for naming and discussing, let alone openly challenging, gender hierarchies. Yet, the fact that many interviewees referred to Soviet times as a period during which professional relations were more equal than nowadays suggests that they do have an opinion about gender in relation to their present working experiences. In practical work, they seem to consider efforts to blend in by acting and performing as men do a safer and more successful strategy to be (seen as) a competent professional. Also in ICPR, one interviewee mentioned explicit efforts to adjust her behaviour as a way to become more accepted. She even took acting classes to learn how to negotiate in a more masculine way.

Researching gendered institutions is challenging, too, because researchers themselves are gendered human beings. Their own internalised ideas about what is normal, appropriate, or desirable in terms of gender will make it easier for them to notice some dynamics more easily than others. Mattur reflects on this in Chapter 9. She creatively mobilises the fact that she was born and raised in India to question what the interviewees from Western Europe considered as normal. Contrasting what they told her with what she knew about her own country yielded interesting conversations that helped bring into relief

and make explicit gendered norms of both interviewer and interviewees. The explicit and conscious use of feminist theories is likewise useful in helping make internalised assumptions as explicit as possible, opening them up for questioning.

A related challenge has to do with the tendency (of both researcher and researched) to essentialise gender differences. In the Nile, Chu–Talas, and Rhine basins, interviewees (both men and women) believed that the presence of women in meetings and negotiations encouraged men to behave more collaboratively and politely, making them avoid rude language and harsh tones. Female interviewees in all three basins also thought that women were better negotiators, as (according to them) women are better listeners than their male counterparts. These similarities across basins seem to originate in more globalised notions of gender difference, such as that women are more caring for the environment, less self-interested, and more eager to find and accept compromises. Confrontation, dominance, competition, and war are instead more associated with men. Similar gendered dichotomies also underpin the distinction between more masculine and competitive and more feminine and caring bargaining styles. Referring to such rather stereotypical ideas about male–female differences to make sense of own and others' experiences does not just underscore their persistence, but may also recursively reproduce them and make them "real" (see also Maoz 2009; Naurin et al. 2019). Researchers must remain cautious about the origins and effects of their frames of interpretation and analysis: do these reify and strengthen prevailing stereotypes, or do they instead help question and widen definitions of what being a "good" water diplomat means? Complementing interviews with direct ethnographic observations is one good strategy to avoid the convenient and rapid reproduction of stereotypes; it allows cross-checking and combining what people say (about what they think and do) with what they actually do. Sehring's analysis in Chapter 8 became, for instance, much richer because she was able to participate in several CTC meetings. Engaging in more ethnographic kinds of observations may not always be possible in a transboundary water context, however. Especially when the stakes of negotiations are high, outside researchers are unlikely to be invited in.

Women Navigating a Masculine and White World

Finally, two chapters (2 and 11) zoom in on the experiences of women diplomats and practitioners working in transboundary governance. Chapter 2 presents an interview with Mariana Yumbay Yallico, conducted and transcribed by Diego Jara. Yumbay Yallico works on transboundary water governance in Ecuador in her capacity as judge in the National Court of Justice of Ecuador. She challenges the prevailing transboundary water culture and norms because she is a woman, but also because she is an indigenous person. In addition to dealing with and navigating gender-based challenges, she therefore also has to confront ethnical, cultural, and racial prejudices. In the

chapter, she explains that these do not just have to do with how she is seen and treated as a person, but also importantly relate to how transboundary waters are defined and dealt with. According to the Kichwa community that she belongs to, it makes no sense to talk about national borders when dealing with rivers. In Kichwa cosmology, rivers or waters cannot be "owned" or "shared", but people live with rivers and rivers live with people in a reciprocal relation of care. Yumbay Yallico believes that creating legal and political space for this indigenous way of relating to rivers is important because of how it recognises and respects the ways of being of indigenous communities as well as how they are impacted by current ways of governing transboundary rivers. The indigenous way comes with much greater appreciation for the inherent value of rivers, which may provide an important inspiration for re-conceptualising society–river relations. Her hope is that it also contributes to reducing gender inequities, a hope that is inspired by what is known about pre-Inca indigenous societies that were more harmonious in terms of gender.

Chapter 11 by ter Horst et al. makes female water diplomats visible through interviews with five renowned women working in transboundary water governance. Although coming from and working in distinctly different contexts, they all felt that they had to adapt their behaviour to be or become accepted in the masculine world of transboundary water governance. In order to be effective and successful, several of the interviewees shared the feeling that they often have to work harder. For instance, Maria Amakali from Namibia notes how she, in contrast to her male colleagues, has to actively organise and arrange her paid work with the work that needs to be done at home. Some also said that they have to be particularly persistent to be heard, oftentimes relating this to the existence of a tacit knowledge hierarchy based on the intersection of discipline and gender. Hydrologists and engineers are considered more important and knowledgeable than biologists, lawyers, or geographers, and men are deemed more important than women. In this context, several women experience that some men react to the fact that they are a woman by explaining how hydrology works, assuming they lack technical knowledge. Others have more positive experiences. Anamika Barua, for example, shares that in the South Asian context, her work as facilitator of the Brahmaputra Dialogue is especially valued due to essentialised ideas about how women are better listeners, rather than her personal merits. Nadia Gefoun from Sudan equally feels taken seriously and valued for her contributions as an experienced diplomat. She relates this amongst others to the position of women in Sudanese society, reflecting on the key role of women in the revolution of 2018–19.

Despite many similarities between the stories of the women interviewed, it is also clear that gender plays out very differently depending on country, institutional platform, and moments in time. Heide Jekel was well placed to note this, as she has been working in six River Basin Organisations (RBOs) with different member countries and adjusts her behaviour respectively.

Conclusion

The case studies and analyses presented in this book show different dimensions of gender dynamics in transboundary waters, as well as different approaches for studying them. The chapters provide important starting points for exposing the genderedness of transboundary water governance and suggest possible ways to open up the field to women (and other "others") and to understand and address gender concerns. As such, the book sketches the contours of an emerging feminist engagement with transboundary governance, one aimed at creating the analytical and political space to question the "normalcy" of transboundary water governance practices, structures, and outcomes. The book suggests that this evolving feminist project in transboundary water governance consists of at least three sub-projects.

A first sub-project consists of identifying and exposing how gendered norms, values, emotions, and knowledges shape transboundary water governance realities. This can be done by carefully listening to the experiences and stories of women who operate as water diplomats and members of transboundary RBOs, zooming in on how they navigate and deal with the gendered mechanisms and structures that characterise the field. It can also be done by uncovering how institutionalised ideas about what it means to be a "good" professional, and notions about what it means to be a "real" man or woman, making professional competence seem more "natural" for some than for others. Detecting how deeply held gender norms and values shape transboundary water governance is an important first step in questioning them. It provides room for making such norms and the practices that they support more explicit, which is a good basis for experimenting with other ways of organising and valuing work and competencies.

A second sub-project consists of engaging with and learning from efforts to mainstream gender in transboundary water governance; creating more space for women or gender concerns in transboundary water platforms and programmes. Such efforts teeter on a thin line, trying to improve the possibilities to recognise women's needs and gender concerns without losing credibility or upsetting those that represent the status quo. As several chapters have shown, transboundary water governance is closely embedded and shaped by the broader structural, political, and cultural contexts and their gender relations, which limits how much change can be achieved within transboundary water institutions. On the one hand, remaining too faithful to preferred ways of doing things runs the risk of continuing to remain caught in and further reproducing the very gendered (sub)structures that cause discrimination against women and marginalisation of gender in the first place. On the other hand, a complete disengagement from existing languages and professional cultures risks having little convincing force towards those with the powers and resources to help make the needed changes.

A third sub-project, then, is concerned with finding new ways of thinking about, defining, and representing (framing, theorising) transboundary water governance that are better suited for articulating gender and feminist

concerns. This sub-project, in a way, follows on and complements the first two sub-projects in that it starts from the realisation that existing ways of doing and talking (or thinking) about transboundary water governance devalorise or invisibilise women's contributions or make gender concerns seem irrelevant. In prevailing ways of making sense of transboundary water realities, both in scholarly and policy texts, gender does not belong to what needs to be explained but rather tends to be taken for granted or is defined away. State-centric approaches notably make it difficult to "see" gender. At an even deeper level, questioning gender within transboundary water governance is difficult because existing ways of thinking, speaking, and writing about it make use of the very gendered binary distinctions – between emotion and reason, formal and informal, private and public, aggression and friendliness – that underpin and justify institutionalised forms of difference and hierarchy. In this endeavour, there is room for deeper engagement with feminist theoretical and methodological approaches in IR and diplomacy studies, as well as work on gender and water management and engineering. Some chapters in this volume touched upon these, but a more explicit application of these to transboundary water governance promises avenues for theorising it from a gender perspective.

In sum, feminist engagement with transboundary water governance does not stop at including women in existing organisations, enhancing their participation in current processes, and/or inserting gender concerns in already established agendas. It is also about questioning these organisations, processes, and agendas from a feminist perspective, disentangling how procedures, rules of engagement, and framings are themselves masculinist or exclusionary, and learning how these play out very differently in different contexts. Based on this, feminist engagements contribute to identifying avenues for overcoming inequalities and achieving truly inclusive and equitable governance arrangements for transboundary waters.

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