

Water Governance in the Mediterranean:

Rethinking the role of National Politics and the Union for the Mediterranean

-Trabajo de Fin de Máster-

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Autora: Joana Argemí Ribalta

Tutor: Andrea Noferini

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Abstract

This Master Thesis aims to give an overview of the political dynamics behind the governance of water in the Mediterranean. The core question is how national politics affect the set-up of a regional water governance. To this end, the bulk of this paper aims to analyse the specific policy framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and explore how this showcases the overall governance dynamics of the Euro-Mediterranean region. To do so, I conduct discourse analysis of UfM's Ministerial Declarations on water and combine it with primary literature and interviews to water and global governance experts. Main result of the analysis is that the interposition of national politics in the water agenda has hindered the creation of a regional governance framework. This research reveals that Mediterranean countries are not interested in setting-up such a framework because they want to preserve their national control over water; because they are afraid of over-complicating the regime if they scale governance up; and because of the lack of flexible and tailor-made regional directives. Despite the several attempts of the UfM to coordinate water governance actions, I argue that it is not an institution entitled to set such a framework but another State-mandated body in a very nationalised and politicised governance system. It remains to be seen whether and how water governance in the Mediterranean will acquire political and institutional stability in the future. Heretofore, my hope is that this research may prove useful in tracing some of the first implications of national politics in the water governance domain.

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List of Abbreviations

CBDR	Common But Differentiated Responsibilities
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GWP-Med	Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean
IEMED	European Institute for the Mediterranean
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISSM	Institute of Studies on Mediterranean Societies
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MCSD	Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)
MD	Ministerial Declaration
MedECC	Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change
MELIA	Mediterranean Dialogue for Integrated Water Management
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPI	Public-Private Partnership
SWM	Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UN	United Nations

1. Introduction

Grounded in environmental studies and political science, this dissertation studies the current structure of water governance in the Euro-Mediterranean region, in terms of the distribution of power and the institutional set-up. As one of the world's driest regions, the Mediterranean faces real challenges to secure water resources and ensure long-term availability. Most Mediterranean countries struggle to manage water resources in a context where water is becoming more scarce, and hydrological stress causes more insecurity, underdevelopment and geopolitical tensions. As stated in the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), water availability per person in the Mediterranean is expected to decline more than half by 2050, and will be further exacerbated by demographic growth and climate change¹. If we trace back our view and count the incredible amount of international/regional initiatives (e.g. the Barcelona Convention), sub-regional (e.g. the 5+5 Dialogue, the Union for the Mediterranean, etc.), or national and local that have been created to tackle the water crisis, and we evaluate the detrimental evolution of water in the region, we would probably be shocked to see the little success they had in delivering the necessary results to secure the resource. This means that the community of Mediterranean States has not managed to create a coherent and effective framework to govern water at a regional level yet. However, this does not mean that the water regime is not governed at all. Instead, Mediterranean countries have resorted to their national institutions and interests to control it.

The failure of regional governance mechanisms to tackle the water crisis and the attribution of the water agenda by Mediterranean States have raised serious concerns about the suitability of current institutional and governance structures to deal with such a severe crisis. General distrust and dissatisfaction in international/regional institutions have driven States to make use of their national regulatory power and policy instruments, through which they can keep their supremacy and impose their national political agenda. This situation has been evident in the case of the Nile river, where there have been geopolitical tensions between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt over 25 years for the control of the water stream, and which have not been solved due to the prevalence of national interests over the regional common good².

In this scenario, the socioeconomic development and future security of the Mediterranean is at stake. Thereby, it seems relevant to study the reasons behind the failure of setting-up a collective water governance within the region, and consider new alternative ideas with enough disruptive potential to catalyse real change. In other words, a proposal of a coherent reasoning that explains how water governance functions, making special emphasis on the role that national politics play in this regard. This is precisely the bulk of this study, and it aims to do it in two different ways.

First, it takes the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) as a case study to analyse the institutional and political dynamics behind the regional water agenda. This means understanding the nature of the organisation, and dissecting the methodology it follows to set water action plans. By doing so, it pretends to find out how much power States have to control its water agenda, and how this affects UfM's mandate.

¹ IPCC, *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)], IPCC, Geneva, 2014.

² Interview with Franc Cortada, undertaken on April 27th 2022.

Second, it extrapolates the results provided by the case study to the overall governance, introducing a critical approach that explains the prevalence of national politics in the governance of water and the failure to set regional integrative initiatives. Hence, this dissertation elucidates the influence of States in the water agenda to explain the systematic institutional challenges of the Euro-Mediterranean region. However, since Mediterranean issues are still controlled by neighbouring States, and their willingness is to preserve their national agendas, this study adopts a long-term pessimistic view towards a systemic change and offers instead alternative ideas to enhance the already existing governance system.

This proposal fits in a context of very little research on the relationship between national politics and regional governance for water in the Mediterranean, and small access to official documents from regional organisations. Moreover, most of the experts interviewed for this study have adopted a neutral and impartial theoretical perspective towards the UfM, focusing on the deficiencies of the overall system rather than tackling specific institutional gaps. Yet the dissertation has found its field of study and analysis on the UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

My research brings this institutional and political work on water governance into conversation. Describing the state of the art allows this work to end up putting into the table the current limitations experienced by the multilateral order we now live in, and in particular, in the Mediterranean region. In doing so, and unlike other researches, this work stands out by providing a comprehensive analysis on how global governance functions in today's world.

1.1. Objectives and motivation

This is not an advocacy paper trying to promote or discard the governance of water in the Mediterranean, nor to explore the suitability of this in the environmental context of the Basin. It is rather focused on studying the political nature of water governance dynamics in the Mediterranean. In this way, my research engages directly with questions of politics, policy-making and governance. In a world that lacks a global institution to effectively enforce environmental politics in the world, questions arise about whether such an institution can exist in a specific region in order to govern a particular issue, such as water. *Is there a governance framework feasible for water at all? Are Mediterranean countries truly interested and willing to coin a regional governance system to regulate water jointly? Do even Mediterranean countries possess the capacities to address water governance transborderly in a rigorous way?* Governance scholars such as Hamdy and Choukr-Allah discuss whether national politics hinder the implementation of a collective water governance framework. In general terms, this dissertation aims to contribute to this theoretical debate and identify the political reasons behind the *raison d'être* of water governance in the Euro-mediterranean area.

More specifically, this research explores how national politics impact decision-making and water governance mechanisms in the Mediterranean, and evaluates the suitability of a collective governance framework in the region under the umbrella of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) organisation. Given the relentless outlook of rising water problems in the Mediterranean, and the potential effectiveness of a common governance framework to tackle them, scrutiny of the role of the UfM in coining such a framework is essential. This paper further explores this issue, analysing the role of the UfM in water governance in the region, and discussing ways to improve it.

1.2. Research Design

1.2.1. Research Question and Hypotheses

Ensuring water access, security and stability has been the essential pathway to foster development, peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean. History of the region is littered by water research and practices from the International Community. These have resulted in multiple endeavours at different levels to regulate water use, but either have failed to live up promises or have eventually vanished³. The region is currently facing many water challenges that can be ascribed to the failure to implement a collective governance framework that replaces unilateral actions. To date, a lot of research has been done on how to improve the water governance agenda, but little attention has been drawn on understanding how water governance is. There has been no study on the politics behind water governance in the region and on the role that plays in shaping governance dynamics. As stated by Wilson *et al.*, “even within this wider understanding, the ways in which ‘the political’ is conceptualised and analysed in water governance realms too often remains partial or under-elaborated”⁴.

According to the IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) released in February 2022, next decades are crucial to decide what future we want to live in⁵. Climate change is bringing different changes in the environment which impact ecosystems and the overall development. Climate change is intensifying water cycles in the Mediterranean region, bringing more rainfalls to the North and intense draughts to the South⁶. Indeed, the First Mediterranean Assessment Report elaborated by the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC) stated that the Mediterranean region is warming 20% faster than the global average⁷. It also projected an increase of sea level by 6 to 12 cm, and a decrease of rainfall of 5 to 10%⁸. In light of this scenario, a coherent water governance in the Mediterranean that accelerates the international climate agenda and ensures socio-economic development in the region is the only way forward. While water problems persist, solutions depend on political decisions such as “*who does what*”, “*when*”, “*why*”, “*at which level*”, and “*how*”⁹. Thus, water governance as the practice of implementation of these political parameters becomes central, and its effectiveness depends on the robustness of regional politics.

For this reason, the current study addresses this issue by analysing governance at the intersection of water and politics. I centre my analysis on exploring how national politics affect, shape and remodel the governance system of water in the Mediterranean basin. By doing so, it seeks to address the following question: *How politics affect water governance in*

³ INGRAM, H., “Beyond Universal Remedies for Good Water Governance: A Political and Contextual Approach”, *University of Arizona and University of California at Irvine*.

⁴ WILSON, N.J. *et al.*, “Re-Theorizing Politics in Water Governance”, *Water 2019*, Vol. 11, 2019, num. 1470, p. 1.

⁵ IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, 2022.

⁶ FERRAGINA, E. and QUAGLIAROTTI, D., “A Common Strategy for Sustainable Water Management in the Western Mediterranean”. In: *The 5+5 Dialogue as a Mechanism of Integration and Regional Cooperation*.

⁷ MedECC, *Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report* [Cramer, W., Guiot, J., Marini, K. (eds.)] Union for the Mediterranean, Plan Bleu, UNEP/MAP, Marseille, France, 2020, pp. 78.

⁸ MedECC, *op. cit.*, nota 7.

⁹ ZWARTEVEEN, M. *et al.*, “Engaging with the politics of water governance”, *WIREs Water 2017*, Vol. 4, 2017, num. 1245.

the Mediterranean? At a secondary stage, this study deals with matters regarding: “How do we govern the access to and control over water resources? What role do stakeholders, such as authorities, donors and users, play in this regard? What kind of governance do we need to effectively deal with water issues in the region?”¹⁰. The study thereby assumes that national politics have effectively contributed to shaping water governance dynamics. In fact, it proposes that politics have been the leverage for coining the current framework.

Water is a primary resource that affects different sectors at different levels. Such a multidimensional good requires a truly interdisciplinary governance framework and implementation agenda. Nonetheless, this transversality has been challenged by the resistance of national politics. Overall, in the Mediterranean region, water has mostly been used to normatively prescribe or help establish institutional and organisational arrangements, such as the Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Programme, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the Mediterranean Water Strategy, the Mediterranean Environmentally Sustainable Development Programme, the 5+5 Water Strategy for the Western Mediterranean, etcetera¹¹. And yet, these have not catalysed real collective implementation practices due to the lack of political willingness from national countries. The main question of this dissertation deals with the extension to which national politics have influenced water governance in the Mediterranean. In order to address this question, I argue that it has effectively influenced it, preventing the establishment of an integrated regional framework. More specifically, I propose three hypotheses that explain why Mediterranean States have not been interested in this scenario.

Hypothesis 1: The strategic nature of water

First, water is considered, by Mediterranean countries, a strategic good, essential to promote socio-economic development. Water is a vital resource to promote economic and sustainable development, poverty reduction, social equality, public health and peace¹². It may be considered from an engineering tool to power industrial machines to an economic good that enhances market competitiveness or a crucial liability for human rights protection¹³. In any case, water is too valuable for countries to surrender their controlling power to an external institution, let alone to neighbouring countries. Indeed, governments tend to monopolise water control by integrating it in their national agendas, maintaining their sovereignty and avoiding external influences.

Hypothesis 2: The inclusion of too many stakeholders in the table.

Second, the multiplicity of actors and initiatives at local, national, regional and global levels in the water sector have made dialogue very complex and consensus too difficult to reach. Challenges to the implementation of a regional governance system have come from the

¹⁰ HAMDY A. and CHOUKR-ALLAH, R., “Effective Water Governance and How to Achieve”. In: CHOUKR-ALLAH, R. and RODRÍGUEZ-CLEMENTE, R. (eds.) *Integrated Water Resources Management in the Mediterranean Region*. Springer, London, 2012, pp. 267-284.

¹¹ SCULLOS, M. and FERRAGINA, E., “Environmental and Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean”, in *10 Papers for Barcelona*, 2010, num.8.

¹² FERRAGINA, E., “The Water Issue in the Mediterranean”. In: SCULLOS, M. and FERRAGINA, E. *Environmental and Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean*, European Institute of the Mediterranean and Institute for Security Studies, 2008.

¹³ INGRAM, H., *op. cit.*, nota 3.

“overlapping of responsibilities between institutional stakeholders”¹⁴, “misunderstanding of the concept of operation partnership among stakeholders in the water sector”, “no full definition of the role and the responsibilities of each water stakeholder”¹⁵, and “[absence of] coordination between different water sectors and stakeholders”¹⁶. To systematically follow the wider scope of water governance in the Mediterranean, there is a multiplicity of stakeholders that come from different disciplines and levels that want a stake in the decision-making process. Without going any further, the European leadership that copes with water gathers European Union (EU) member countries, non-member countries, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations¹⁷. Apart from interrelating between each other in EU water frameworks, actors also interact with other stakeholders from different natures, various levels, and distinct governance structures. Before such a complex network, decision-makers struggle to coin a common framework that meets all actors’ demands. Also, as more actors are involved, processes of dialogue, analysis and negotiation become slower, more expensive and less effective¹⁸. As stated by Helen Ingram, “the more complex the policy chain, such as policies involving actors at multiple levels in public and private sectors, the more numerous are the veto points where policies can fail”¹⁹. For this precise reason, governments place little trust, liability and commitment in transboundary water initiatives.

Hypothesis 3: The rigidity of governance structures

Third, governance prescriptions established in the Mediterranean up to date have set standardised solutions and general policy practices, disregarding the context and the political, social and economic phenomena that distinguish one country from another²⁰. Institutional arrangements implemented over the past 50 years have claimed to be the ‘panacea’ of water management, but governments have found difficulties in adopting these to local contexts. One of the mechanisms widely criticised by the scholar community for its lack of flexibility is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Principles on Water Governance²¹. Moreover, standardised solutions have always embraced just one political notion to solve the problem of water: either a top-down approach reigned by hierarchical and bureaucratic arrangements, or a bottom-up perspective that seeks egalitarianism, horizontality and informality. Nonetheless, it is not necessary to argue that such an interdisciplinary resource -as water is- requires integrated solutions that contain a mix of perspectives, not dichotomous political narratives. This is nicely put by the authors of the book ‘Clumsy Solutions for a Complex World’:

“It takes its cue from the idea that our endlessly changing and complex social worlds consist of ceaseless interactions between organising, justifying and perceiving social relations. Each time

¹⁴ NION, G., “Mediterranean Water Policies Conceptual Framework”. In: CHOUKR-ALLAH, R. and RODRÍGUEZ-CLEMENTE, R. (eds.) *Integrated Water Resources Management in the Mediterranean Region*. Springer, London, 2012, pp. 253-266, p. 255.

¹⁵ NION, G., *op. cit.*, nota 14.

¹⁶ ABUZEID, K.M., “Mediterranean Water Outlook: Perspective on Policies and Water Management in Arab Countries”. In: CHOUKR-ALLAH, R. and RODRÍGUEZ-CLEMENTE, R. (eds.) *Integrated Water Resources Management in the Mediterranean Region*. Springer, London, 2012, pp. 223-235, p.225.

¹⁷ SCULLOS, M. and FERRAGINA, E., *op. cit.*, nota 11, p.14.

¹⁸ LaCaixa (Producer). “*La importància de les mobilitzacions ciutadanes per abordar l'emergència climàtica*”, Seminar, February 21st, 2022, intervention of Ms. Lucía Errandonea (expert at Ideas for Change).

¹⁹ INGRAM, H., *op. cit.*, nota 3, p.15.

²⁰ INGRAM, H., *op. cit.*, nota 3, p.12.

²¹ MEISCH, S.P., “I Want to Tell You a Story: How Narrative Water Ethics Contributed to Re-theorizing Water Politics”, *Water* 2019, Vol. 11, 2019, num. 631.

one of these perspectives is excluded from collective decision-making, governance failure inevitably results.”²²

Before the lack of flexibility and over-rigidity of water regimes in the Mediterranean, countries have shown themselves wary of getting involved in them, and have been resistant to implementing water governance strategies collectively.

1.2.2. Research Method

Overview

With the ultimate aim to achieve the objectives of this thesis and address the hypotheses, it is necessary to use a three-way methodology, a combination of three qualitative sources: (I) the main findings that compose the literature, (II) a discourse analysis of the specific case study of the Union for the Mediterranean, and (III) the insights of some of the main experts in the field that have been interviewed for the purpose of this study.

(I) Literature

The literature review used in this study has been fed by the contributions of experts from the environmental and the political domains. Concerning the environmental area, data has been extracted from international research entities such as the Institute of Studies on Mediterranean Societies (ISSM), the European Institute for the Mediterranean (IEMed), and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Also, further attention has been given to literature specialised in the most technical aspects of water management in the Mediterranean. One of the most recurring sources in this regard is the book ‘Integrated Water Resources Management in the Mediterranean Region’. With regards to the political domain, this book has also brought interesting political insights to the literature review, especially in relation to water policies and governance. Also, policy statements and official working papers from international institutions such as the United Nations and the OECD have been used to complement scholar insights. Finally, all information regarding political governance frameworks for water has been contrasted with alternative critical approaches, such as the ‘Narrative Ethics’.

(II) Discourse Analysis

In order to examine how water governance works in the Mediterranean area, this study has taken the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) as a case study. Accordingly, the UfM is one example of the institutional initiatives that have contributed to the development of a governance framework for water on the Mediterranean. Indeed, it supports joint actions among Mediterranean countries to address the water crisis, and promotes projects that aim to accelerate socioeconomic development in the region²³. In this analysis, I have targeted the UfM’s Ministerial Declarations, a set of high-level documents that result from thematic Ministerial Conferences where Ministers discuss and set the priorities, objectives and specific policies about a specific issue. More specifically, the analysis focuses on all UfM Ministerial Declarations set between 2014 and 2021, and which mainly cover the Environment and Climate Change, Blue Economy and Water.

²² VERWEIJ, M and THOMPSON, M., *Clumsy Solutions for a Complex World: Governance, Politics and Plural Perceptions*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, abstract.

²³ Official Website of the Union for the Mediterranean.

The analysis of the Ministerial Declaration is based on a discourse analysis. The aim of the discourse analysis is to examine the discourses delivered by the UfM Ministers with regards to water governance, and to identify the dynamics between countries through them. By applying this method, this paper will:

- Inspect the ministerial texts of the UfM in water governance;
- Recognize the water governance structure of the UfM;
- Understand the national and foreign agendas of Mediterranean countries with regards to water and the environment;
- Identify wider patterns of interaction among countries that shape the overall system and the governance framework of the Mediterranean;

The discourse analysis of the Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Declarations has been carried by the *coding and categorising* method. This basically consists of establishing sets of categories and codes that will later be identified in the texts in order to establish some patterns. These patterns will later be contrasted with hypotheses and translated into conclusions (see Annex).

(III) Interviews

The third source of qualitative data used in this analysis is the interviews. Even though the literature review sets a conclusive theoretical framework to base my research, it felt interesting to reinforce the analysis by carrying out an interview with an international expert in the most technical and environmental issues of water governance in the region (see Annex: Interview with Dr. Redouane Choukr-Allah)²⁴. This interviewee brought the Southern perspective to the analysis, providing insights about water management and governance in the Arab Mediterranean region. Moreover, since this study focuses on the specific framework of the UfM, an interview with someone working at the UfM that provides first-hand insights of its work in water governance is essential (see Annex: Interview with Mr. Almotaz Abadi²⁵). While these interviewees had very interesting contributions to the research, they came from very streamlining domains. Thus, unconventional insights from experts in the non-state sector were also needed to contrast the main narrative (see Annex: Interview with Mr. Franc Cortada²⁶). By elucidating processes of social construction - how the clash of ideas of water lead to structural deficiencies, how rules perpetuate the distribution of power, and how States come to be the ultimate governors - provide a useful approach to understand governance challenges in the Mediterranean. The synthesis of these four interviews has allowed to contrast the streamlining theoretical framework of water governance with real in-field expertise and alternative approaches.

1.3. The Politics of Water Governance: Framework, Definition and Context

1.3.1. Framework

Water governance is still a very recent phenomenon that lacks mechanisms, institutional structures and experienced agents to properly land in the Mediterranean region. Despite the youthfulness of this regime, recent policy developments show that it has adopted a crucial position not only to promote political cooperation among Mediterranean countries but also to

²⁴ Interview with Redouane Choukr-Allah, undertaken on March 10th 2022.

²⁵ Interview with a UfM Officer, undertaken on March 11th 2022 and interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

²⁶ Interview with Franc Cortada, undertaken on April 27th 2022.

secure social and economic development in the region. This section aspires to elaborate on the significance of studying and analysing the politics of water governance in the current context of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a new plan of action composed of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets with the ambition to seek universal peace, sustainable development and prosperity in the world by 2030²⁷. Sustainable development is universal and as such, there is no country that can escape from its duty to make progress with respect to equity, job creation or climate change. Therefore, the Agenda 2030 applies to Mediterranean countries as well.

In fact, the Mediterranean region has been one of the most vulnerable to climate change, and most complicated to promote a sustainable future. Studies show that 48% of natural wetland has been lost since 1970; 730 tonnes of plastic enter the Mediterranean Sea every day; and Mediterranean cities will account for half of those most damaged by sea level rise in the world by 2050²⁸. Also, the Mediterranean harbours more forest fires and degradation of agricultural land than any other region in the world²⁹. Yet, future prospects do not seem optimistic either: scientists expect an increase of severe water shortages, led by a constant decrease of water supply and a rising demand of water from growing population, larger industrial and agricultural needs, and growing tourism trade. On top of that, climate change is further tensening water availability and security in the region³⁰.

1.3.2. Definitions: governance, politics and water

Before the instability of water resources in the Mediterranean, there is an increasing demand for governing water. Decision-makers acknowledge the importance of water as a strategic resource essential to promote sustainable development and security in the region, and have started to put more attention on its management³¹. This study engages precisely in the examination of mechanisms, approaches and initiatives set by Mediterranean countries to manage water, and features the role they have in shaping water governance.

Water governance is referred by Nicole J. Wilson *et al.* as “the processes through which institutions, actors, and societies broadly decide on how water is to be used, by whom, and under what circumstances”³². In this line, this study considers water governance as the framework of rules, institutions, policies and mechanisms that frame the water agenda. By now, there is a large quantity of literature dealing with water governance from a political point of view, considering politics as an intrinsic element of water governance. According to Zwarteveen *et al.*, “water governance at heart is about political choices as to where water should flow; about the norms, rules and laws on which such choices should be based; about who is best able or qualified to decide about this”³³. That is why in this study an attempt is made to analyse the extent to which politics shape and intervene in the good governance of

²⁷ United Nations General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/RES/70/1, 2015.

²⁸ Union for the Mediterranean, “UfM Environment Agenda” [Online] Available at: <https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-environment-agenda/> [Last accessed: March 20th, 2022].

²⁹ CHOUKR-ALLAH, R. *et al.*, *Integrated Water Resources Management in the Mediterranean Region*, Springer: London, 2012, Preface.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ WILSON, N.J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 4, p. 23.

³² WILSON, N.J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 4, p. 1.

³³ ZWARTEVEEN, M. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 9, p. 1.

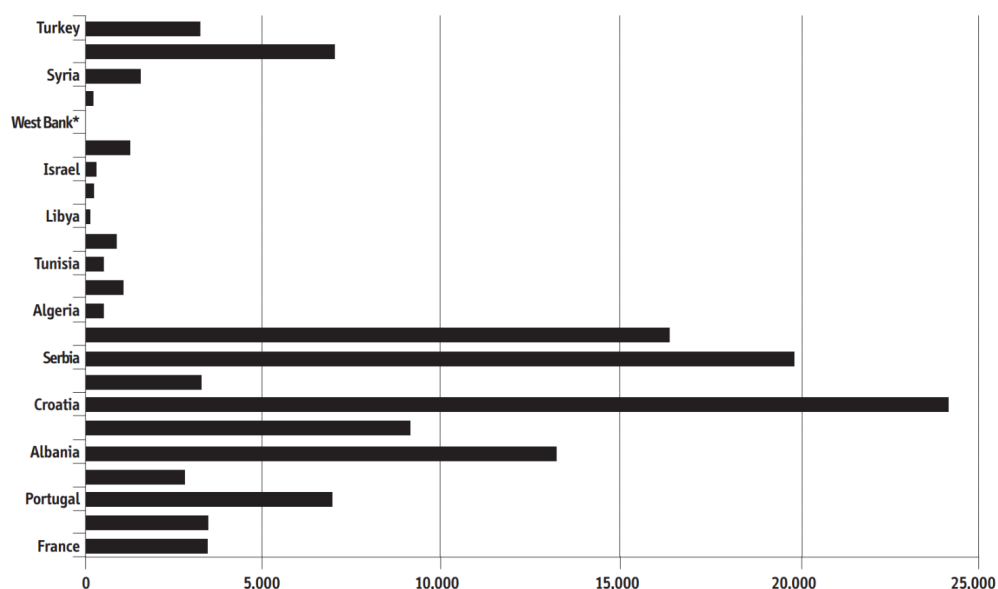
water, considering *politics* purely as the national interests of States. In this sense, when analysing the politics of water governance, we will be referring to the national interests of governments towards the water agenda, and will be addressing questions such as: *what is the national agenda of States towards water governance? Which mechanisms are used to manage water resources? Who takes the important decisions? Which power relations are established between decision-makers and stakeholders?*

Since water has so many functions and connotations, attempts to differentiate the governance framework for every dimension of water may complicate the analysis. For this reason, this paper will treat ‘*water*’ as a broader concept, including simultaneous dimensions: fresh water, groundwater and seawater. In the same line, the concept ‘*water governance*’ will refer to all governance frameworks of water, from fresh and sea water governance to blue economy³⁴. There are many other dimensions where water is present, and yet, this analysis will only focus on the already-mentioned ones, thereby sticking to UfM’s agenda on Water, Environment and Blue Economy.

1.3.3. Mediterranean Context

Before an increasing vulnerability and scarcity of water resources in the Mediterranean, decision-makers have set management frameworks to not only secure water access in their country, but also to ensure equal distribution, supply and fair use of water throughout the region. Such mechanisms have been implemented with the assumption that water can be easily managed by governments and politics, and that regulation is universally applied³⁵. Yet, the reality is that the Mediterranean region’s water supply is unequally distributed, as the main shortage of water is focused in the Southern countries.

Figure 1: Distribution of Water Resources Per Capita (2005)



Source: FERRAGINA, E., “The Water Issue in the Mediterranean”. In: SCULLOS, M. and FERRAGINA, E. *Environmental and Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean*, European Institute of the Mediterranean and Institute for Security Studies, 2008, pp. 53-78;

³⁴ Blue economy is the concept that refers to the use of ocean, sea and coastal water resources for economic growth.

³⁵ WILSON, N.J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 4, p. 2.

Figure 1 shows an extreme water divide in the Mediterranean: while Croatia enjoyed 24,000m³ of water per person in 2005, Algeria barely reached the 1000m³ per capita. This inequality has sustained over time. According to an Assessment Report published by the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change, in 2016 Northern Mediterranean countries held approximately 73% of water resources while Eastern and Southern countries only amounted to 27%³⁶.

Water availability is one of the many issues that have led to the current water crisis, and as Zwartveen *et al.* affirm “the water crisis is a crisis of governance”³⁷. This is argued by the fact that if water resources are already limited, an ineffective circle of water management policies will reasonably hamper their security and availability. The problem of water governance, however, does not come from a lack of regulation³⁸. Indeed, water regulation is one of the oldests ones in the Mediterranean as it traces back its historical roots as a trading and navigation region³⁹. Instead, the ineffectiveness of water governance comes from a lack of proper implementation of these regulations⁴⁰. It is therefore to agree with Micheal Scoullos and Eugenia Ferragina, who point out that water rules have already been integrated in the political agenda for centuries. The problem emerges, they follow, because the implementation of this regulation has failed⁴¹. This argument hereby does not place the problem in water ‘regulation’ but in water ‘implementation’, which is what this study will focus on.

When analysing water governance, a myriad of questions arise regarding how this precious resource is distributed among sectors, who implement efforts to increase productivity and efficiency, and which basis are these decisions taken on. These questions are not just about water, but also determine the nature behind laws, norms and decision-making processes. This brings us to the primary element of our research. Acknowledging the many links between water governance and decisions concerning politics, it is fundamental to study how politics intervene in water governance in an effort to illuminate how political interests have leverage over water issues in the Mediterranean, and to produce lessons for policymakers to improve policies in the future.

The study of political influence in water governance of the Euro-mediterranean region is crucial in a context in which efforts to regulate water have been unsustainable or, in major cases, a failure. The failure of water governance has, according to some authors, exacerbated the current environmental crisis. One of them, Micheal Scoullos, describes this crisis through eight different factors⁴².

³⁶ FADER, M. *et al.*, “Water”. In: CRAMER, W. *et al.* (eds.), “*Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin - Current Situation and Risks for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report*”, MedECC, 2020, pp.1-57, p.4.

³⁷ ZWARTEVEEN, M. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 9, p. 2.

³⁸ The concept of ‘water regulation’ refers to the “norms, rules and laws” that manage water resources. ZWARTEVEEN, M. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 9, p. 1.

³⁹ RODRÍGUEZ-CLEMENTE, R. and HIDALGO A., “Identifying Risks, Actions, and Opportunities for a Long-Term Water Strategy in the Mediterranean”. In: CHOUKR-ALLAH, R. and RODRÍGUEZ-CLEMENTE, R. (eds.) *Integrated Water Resources Management in the Mediterranean Region*. Springer, London, 2012, pp. 237-252.

⁴⁰ Interview with Redouane Choukr-Allah, undertaken on March 10th 2022. The concept of ‘implementation’, taken from the A. Hamdy and R. Choukr-Allah, means the put in practice of the initiatives of water governance by institutions and states. HAMDY A. and CHOUKR-ALLAH, R., *op. cit.*, nota 10, p.268.

⁴¹ SCULLOS, M. and FERRAGINA, E., *op. cit.*, nota 11.

⁴² SCULLOS, M., “Environmental and Sustainable Development Components of a European Strategy for the Mediterranean in 2010”. In: SCULLOS, M. and FERRAGINA, E. *Environmental and Sustainable*

First, cities and urban settlements have grown. The rapid urbanisation has led to an increasing demand of water resources, pollution of aquifers, excessive land use and greenhouse gas emissions. Second, tourism has brought even more people to the region, further exacerbating environmental degradation and water pollution. Third, agriculture has also played a significant role. Whilst it is the primary source of social and economic development in the majority of countries, there still prevail unsustainable agricultural practices which have exacerbated soil erosion and water misuse. Fourth, the generation of waste and marine debris, mainly caused by the absence of functional recycling and waste management mechanisms, amount to 80% of the total pollution of water in the region. The fifth factor is the industrial sector, especially the energy, chemical, metallurgical, and oil refining, which have severe consequences over the ecosystems, air, water and biodiversity by releasing high concentrations of pollutants such as heavy metals, dioxins and benzenes. Sixth, maritime traffic also puts environmental pressure not only through the giant infrastructures it requires, but also through the oil spills that may occur in case of shipping accidents. Relatedly, transport by car and air planes has increased throughout the region, and so have greenhouse gas emissions and toxic substances as a consequence. Finally, the overfishing and excessive by-catch practices are endangering the survival of fish species and affective coastal and marine ecosystems.

The exposure of the Mediterranean to these pressures has led to major environmental problems: desertification, soil erosion, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, floods and droughts. While these have been further exacerbated by climate change, the reason behind their persistence is a deficient governance framework. Many authors have identified and listed a wide range of challenges applicable to the particular case of water governance in the Mediterranean. While these will be further scrutinised in the following study, literature can be summarised as follows:

- Lack or delay in the implementation of legislation;
- Lack of political commitment and accountability of results due to democratic deficit, corruption and over-bureaucracies;
- Weak coordination between authorities at local, national and regional levels;
- Political and social instability of the region;
- Slow and unequal access to innovation;
- Scientific and technical incapacities;
- Limited investment in research and implementation mechanisms;
- Little education and documentation about environmental and climate change mitigation information;
- Cultural differences with regards to water's ontology and purpose⁴³.

1.4. The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

Despite the fact that cooperation between European and the Southern countries of the Mediterranean was not evinced until last century, the last forty years have experienced a massive upgrade of their relations. This happened mainly on the initiative of France and

Development in the Mediterranean, European Institute of the Mediterranean and Institute for Security Studies, 2008, pp. 13-52, pp. 16-18.

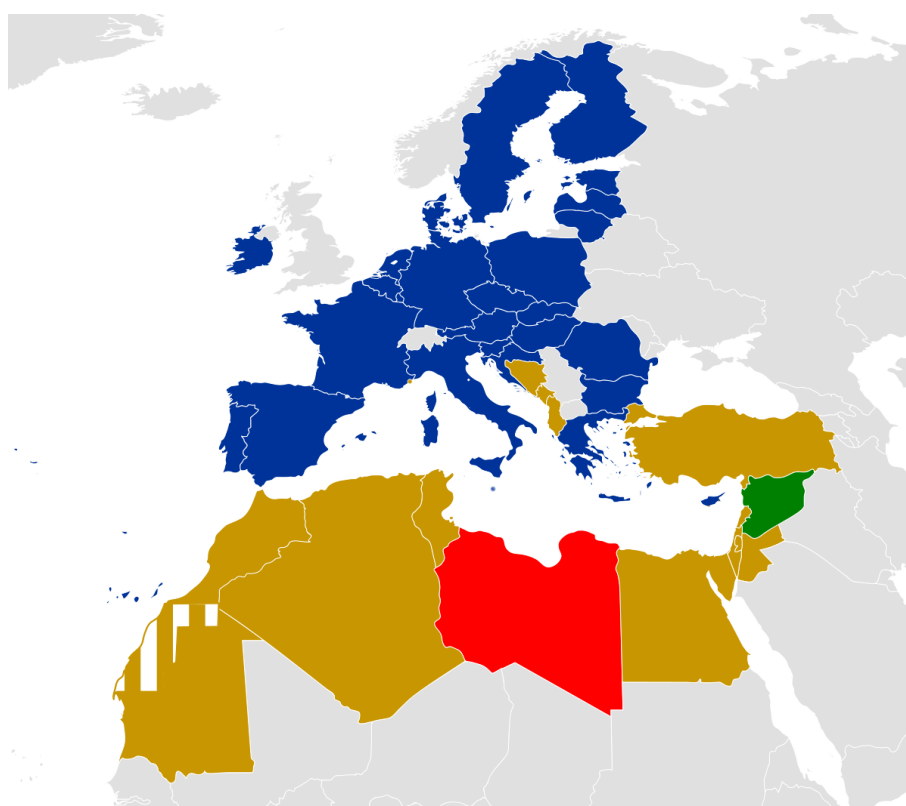
⁴³ FERRAGINA, E., *op. cit.*, nota 12; SCULLOS, M., *op. cit.*, nota 42; HAMDY, A., "Water Governance in the Mediterranean". *Economy and Territory: Sustainable Development. European Institute for the Mediterranean*, 2012.

Spain, who pushed towards the creation of the so-called ‘Barcelona Declaration’ and its framework, “the Barcelona Process”⁴⁴. Created in 1995, the Barcelona Process was a regional partnership between the 15 EU Member States and 12 Mediterranean Partners who aimed “to give their future relations a new dimension” and to turn “the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity”⁴⁵.

The Barcelona Process set the foundations for the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean, which was finally approved by the Council of the EU in November 2008, praising it as “a renewed political momentum into Euro-Mediterranean relations”⁴⁶.

The Union for the Mediterranean is an intergovernmental organisation currently composed of 42 countries (27 EU Member States and 15 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean States). It can be observed that participants include Libya as an observer state taking part in the project.

Figure 2: Union for the Mediterranean Partner States



Source: MILTNER, P., “The Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership: A Comparative Analysis”, *Department of European Interdisciplinary Studies, College of Europe*, 2010.

It was set with the mandate to continue the Barcelona Process, preserving the EU and Southern Mediterranean cooperation. Apart from its old aims of the Process which is “to build together a future of peace, democracy, prosperity and human, social and cultural understanding”⁴⁷, three new aims were established:

⁴⁴ MILTNER, P., “The Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership: A Comparative Analysis”, *Department of European Interdisciplinary Studies, College of Europe*, 2010, p.23.

⁴⁵ Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, *Final Declaration (Barcelona Declaration)*, Barcelona, 1995.

⁴⁶ Council of the European Union, *Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean ministerial conference*, 15187/08 (Presse 314), Marseille (France), 2008.

⁴⁷ Council of the European Union, *Joint declaration of the Paris summit for the Mediterranean*, 11887/08 (Presse 213, Brussels (Belgium), 2008, p.9.

- To upgrade the political level of the EU-Mediterranean partnerships;
- To provide more co-ownership and accountability to multilateral relations; and
- To make relations more concrete and visible through additional regional and sub-regional projects, relevant for the citizens of the region⁴⁸.

Its unique character derives from its nature as an intergovernmental Mediterranean partnership with a permanent Secretariat that brings together European and Southern Mediterranean countries to decide on priorities and actions of collective concern through a pragmatic structure. It is therefore not a donor, a fundraiser or a political institution, but a platform through which Member Countries and stakeholders gather together to discuss, debate and decide on priorities and agendas with the ultimate goal of achieving better social and economic development in the region⁴⁹. In these lines, Aliboni and Ammor stress that “[t]he deep political meaning of the UfM, but also its main challenge, is the attempt to share decision-making and management between the regions North and South of the Mediterranean Sea”⁵⁰.

As an intergovernmental organisation, it hosts annual meetings of Ministers of Member Countries to discuss particular issues and elaborate Ministerial Declarations (MDs). Among all thematic issues, MDs are built around Environment and Climate Change (2014, 2021), Blue Economy (2015, 2021) and Water (2017). These MDs express UfM’s Member States political interests, priorities and commitments regarding environmental and climate challenges, blue economy and water-related issues. They also set guidelines for the UfM and its Members States to collaborate with international initiatives such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the Barcelona Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the European Union, among others⁵¹.

1.5. Dissertation Outline

In order to simplify the analysis, this study is divided into chapters. Departing from Chapter 2, an overview of the overall literature of the politics of water governance in the Euro-mediterranean region is presented. This section mainly evokes scholarly research and debates about water definition and research, governance design and implementation. Chapter 3 is devoted to the discourse analysis of the Ministerial Declarations of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and interviews. This part is divided into sections, each one assigned to each hypothesis and ended with some final remarks. It also contains a final section including an interim conclusion. A further chapter follows providing some avenues towards a better regional water governance for the UfM and the Mediterranean countries. The fifth and final part of the thesis reveals the concluding remarks of the study and some potentially important trends that may be interesting to study in the future. The annex includes the content analysis and the interview transcripts.

⁴⁸ Council of the European Union, *op. cit.*, nota 47, p.13.

⁴⁹ Union for the Mediterranean Official Website.

⁵⁰ ALIBONI R. and AMMOR F., ‘Under the Shadow of ‘Barcelona’: From the EMP to the Union for the Mediterranean’, *EuroMeSCo paper*, 2009, num. 77, p. 4.

⁵¹ GLOBAL CAD, “External Evaluation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change”, 2019.

2. Literature Review

In the area of the Mediterranean, the governance of water is recognized as a priority issue in the core of national agendas and intergovernmental cooperation relations. This is due to the growing role of water in promoting socio-economic development and stability in the region, both for the Northern and Southern countries of the Basin. Nowadays, many Mediterranean countries are currently in the process of establishing ways to improve regional strategies and policies to secure access to water, maintain ecosystems and produce economic development. While water governance is politically seen as a crucial issue, there is little development and recognition of its centrality⁵².

The acute water crisis led by competing water uses and climate change has involved scholarly attention from a wide range of issues: from water management to water governance qualities, instruments and regional cooperation. Given the diversity and complexity of water governance and following the ontology of ‘governance’ itself, this section is divided into three different areas: definition, regulation and implementation of water governance.

2.1. Definition

Various paradigms and theories on water governance have emerged since the proliferation of water governance studies in the 1980s⁵³. From the beginning, water governance definitions had been focused on one specific issue. A review of the water governance studies performed by Özerol *et al.* shows that the first work on this matter was focused on very specific issues, such as river basin management, agriculture and urban water services. These were mainly published in technical-based environmental journals such as the *Environmental Policy and Governance*; *Ecology and Society*; *Water Policy*; *Environmental Science and Policy*; *Regional Environmental Change* and *Water International*⁵⁴. In this line, definitions were also very narrow-minded and did not provide a generic overview. For decades, the most general description was the one provided by the United Nations Development Programme: “Governance [...] is the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs”⁵⁵. This implies that there has not been a common approach among the scholars to define water governance yet.

As the discipline has evolved, new definitions have been coined. In fact, and perhaps counter-productively, some of them overlap up to the point of making it difficult to differentiate governance from the different management activities that it encompasses. Nowadays, the most used definition is taken from the Global Water Partnership, which states that water governance is “the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society”⁵⁶. Despite being the definition *par excellence*, more complete meanings to water governance have been coined recently. This is the case of Hamdy and Choukr-Allah’s definition, which includes informal structures and other non-governmental

⁵² HAMDY A. and CHOUKR-ALLAH, R., *op. cit.*, nota 10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ ÖZEROL, G. *et al.*, “Comparative studies of water governance: a systematic review”. *Ecology and Society*, Vol. 23, 2018, num. 4, p.4.

⁵⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Governance for sustainable human development: a UNDP policy document*. UNDP, New York, New York, USA, 1997.

⁵⁶ Global Water Partnership, *Introducing Effective Water Governance*, 2002, p.5.

actors: “A mix of formal and informal institutions that are in place for managing water resources emphasising the link between communities and local governmental entities”⁵⁷.

Historically, governance was associated with government, hierarchical power and management. However, the concept of governance started evolving in the 20th century and adopted a new meaning: “something more than government”⁵⁸. Scholars have contrasted water governance with management by being regarded as a broader concept that involves political processes, actors, principles, rules and management decisions at different levels⁵⁹. On the contrary, water management is perceived, within the governance scope, as the set of specific actions taken by governments and based on very bureaucratic structures to directly manage water⁶⁰. Hence, scholar literature has characterised water governance as being more inclusive and aiming at ensuring legitimacy, unlike water management, which exclusively seeks political efficiency⁶¹. It must be stressed that this issue is clearly distinct from the question whether, and to what extent, national politics move towards an integrated approach of water governance. This study certainly relies on political discretion and as such does not go into ontological details about governance itself. It will herein consider governance and management as relatively same concepts.

The complexity of water governance has led authors to define different dimensions within it. Following Hamdy and Choukr-Allah’s study, there can be defined four different dimensions: the social, the economic, the environmental and the political. The social dimension addresses the equitable use of water resources among citizens, and especially between Northern and Southern countries. The economic dimension points to the efficiency of water management processes and their compatibility with economic growth in the region. The environmental dimension is the one regarding the sustainable use of water resources and the protection of ecosystems. And the political dimension draws attention on granting political opportunities to stakeholders to influence water governance, particularly to the most marginalised groups, such as women⁶². Other authors set categories determined by thematic criteria, such as water culture, water technology, water policies, water conflict, etcetera⁶³. In any case, the scholarly tendency to define water governance in categories demonstrates the complexity and transversality of such phenomenon.

2.2. Regulation

The regulation of water is another sphere worth exposing in order to understand the constellation of rules, principles and norms that have been set to regulate water in the Mediterranean.

Water governance has always been reigned by the principle of human domination over nature⁶⁴. In the 20th century, a growing awareness of the limits of the environment and the damaging spill-over effects of human activities replaced the free will narrative by the notion

⁵⁷ HAMDY A. and CHOUKR-ALLAH, R., *op. cit.*, nota 10, p. 265.

⁵⁸ RASOOLY, N., “Water Governance in Afghanistan”, Degree Thesis, *Oregon State University*, 2019, p.23.

⁵⁹ ÖZEROL, G. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 54.

⁶⁰ MEISCH, S.P., *op. cit.*, nota 21, p.1.

⁶¹ MEISCH, S.P., *op. cit.*, nota 21, p.1.

⁶² HAMDY A. and CHOUKR-ALLAH, R., *op. cit.*, nota 10, p. 269.

⁶³ Mediterranean Dialogue on Integrated Water Management, Integrated Water Management [Online] Available at: <https://www.idaea.csic.es/meliaproject/integrated-water-management> [Last accessed: February 19th, 2022].

⁶⁴ FERRAGINA, E., *op. cit.*, nota 12.

of “wise and responsible use of natural resources [and the protection of] the rights of future generations”⁶⁵. The interest in water and environmental regulation emerged after the Second World War, in a context of structural changes in the international liberal order led by the processes of globalisation and democratisation⁶⁶. At that time, water systems faced challenges due to population growth, climate change and urban development, and started being integrated in domestic government debates with the aim to cope with such complexity and provide management practices⁶⁷.

As this notion was being integrated in the political, economic and social systems of countries, the importance of regulating water at a regional level also emerged. This was firstly recognized in the Mediterranean Charter for Water (1992), in which Ministers recognized the fact that “water resources are of vital importance for man and his environment and can constitute a positive factor in the cooperation among countries”⁶⁸. In the Environment in the European Report of 1995, the European Environmental Agency also acknowledged the threats to water derived from human-led pollution and over-exploitation, and stated EU’s state of action and responsibility on water management⁶⁹. Moreover, the Barcelona Declaration (1995), which first established the framework for an Euro-Mediterranean partnership, identified water as a pillar for regional cooperation and development:

"Water is a priority issue for all the Mediterranean partners and will gain in importance as water scarcity becomes more pressing. The purpose of cooperation in this area will be as follows:
- to take stock of the situation taking into account current and future needs;
- to identify ways of reinforcing regional cooperation;
- to make proposals for rationalising the planning and management of water resources, where appropriate on a joint basis;
- to contribute towards the creation of new sources of water”⁷⁰.

As a result, water governance started being viewed as a common ground for regional cooperation among Mediterranean countries. In fact, the Barcelona Declaration set the basis for a series of Mediterranean Water Conferences (Marseille, 1996; Malta, 1997; Palermo, 1999, Madrid, 2001; etcetera) and for the EU Water Framework Directive, which aimed at establishing a framework for water policy in the European region⁷¹.

On top of regional regulatory endeavours, there were also various frameworks at the international level. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Water Principles is one of the most cited sources among scholars⁷². Not only did the OECD establish a set of 12 principles to regulate water use, but it also created a Water Governance Indicator Framework, to support the implementation of these principles⁷³.

Despite the multiple attempts to design the governance framework for water in the Mediterranean, authors believe that there is no single formula for governance, and therefore, no standardised regulation. Indeed, Hamdy and Choukr-Allah claim that “governing

⁶⁵ FERRAGINA, E., *op. cit.*, nota 12. p.68.

⁶⁶ RASOOLY, N., *op. cit.*, nota 58, p. 28.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Mediterranean Charter for Water*. Ministerial conference in Rome, 1992.

⁶⁹ European Environment Agency, Environment in the European Union, *Report for the Review of the Fifth Environmental Action Programme*, 1995.

⁷⁰ *Barcelona Declaration. Work Programme*. Euro-Mediterranean conference, Barcelona, 1995.

⁷¹ European Commission, Water Framework Directive (WFD), 2000/60/EC.

⁷² OECD, *Principles on Water Governance*, Regional Development Policy Committee, 2015.

⁷³ OECD, *OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework*, 2018.

mechanisms vary considerably across countries due to the variations of water resources characteristics and socio-economic and political frameworks⁷⁴. These authors are reticent towards the idea of a common regional governance framework. Yet the Global Water Partnership has declared a set of common principles that could serve as the regulatory basis for water in the Mediterranean, which define:

- Water as a finite and vulnerable resource;
- The importance of a participatory approach involving users, planners and policymakers;
- The recognition of the special role of women as water users;
- Water as an economic good with economic value in competing uses and as having social and environmental roles⁷⁵.

Hamdy adds to these principles key factors that are essential to global governance:

- Sound policies;
- Decentralised legal and regulatory framework that protects water rights and laws;
- Respect for human needs and dignity⁷⁶.

Others, such as Saravanan and Ingram, propose instead a combination of formal and informal mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships, to obtain the optimum water governance design⁷⁷.

Apart from the scholarly debates over the regulation of water governance, in practical terms, water governance has been theoretically framed by the Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development⁷⁸; the Agenda 21⁷⁹; the Guidelines on Access to Environmental Information and Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making⁸⁰; and the Reports of Global Water Partnership⁸¹.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, and as a consequence of the release of the EU's Water Framework Directive, which resulted from multilateral dialogues and collaborations, scholars such as Choukr-Allah, Nion, Hamdy and Scoullou started to focus on setting the theoretical bases for integrated governance mechanisms. One of the most framed ones is the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). This has been defined by the Global Water Partnership as “a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximise the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital

⁷⁴ HAMDY A. and CHOUKR-ALLAH, R., *op. cit.*, nota 10, p. 268.

⁷⁵ Global Water Partnership, *op. cit.*, nota 56.

⁷⁶ HAMDY, A., *op. cit.*, nota 43.

⁷⁷ SARAVANAN, V.S., “Integrated water resource management: a response”. *Center for Development Research, University of Bonn*, 2006; INGRAM, H., *op. cit.*, nota 3.

⁷⁸ International Conference on Water and the Environment (ICWE), *The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development*. International Conference on Water and the Environment, Dublin, 1992.

⁷⁹ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, *Agenda 21, Rio Declaration*. New York: United Nations, 1992.

⁸⁰ United Nations, *Draft Guidelines on Access to Environmental Information and Public Participation in Environmental Decision-making*. ECE Working Group of Senior Governmental Officials “Environment for Europe”, Geneva, 1995.

⁸¹ HAMDY A. and CHOUKR-ALLAH, R., *op. cit.*, nota 10.

ecosystems”⁸². The call for more integration, which makes the difference with the traditional approaches, is motivated by the fact that, as a transectoral issue, water governance requires a holistic approach that includes all societal actors at different levels and dimensions: health, poverty, food, agriculture, education, economic development⁸³.

As many scholars focus on debating which approach better guides water regulation and whether IWRM is a more suitable solution than conventional governmental management, analytical literature draws on the political nature of the overall design. While there is a general consensus that water regulation results from political arrangements, scholars disagree on what ‘politics’ bring to it. Wilson *et al.* argue that water governance is inseparable from politics, but propose to re-think politics as a collaborative and inclusive process that brings social and cultural context to norms and regulations⁸⁴. More radical authors, such as Meisch, argue from the Narrative Ethics perspective that current regulatory frameworks, such as the OECD Water Principles, are political tools of Western countries to crystallise their moral values. She proposes instead to create a reflective water governance framework that incorporates alternative political narratives⁸⁵.

2.3. Implementation

Even though theoretical approaches on water governance appeared in the 1980s, they were not implemented until 30 years later. As already mentioned, in this paper, implementation refers to putting into effect the different rules, mechanisms and water management initiatives by institutions and public authorities at national and international levels.

Perhaps the implementation of water governance is the most controversial aspect of the discipline. This is due to the absence of proper institutional capacities and cooperative mechanisms at the Mediterranean level, which have raised many ethical, political and legal concerns. Some authors suggest that it is the overwhelming amount of actors involved in water governance which hinders the creation of a coherent institutional framework for water governance in the Mediterranean⁸⁶. In this context, many institutional programs have been proposed to resolve these shortcomings, but, thus far, have not succeeded in catalysing real outcomes. One of these is the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean (SWM), proposed in the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean (Paris, 2008) as an institutional plan of action to promote water conservation, demand management and financing optimization⁸⁷. The SWM was planned to be approved in the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water of 2008 in Jordan, but due to lack of political consensus it failed⁸⁸. Another attempt is the ‘Water 5+5: Towards a Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean’ strategy, launched by water ministers of the Western Mediterranean countries (Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and Malta on the European Side, and Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania and Tunisia on the African side) in 2013. This initiative had the aim to create a common approach of water governance, strengthen cooperation, and achieve a higher degree of political, economic and social

⁸² Mediterranean Dialogue on Integrated Water Management., *op. cit.*, nota 10.

⁸³ HAMDY, A., *op. cit.*, nota 43; FERRAGINA, E., *op. cit.*, nota 12.

⁸⁴ WILSON, N.J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 4.

⁸⁵ MEISCH, S.P., *op. cit.*, nota 21.

⁸⁶ HAMDY, A. *op. cit.*, nota 23.

⁸⁷ *Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean*, Paris, 2008.

⁸⁸ RODRÍGUEZ-CLEMENTE, R. and HIDALGO A., *op. cit.*, nota 39.

integration. Unlike the UfM's proposal, this is still implemented but the forum has been losing strength due to its over-bureaucracy, discoordination and differences in priorities⁸⁹.

Institutional endeavours to implement the already-mentioned Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) mechanisms have also taken place. The Mediterranean Dialogue for Integrated Water Management project, also called MELIA, is an example. This was an EU-financed collaborative project launched in 2006 with the aim to “build a knowledge base for Integrated Water Resources Management planning (...) and to propose participatory mechanisms and prevention tools to avoid competition for resources between regions, states and different end users”⁹⁰.

Politically and socially, the challenge that most countries face is how to balance their national interests with the regional needs to advance governance developmental plans. For now, we still need to further understand the reason why institutions struggle to effectively govern water resources. Current scholars debate on: *How institutional gaps for water governance affect Mediterranean countries? How may these gaps impact integrated management models? What mechanisms can be used for addressing these gaps? What roles individuals, civil society have in governing access and control over water resources?*⁹¹ Needless to say, all this research has the final goal to guide policymakers in their task to design and implement a coherent framework for water governance in the Mediterranean, whether it is an integrated or dispersed governance regime.

⁸⁹ FERRAGINA, E. and QUAGLIAROTTI, D., *op. cit.*, nota 6.

⁹⁰ CHOUKR-ALLAH, R. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 29, Preface.

⁹¹ HAMDY A. and CHOUKR-ALLAH, R., *op. cit.*, nota 10.

3. Analysis

“The situation in the Mediterranean varies on the different levels of governance: [some are] independent of political processes but the majority are attached totally to the political processes”⁹².

In the above quote, Almotaz Abadi makes an explicit reference to the interaction of politics and water governance in the region of the Mediterranean. Accordingly, water will always be part of the political agenda as it “is part of all other issues, across sectors, that are governed by political leaders”⁹³. In such a view, the politicisation of water governance is not detrimental per se. Only when political interests interfere in the good functioning of water governance, by diverting public funds, prioritising private revenues or abandoning the provision of the basic right to water, will they become a problem to the water sector.

Few mechanisms have been established to align national politics towards agendas and prevent these intentional political deviations at the regional level. Instead, most institutions and mechanisms have been set by countries to feed their own political motivations, to gain legitimacy, integrate in the regional network or gain leverage before other neighbouring countries. The political-led character of these institutions have condemned them to failure due to the lack of consent and disagreements about agenda-setting and implementation. The Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSDD) is an example. The MCSDD was set up in 1995 under the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide advisory support to the parties of the Barcelona Convention. But, unfortunately, “over the last few years for a series of reasons, (...) because of disagreements within the secretariat of UNEP/MAP itself about the competences profile and handling of MCSDD, this body has not functioned as well as it should and its significant potential has not been utilised”⁹⁴. Another example is the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean (SWM), an initiative undertaken by the 5+5 Dialogue and the UfM in 2016 with the aim to provide guidelines for water management and protection, and promote sustainable social and economic growth⁹⁵. The SWM was intended to approve at the 2010 Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water in Barcelona (Spain) but political disparities hampered the final agreement once more⁹⁶.

Unlike the MCSDD and many others, the Union for the Mediterranean is not a political organisation catalysing national politics in the Mediterranean region. It is rather established to help countries enhance their policies and align them to the regional agenda. In this regard, it plays at the intersection between politics and water governance, trying to find the right balance between each other and maximising the benefits of combining both. One of the mechanisms used to achieve such objectives is the Ministerial Meetings, periodical gatherings of the Ministers of UfM countries who discuss the priorities in the region and capture the main objectives in Ministerial Declarations (MD).

This article undertakes an in-depth analysis of the UfM’s Ministerial Declarations (MD) on water-related issues, examines the role that national politics have played in them, and studies how these have contributed to shape the current water governance framework in the Mediterranean. This evaluation has three main objectives: firstly, to look back at the past 8

⁹² Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ SCULLOS, M., *op. cit.*, nota 42, p.22.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.31.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.32.

years (2014-2022), analysing the political decisions, agenda-settings and institutional proposals in the Ministerial Declarations, and identifying the main elements that evidenciate the interference of politics therein. Secondly, to apply my hypothesis on the role of politics in Mediterranean water governance in order to validate or refute them. And thirdly, to draw on conclusions and understand the overall dynamics of contemporary water governance in the Mediterranean.

Such analysis is particularly timely in a context where the different regional responses to address freshwater shortages, warming oceans and sea level rise, such as the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSDD) (1998) and the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean (2016), have proven to be insufficient and ineffective, and more political attention is being drawn to national water mechanisms to ensure safe and clean access to water in the region⁹⁷.

The analysis focuses on a specific set of Ministerial Declarations, specifically, those celebrated under the framework of Water, Blue Economy, and Environment and Climate Change. This dissertation relies on qualitative data, including analysis of primary literature, interviews and observation of the UfM's Ministers decisions on water governance taken between 2014 and 2021.

In order to facilitate the dissertation of the above-mentioned Ministerial Declarations (MDs) and follow-up on the analysis of their contents, three different parts have been established in correspondence with the three hypotheses. As stated in the section of Research Design, every hypothesis introduces a reason for my main argument. In light of my research question - *How politics affect Water Governance in the Mediterranean?* - I assert that it has effectively hampered the creation of a common water governance framework in the region. This argument is backed by three different reasons, which correspond to the three hypotheses analysed in this section.

In the assessment of the three parts, I have divided each one into criteria considered necessary for the validation of my hypothesis. Each criteria has been assessed by one or more indicators. Using the *coding and categorising* method, I have collected qualitative data from all five MDs and grouped them together in the different indicators (See Table 1).

⁹⁷ GUERRIES, D., "Strengthening Transboundary Water Cooperation", In: REIGELUTH, S. (ed.) *Water around the Mediterranean*, 2017 Revolve Water, 2017, pp. 32-41.

Table 1: Design of the Qualitative Data Analysis

Main argument	Hypothesis	Criteria	Indicator
National politics have hampered the creation of a common water governance framework in the Mediterranean, because:	Countries do not want to relinquish sovereignty on water given its strategic nature	National strategic importance of water	Number of times the word “national” and related appear
		Nationalisation of the water agenda	Number of times the word “cooperation” appears
			Sentences that recall nationalisation of the water agenda
			Number of times the word “regional” appears
			Number of times the word “common” appears
			Number of times the word “integration” and related appear
	Water and security	Links between water and security	
	Too many stakeholders involved with too different political interests make decision-making processes very complex	Multi-stakeholderism	Actos mentioned and involved
		Cross-sectorialism	Initiatives mentioned
	There is a lack of flexibility and an over-rigidity of mechanisms which do not adapt to national contexts	Flexibility	Calls for differentiation

Source: Own illustration.

3.1. Assessment of the first hypothesis: Nationalisation of water management

As emphasised by a Programme Officer and expert at the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat of the Blue Economy Division, there has been little attention and no global consensus on placing water in the global political agenda⁹⁸. Indeed, there is no intergovernmental platform similar to the Union for the Mediterranean, in the global arena, addressing water governance. Still, at regional level, the UfM has stuck to a cooperation and dialogue-driven role, with no political or decision-making capacities. This, I argue, is due to the fact that water is sometimes a national security concern, and as such, countries require a domestic security apparatus to manage it.

The relation between water and security is well addressed by Rodríguez-Clemente and Hidalgo, who claim that water is a key environmental resource for ensuring social and food security, economic and agricultural growth, peace and prosperity, which are the constituting factors for human security. The relevance of security implications at the national level is explained by water-led situations such as the struggle of control over resources, destruction of water reservoirs due to conflicts, environmental refugees, etc⁹⁹.

⁹⁸ Interview undertaken on March 11th 2022.

⁹⁹ FERRAGINA, E., *op. cit.*, nota 12, p.54.

It can be concluded that water is perceived as a critical issue for countries, whose control and management are better addressed by national authorities. Seemingly, countries do not want to relinquish their sovereignty on water to the international community as this would leave them with less power to govern it, and have ended up creating a national-led water governance rather than a regional one.

3.1.1. Water as a national security issue

Given the important role of water, it is logical to expect that Ministerial Declarations (MDs) manifest on different occasions this fact. Some of the references are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: List of mentions of the importance of water in UfM Ministerial Declarations

<p>Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change, 13 May 2014, Athens. Declaration.</p> <p><i>The Ministers in charge of Environment and Climate Change, and other Heads of Delegation,</i> “reaffirming the continued relevance of (...) waste water”;</p> <p>“[Ministers] recognize the growing need for the region and its future prosperity to enhance its resilience to (...) water”.</p>
<p>Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy, 17 November 2015, Brussels. Declaration.</p> <p><i>The Ministers and other Heads of Delegation,</i> “stressing the need for the Mediterranean region to make the best use of the potential of the blue economy, to promote growth, jobs and investments and reduce poverty, whilst safeguarding healthy seas and developing a clear vision for the sustainable and integrated development of marine and maritime sectors at national and sea basin level”.</p>
<p>Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Ministers on the UFM Water Agenda, 3 April 2017, Jordan. Declaration.</p> <p><i>The Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean members in charge of Water and other Heads of Delegation,</i> “Conscious that (...) access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a fundamental human right, key to sustainable social and economic development and has a crucial role in human health”;</p> <p>“Good water governance (...) [is a] key tool for achieving our regional objective”.</p>
<p>Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, 2 February 2021, Jordan. Declaration.</p> <p><i>The Ministers,</i> “Reaffirming the potential of the blue economy to promote sustainable growth, decent work and reduce poverty in the Mediterranean”.</p>
<p>2nd Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action, 4 October 2021, Cairo. Declaration.</p> <p><i>The Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM),</i> “Acknowledging that [water is] a shared environmental asset”;</p>

Source: Own illustration, on basis of UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

The wording used by Ministers to refer to water, including “growing need”, “crucial role”, “fundamental human right” and “asset”, indicates how important water remains to Mediterranean countries. Moreover, references to water’s essentiality allege the different sectors that relate to water, in which it becomes crucial for their well-functioning: waste management and climate change (2014 Declaration); blue economy, marine conservation, financial stimulation and poverty reduction (2015 and 2021 Declarations on Blue Economy); human rights, sustainable development and economic growth (2017 Declaration); and the environment (2021 Declaration).

Not only is water crucial to Mediterranean countries, but it also is considered an essential element to preserve security.

Table 3: List of mentions to the links between water and security in UfM Ministerial Declarations

<p>Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change, 13 May 2014, Athens. Declaration.</p> <p><i>The Ministers in charge of Environment and Climate Change, and other Heads of Delegation,</i> "Deeply concerned by the growing environmental and climate-related challenges facing the entire region, (...) with unsustainable use of natural resources (...), and acknowledging that, if not adequately addressed, these may increasingly become a source of instability and prejudice the living conditions of current and future generations in the region"</p>
<p>Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Ministers on the UFM Water Agenda, 3 April 2017, Jordan. Declaration.</p> <p><i>The Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean members in charge of Water and other Heads of Delegation,</i> "Regional socio-economic trends and environmental impacts are interlinked with water inadequacy, which can contribute to social and political instability"</p>
<p>2nd Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action, 4 October 2021, Cairo. Declaration.</p> <p><i>The Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM),</i> "The significant risks posed by these challenges [i.e. water scarcity, among others] to ecosystems and their services, human lives and societies, including their cultural heritage, and economies, thus becoming potential threat multipliers adding to pre-existing vulnerabilities of the Mediterranean region, significantly impacting security, development and peacebuilding;"</p>

Source: Own illustration, on basis of UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

Table 3 shows that Ministers acknowledge the security implications that water has if it is precarious. The connection between water and security comes to the fore when there is not enough supply, triggering competition between actors to control the resources, and increasing geopolitical tensions. Water can also lead to instability by causing the displacement of communities who do not have access to clean water. Either way, Ministers are aware of these connections, and aim to establish a water agenda that is security-based in nature, as proven in these Declarations.

Despite the recognition of the importance of water and the security effects, States have not attempted to coin a collective framework to prevent water-led insecurity so far. Indeed, the hydrological stress in the Nile and Jordan Rivers that have confronted Egypt and Ethiopia,

and Israel and Palestine shows once more that the water security concerns remain a matter of national agendas, and that no room for a collective water framework to preserve security is left¹⁰⁰.

3.1.2. National Control of the Water Agenda

The strategic and interrelated nature of water in all sectors explains why “water is climbing higher in political agendas” in Mediterranean countries¹⁰¹. Indeed, European and Southern countries have promoted water priorities through national plans, maintaining their control over water resources that fall in their territories. This strategy, a challenge to regional integration, but equipped with political legitimacy, intends to conserve the national sovereignty of countries with regards to water and prevent external influences.

The analysis clearly shows the nationalisation tendency¹⁰² of water governance through a number of facts. Firstly, in the respective Declarations, Ministers make numerous references to national-related issues when it comes to water and environmental governance, as seen in Table 4:

Table 4: Frequency of the word “national” and related words in UfM Ministerial Declarations

Ministerial Declarations	Number of times “national” or related words have appeared
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change, 13 May 2014, Athens. Declaration.	14
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy, 17 November 2015, Brussels. Declaration.	8
Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Ministers on the UFM Water Agenda, 3 April 2017, Jordan. Declaration.	27
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, 2 February 2021, Jordan. Declaration.	5
2nd Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action, 4 October 2021, Cairo. Declaration.	5

Source: Own illustration, on basis of UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

Regardless of the context in which the words are used, the abundant reference to national-related matters suggests that a clear link between water and nations is established, and therefore, national politics are actively involved in managing and governing water.

Also, Table 5 shows that there is a general inclination of Mediterranean countries towards cooperation when it comes to water and blue economy governance.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Franc Cortada, undertaken on April 27th 2022.

¹⁰¹ OLLI, V. and TORTAJADA, C., “Water Governance in the MENA Region: Policies and Institutions”, *Extended Report. An International Conference at the Dead Sea*, Jordan, 2009, p.6.

¹⁰² The concept of ‘nationalisation’ refers to the tendency of States to acquire the responsibility to control the water agenda.

Table 5: Frequency of the word “cooperation” in UfM Ministerial Declarations

Ministerial Declarations	Number of times “cooperation” has appeared
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change, 13 May 2014, Athens. Declaration.	7
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy, 17 November 2015, Brussels. Declaration.	22
Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Ministers on the UFM Water Agenda, 3 April 2017, Jordan. Declaration.	8
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, 2 February 2021, Jordan. Declaration.	19
2nd Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action, 4 October 2021, Cairo. Declaration.	5

Source: Own illustration, on basis of UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

The bet for cooperation further supports the previous argument about nationalisation. Cooperation is often linked to service-sharing agreements. In this stage, Mediterranean States make use of state-to-state cooperation as they believe the services provided by other countries will benefit their performance on water management. But inter-state cooperation excludes any more formal forms of integration such as affiliations or mergers¹⁰³. Accordingly, cooperation recalls an intergovernmental structure based on the respect of states’ sovereignty. It is therefore expected that when it comes to water issues, which concern national sovereignty, States opt for intergovernmental cooperation rather than regional integration. This attitude of Mediterranean countries is typical of those countries that do not want to lose their control over water and face integration fatigue, despite the increasing necessity to address water problems at a regional level¹⁰⁴.

Not only do Mediterranean countries call for more intergovernmental cooperation for water, but intergovernmentalism is also evidenced through other mechanisms:

- “*Synergies*” (2014, 2015 Ministerial Declarations);
- “*Work together*” (2014 Ministerial Declaration);
- “*Coordination*” (2015 Ministerial Declaration);
- “*Joint projects*” (2021 Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy).

Despite the preservation of national sovereignty and the rejection of regional integrity, evidence shows that countries still want to bring cooperation at the regional level. This conclusion has been drawn by the numerous references to regionalization of water governance in the Ministerial Declarations, as shown in Table 6:

¹⁰³ KWON, S.W. and FEIOCK, R.C., “Overcoming the Barriers to Cooperation: Intergovernmental Service Agreements”, *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 70, 2020, num. 6, pp. 876-884.

¹⁰⁴ HABA, K. and HOLLAND, M. (eds) *Brexit and After: Perspectives on European Crises and Reconstruction from Asia and Europe*, Springer, London, 2021, pp. 62-64.

Table 6: Frequency of the word “regional” in UfM Ministerial Declarations

Ministerial Declarations	Number of times “regional” has appeared
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change, 13 May 2014, Athens. Declaration.	15
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy, 17 November 2015, Brussels. Declaration.	26
Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Ministers on the UFM Water Agenda, 3 April 2017, Jordan. Declaration.	21
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, 2 February 2021, Jordan. Declaration.	21
2nd Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action, 4 October 2021, Cairo. Declaration.	21

Source: Own illustration, on basis of UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

Again, it should be repeated that the context in which the word “regional” has been used is not of relevance in this analysis. The simple reference to regionalism already determines the collective character of water governance.

Further evidences that demonstrate countries’ inclination towards more regionalism in water governance are brought in Table 7, which contains the number of times the words “integration” and “common” are used in the Ministerial Declarations:

Table 7: Frequency of the word “regional” in UfM Ministerial Declarations

Ministerial Declarations	Number of times “integration” and related words have appeared	Number of times “common” has appeared
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change, 13 May 2014, Athens. Declaration.	8	2
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy, 17 November 2015, Brussels. Declaration.	8	4
Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Ministers on the UFM Water Agenda, 3 April 2017, Jordan. Declaration.	4	2
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, 2 February 2021, Jordan. Declaration.	7	2
2nd Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action, 4 October 2021, Cairo. Declaration.	3	3

Source: Own illustration, on basis of UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

It is true that calls for “integration” and “common” arrangements have been repetitively made in the Ministerial Declarations. This may, at a glance, lead us to think that countries may be inclined to set a regional collective governance framework for water. Although when compared with the opposing wording (such as “cooperation” and “national”), calls for regional integration recede in importance (see Table 8).

Table 8: Comparison between “cooperation” and “national” vs. “integration” and “common” in UfM Ministerial Declarations

Ministerial Declarations	Number of times “national” or related words	Number of times “cooperation”	Number of times “integration” and related words	Number of times “common”
UfM MD, 13 May 2014, Athens. Declaration.	14	7	8	2
UfM MD, 17 November 2015, Brussels. Declaration.	8	22	8	4
UfM MD, 3 April 2017, Jordan. Declaration.	27	8	4	2
UfM MD, 2 February 2021, Jordan. Declaration.	5	19	7	2
UfM MD, 4 October 2021, Cairo. Declaration.	5	5	3	3

Source: Own illustration, on basis of UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

This again evinces that Mediterranean countries prefer to manage water resources within their regulatory and institutional frameworks, aiming to satisfy their political agendas, rather than coining a regional water governance shared by all countries and regulated by common rules and institutions. In other words, national cooperation overcomes regional integration in water governance.

Conclusion

Water in the Mediterranean region is of crucial importance. As stated by Varis and Tortajada, “water is one of the basic resources for humans, human livelihoods, ecosystems and economies”¹⁰⁵. This analysis has effectively demonstrated that Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean countries acknowledge the importance of water.

While this has been crucial for placing water as a common area of interest and cooperation among Mediterranean countries, it has nonetheless promoted nationalism and protectionism against regional integration. This is due to the fact that countries perceive water as a critical issue whose control and management are better addressed by national authorities. Seemingly, countries do not want to relinquish their sovereignty on water to the international community as this would leave them with less power to govern it.

In addition to the various calls for localising the water agenda, UfM countries have barely mentioned the creation of a regional collective management system of water. Seemingly, Ministers have made major use of words related to intergovernmental cooperation rather than regional integration.

¹⁰⁵ OLLI, V. and TORTAJADA, C., *op. cit.*, nota 101, p.6.

Evidence confirming that Mediterranean countries are not inclined towards a regional collective water governance also comes from the fact that they have already implemented national agendas for water management and governance. For instance, Italy implemented Laws 183/1989, of 18 May, and 36/1994, of 5 January, together with Legislative Decree 152/1999, of 11 May, which constituted the legislative basis for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in national law. With the same objectives, France adopted Law 64/1964, of 16 December and Law 92/1992, of 3 January¹⁰⁶. Morocco adopted Law 10-95 on Water to establish a national water policy¹⁰⁷. Also, Turkey, although not a UfM Member State, also coined water national governance through the Constitution of 1983, Turkish Civil Code of 2001 and other water legislation on Environment, Agriculture and Municipalities¹⁰⁸.

It is therefore understood that Mediterranean countries do not aim at coining a regional water governance under the Union for the Mediterranean umbrella. This is rather seen as a tool to coordinate cooperation without propelling a common integrated framework. Indeed, in the report “Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean”, the OECD does not consider water as a domain of regional integration under the UfM scope, as it can be finance, migration or education¹⁰⁹.

The growing presence of water in domestic politics does not mean, however, that it will be better managed at national level than at the regional one. Indeed, as water makes its way to the core of national political agendas along with other demographic, economic and environmental issues, more specific water-related objectives need to be defined, or otherwise “water will not be considered to be an important issue by politicians”¹¹⁰.

As stated by Almotaz Abadi, “you will find that the water issue is a national security issue. When there is a national security issue, you will find the water representatives sitting at the ‘small cabinet’”¹¹¹. At this point, it is to conclude that within the Mediterranean, water is effectively seen as a strategic asset that neighbouring countries do not want to share for their own political, economic, social and environmental stakes.

3.2. Assessment of the second hypothesis: An already complex water regime

In the Mediterranean region, water has an immense potential for promoting economic growth and social development. It impacts societies and activities from the small to the large scale, and involve a wide range of different stakeholders and individuals¹¹², from governments to international organisations, financial institutions, regional organisations, the civil society and the private sector¹¹³. The intersectionality of water has led countries to devote dozens of ministries, each having different agendas and objectives, to manage water. Consequently, this

¹⁰⁶ CÁNOVAS, J., “Water Management in the Mediterranean Countries of the European Union”, *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2008*, IEMed, 2008.

¹⁰⁷ *Law n° 10-95 on Water*, Dahir (Royal Decree) n°. 1-95-154 of 18 Ranii 1916 (16 August 1995), Official State Gazette n° 4325, 1995.

¹⁰⁸ KIBAROGLU, A. and BASKAN, A., “Turkey’s Water Policy Framework”. In: KRAMER, A. *et al.*, (eds) *Turkey’s Water Policy: National Frameworks and International Cooperation*, London, Springer, 2011, pp. 3-25, pp. 3,6.

¹⁰⁹ OECD, *Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean*, Progress Report, 2021.

¹¹⁰ OLLI, V. and TORTAJADA, C., *op. cit.*, nota 101, p.6.

¹¹¹ Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

¹¹² OLLI, V. and TORTAJADA, C., “Water Governance in the MENA Region: From Analysis to Action”, *Extended Report. An International Conference in Marrakech*, Morocco, 2008, p. 6.

¹¹³ SCOLLLOS, M., *op. cit.*, nota 42, p. 29.

has fragmented the structure of water governance, whose pieces are brought by the different political actors relevant to the sector¹¹⁴.

Water governance at national level is already very complex, let alone on a regional scale, where more countries, stakeholders and agendas intermingle. In light of this, I argue that the coinage of a collective water governance at Euro-Mediterranean level is very difficult to achieve given the complexity of political dynamics that take place at that level. There are too many stakeholders involved that want to impose very different political agendas. It can therefore be assumed that the inclusion of even more stakeholders in the water sector discourages Mediterranean States to create a regional governance framework for water.

To test this hypothesis, two different criteria have been assessed: the multistakeholderism and the cross-sectoralism of the Mediterranean water sector.

3.2.1. Multistakeholderism

Before developing the findings of this criteria, it is important to define what *multistakeholderism* is, especially in the context of Mediterranean water governance. Mark Raymond and Laura Denardis define *multistakeholderism* as a kind of institutional structure that “entails two or more classes of actors engaged in a common governance enterprise concerning issues they regard as public in nature, and characterised by polyarchic authority relations constituted by procedural rules”¹¹⁵. Thus, two main aspects characterise a multistakeholder institution: the involvement of two or more actors coming from different sectors, and a polyarchic organisation, in which actors intervene at different phases of the governance framework.

Accordingly, *multistakeholderism* is applicable to a lot of domains of the international system, even though they especially focus on issue-specific sectors, such as the Internet¹¹⁶. However, whilst it is a very recent and underdeveloped concept, it sheds light on the existence of complex governance structures. This section further explores the applicability of *multistakeholderism* to Mediterranean water governance, arguing that it resembles a very complex regime which makes it lose attractiveness before countries¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁴ OLLI, V. and TORTAJADA, C., *op. cit.*, nota 101, p.6.

¹¹⁵ RAYMOND, M. and DENARDIS, L., “Multistakeholderism: anatomy of an inchoate global institution”, *International Theory*, Vol. 5, 2015, num. 3, pp. 572-616.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ RAYMOND, M. and DENARDIS, L., *op. cit.*, nota 115, p.579.

Table 9: Actors mentioned in the UfM Ministerial Declarations

Ministerial Declarations	Actors involved or mentioned
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change, 13 May 2014, Athens. Declaration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "governments, agencies, civil society, relevant international institutions including international donors, private sector representatives and other experts". (p.7) • "public and private donors and investors". (p.7) • "local and regional authorities, as well as civil society and the private sector". (p.7) • "ministries, agencies, local and regional authorities, and the private and public sector". (p.8)
Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy, 17 November 2015, Brussels. Declaration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "international, regional and bilateral donors". (p.3) • "the private sector". (p.3) • "IFIs [International Financial Institutions] and donors, as well as private investors". (p.3) • "civil society including recognised and registered NGOs, social partners, academia, financial and research institutions, local and regional authorities, the private sector, and other stakeholders". (p.6) • "ministries, agencies, local and regional authorities, and private entities". (p.6) • "universities, research, governments, businesses, as well as the public". (p.8) • "private sector, civil society, national/local authorities, etc.". (p.9) • "young people". (p.10)
Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Ministers on the UFM Water Agenda, 3 April 2017, Jordan. Declaration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "financial actors and the private sector". (p.4) • "private sector". (p.4) • "regional institutions, donors and non-governmental actors". (p.5) • "thematic partners, regional institutions, stakeholders organisations, and the donor community". (p.6)
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, 2 February 2021, Jordan. Declaration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and private actors (<i>no specification</i>).
2nd Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action, 4 October 2021, Cairo. Declaration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "women's and youth engagement". (p.3) • "regional and local governments, civil society, the scientific community and the private sector". (p.3) • "national, regional and local authorities and administrations, civil society, the private sector and the academia". (p.4) • "gender and youth". (p.4)

Source: Own illustration, on basis of UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

At a glance, the long list of actors mentioned by Ministers in the UfM Declarations (Table 9) showcases the interdisciplinarity of the water sector. However, the fact that they are mentioned in official policy papers does not mean that they are active actors in the decision-making processes. In fact, further nuances that evince their exclusion from the table are examined next.

First, in the Ministerial Declarations (MDs) of 2014, 2015 and 2017, Ministers call for the involvement of non-governmental actors for consultative purposes. For instance, in the 2015 MD, it is explicitly mentioned: "*Ministers acknowledge (...) the **consultative role** that civil*

society (...) can play in achieving the blue economy objectives". In the same line, in the 2017 MD, it is stressed that the UfM Water Agendas will be elaborated and implemented "**in consultation** with regional institutions, donors and non-governmental actors of the UfM region". This leads us to assume that stakeholders other than governments do not hold any powerful or decision-making positions and rather play a soft-law/discussing role. This is further evidenced by the multiple calls made by Ministers who stress, in the 2014, 2015 and 2021 MDs, that "*steps are necessary to enhance the opportunities and capacity for [civil society] to participate in decision-making processes*".

Another nuance of the stakeholders' involvement in the Euro-Mediterranean water governance framework is that their participation in the process is determined and subjected to domestic politics. As mentioned in the 2015 MD, the opportunities and capacity of civil society actors to take part in decision-making processes will be enhanced "*as foreseen by the national legislation*". This shows how national political interests dominate the water agenda and governance processes, putting national agendas ahead of any form of participatory and inclusive governance mechanisms.

Although limited in participation and decision capacity, it has been noticed that some stakeholders attract special attention from governments. The analysis shows a distinguished interest of UfM countries to involve private actors in the process, especially for financial attraction, research and innovation. In the 2014 MD, Ministers provide a clear message to "*international, regional and bilateral donors, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) (...), and the private sector about the importance of their contribution (...) to the implementation of the investments required*". The 2015 MD also contains acknowledgements of the potential of Public Private Partnerships (PPI) in "*accelerating the commercialization of ongoing research in exploring data and in creating new products drawing from marine and maritime data resources*".

All in all, evidence shows that the governance of water in the Mediterranean is based on a *multistakeholder* structure. First, there is a wide range of actors from different classes taking part in the governance of water, including non-governmental organisations, international financial institutions and academia. And second, these effectively influence different stages of the governance process: *governments* are the ones setting the water agenda, negotiating priorities and enforcing them at national level; *private actors*, such as water suppliers, engineering and management utilities, and financial institutions, are the ones implementing (or helping to) the actions plans at local level, and also sharing data and monitoring mechanisms; and the *civil society*, including environmental NGOs, academia, and research centres, adopt a more consultative role, providing governments with technical expertise, promoting public debates, and publishing relevant data and information¹¹⁸.

In brief, the whole water system includes a *multistakeholder* structure which makes it very difficult to govern at a national level, and unlikely to sustain at a regional one.

3.2.2. Cross-sectorialism

Along with the plurality of actors, this section furnishes additional evidence of the complexity of the institutional structure of water. In doing so, it demonstrates the existence of multiple kinds of entities and organisations that are involved in this regime, constituting a

¹¹⁸ ABBOTT, K.W. and SNIDAL, D., "The Governance Triangle: Regulatory Standards Institutions and the Shadow of the State", *Princeton University Press, Arizona State University*, 2009, p.20.

novel, complex, transnational issue, very difficult to control. At a more general level, the study of cross-sectorialism shows how complex it is to manage water on a regional scale, which results in a very inadequate way to govern water. It therefore justifies the reluctance of countries to bring water issues to the international agenda. The endless list of institutions, mechanisms, and initiatives related to water at regional and international levels is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Actors mentioned in the UfM Ministerial Declarations

Ministerial Declarations	Multilateral initiatives involved or mentioned
Ministerial Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Ministers on the UfM Water Agenda, 3 April 2017, Jordan. Declaration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Earth Summit; ● The World Summits for Sustainable Development; ● The Rio+20 Summit; ● The UN Summit on Sustainable Development; ● The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals; ● The Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water; ● The Euro-Mediterranean Summit; ● The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management; ● The Barcelona Convention; ● The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment; ● The Horizon 2020 Initiative to De-Pollute the Mediterranean; ● The Joint Declaration of the Summit for the Mediterranean establishing the UfM; ● The Marseille Declaration; ● The UfM Ministerial Conferences on Water; ● The UfM Ministerial Conferences on Environment and Climate Change, and on Blue Economy; ● The UfM/EuroMed Ministerial Conferences on Employment and Labour; Trade; Women; Urban Development; Transport; Energy; Industrial Cooperation; Digital Economy; and Regional Cooperation and Planning; ● The UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/292 on Water as a Basic Human Right; ● The UN General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/70/169 on The Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation; ● The Declaration and Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development; ● The Paris Agreement, ● The UN Secretary-Generals' Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation (UNSGAB); ● The 5+5 Dialogue; ● The UfM Water Agenda; ● The UfM Water Expert Group.
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, 2 February 2021, Jordan. Declaration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Joint Declaration of the Summit for the Mediterranean; ● The Marseille Declaration; ● UfM Ministerial Conferences; ● The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the “Barcelona Convention”); ● The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; ● The Paris Agreement; ● The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); ● The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); ● The Global Biodiversity Framework; ● The Agenda 2030; ● The UN Ocean Conference; ● The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World

	<p>Conservation Congress;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The 2021-2030 UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development; ● The UfM Blue Economy Working Group; ● The Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform; ● The ‘Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean’ (WestMED); ● The Research and Innovation for Blue Jobs and Growth in the Mediterranean area (BLUEMED Initiative); ● The Horizon 2020; ● The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; ● The European Neighbourhood Instrument; ● The European Regional Development Fund; ● The Connecting Europe Facility Programme; ● The United Nations Environment Programme; ● The European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR); ● The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF); ● The Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA); ● The BLUEMED Initiative; ● EU's Copernicus programme; ● The Startup Europe Mediterranean (SEMED) initiative; ● The Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholder Platform; ● The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM); ● MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration; ● The GFCM’s IUU Plan of Action (IPOA-IUU); ● The European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA); ● The GFCM’s Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea (RPOA-SSF); ● The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL); ● The International Maritime Organisation Action Plan; ● The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO on Maritime Spatial Planning; ● The Common Regional Framework for ICZM; ● The Mediterranean Coast Guard Functions Forum (MedCGFF); ● The Maritime Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC); ● The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).
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Source: Own illustration, on basis of UfM Ministerial Declarations on Water, Climate Change and Blue Economy.

The cases of the UfM Ministerial Declaration (MD) on Water of 2017 and the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy of 2021 are only two examples of what appears to be an over-complex international water regime.

As previously shown, water issues range from water pollution, soil degradation, desertification, salinisation, degradation of freshwater, poor management of wastewater, irrigation, water scarcity, water evaporation due to global warming, among others¹¹⁹. These simultaneously encompass a variety of sectors, including agriculture, food production, trade, biodiversity, waste management, engineering, industry, and many more. It is therefore expected that institutions linked to these sectors also intervene in the water regime. Indeed, by only taking two of the five UfM Ministerial Declarations out of five, we have already identified many categories of stakeholders. Some examples are:

¹¹⁹ Interview with Franc Cortada, undertaken on April 27th 2022.

International summits: Earth Summit, the Rio+20 Summit, etc.;

Sustainable Development agenda-settings: 2030 Agenda, Horizon 2020, etc.;

International legal frameworks: Paris Agreement, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), etc.;

Soft legal sources: UN General Assembly Resolutions, the MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration), etc.;

Sub-regional institutional mechanisms: UfM Water Expert Group, the European Neighbourhood Instrument, etc.;

Funding programmes: The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, etc.

As stated by some authors, “coordination and interactions between different water-related institutions in anyone country leave much to be desired. Rivalries between different water institutions are common, especially as their responsibilities are not always clearly established. The net result is often inefficient delivery of water services”¹²⁰. If the regime of water is already complex at national level, involving ministries from different sectors, the coinage of water governance at a regional level, where all these international mechanisms intermingle with new actors, becomes unlikely to achieve.

Conclusion

Two main conclusions are drawn from this analysis. First, governing water at the Mediterranean level requires the involvement of a multiplicity of actors and institutions at different levels. Second, as a very dynamic and enriching issue, water does not only concern a variety of actors but also of sectors, making it a very diffuse and extremely cross-cutting topic.

While this validates the original assumption, the hypothesis is misleading. It is true that the water sector has a multistakeholder structure and a cross-sectoral nature. However, the analysis shows that only the latter hampers the viability of a regional governance framework for water. Indeed, it is not the interference of too many stakeholders in the table that makes countries less engaged in the process, as presumed in the beginning. It is in fact the cross-sectional and interdisciplinary nature of water that makes it so complex.

This is argued as follows: It seems that the water sector involves a multiplicity of actors, as seen in the Ministerial Declarations, but non-governmental stakeholders do not have enough power to hold a seat in the decision-making table. Instead, they have been granted more consultative and supportive roles to help governments execute water policies. In light of the absence of stakeholders in the decision-making processes, the Union for the Mediterranean brings them back to the table through dialogue and negotiation regional platforms. The incorporation of water stakeholders into the governance processes is, according to Almotaz Abadi, the added value of the UfM. As he stated in an interview, “if the UfM does not exist, people will lose connection, platform to talk, to learn from each other, and to influence, somehow, smoothly”¹²¹.

In the end, governments are the ones controlling who has a seat on the table and who is left outside. Interestingly, they have a tendency to allow private investors and funders to get on

¹²⁰ VARIS, O. and TORTAJADA, C., *op. cit.*, nota 112, p. 6.

¹²¹ Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

board very easily. This has been clearly demonstrated in the UfM Ministerial Declarations, in which Ministers openly call for their involvement multiple times. Such political interests are motivated by the lack of sufficient investment in the sector. Indeed, according to the OECD, 1.7 trillion USD is what is needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 6 on Water and Sanitation. However, current investments are three times less¹²².

Hence, the invitation to the cabinet is not an altruistic action of governments to lead a more participatory governance process. Instead, Ministers give the private sector a seat on the small cabinet as an exchange for their investment in the water sector. This is because governments will never jeopardise their power to control water, but in order to pursue their political agendas, they give to stakeholders some capacity to influence as a mere formality. Evidence of this is brought by the fact that the numerous calls for their participation in the decision-making processes have never turned into real actions.

The self-seeking political dynamics of governments have backfired on them as the little room left to private actors has made the latter lose their appetite for the water sector and have switched to other markets, as has their money. As Almotaz Abadi claimed: “the private sector in the water sector [is] not really looking at it because they think it is not a place where they will be gaining profit”¹²³.

Therefore, the hypothetical assumption that the coinage of a regional water governance is not within the national interests of Mediterranean countries is proven, as countries are not willing to overcomplicate an already complex regime and lose their authoritative monopoly on water governance.

3.3. Assessment of the third hypothesis: Lack of tailor-made policies

There is a general perception among international experts that Mediterranean countries are very different from each other up to the point that no common governance framework is believed to exist for all of them. Mr. Redouane Choukr-Allah, a Moroccan expert on Integrated Water Management in the Mediterranean, states that common directives are feasible, but their implementation has to be adapted to each countries’ context¹²⁴. Also, at the UfM level, an expert on Blue Economy, recognized in an interview that the organisation has the mandate to identify such differences and embrace them to create a better water governance framework that is feasible for every Mediterranean country¹²⁵.

In light of this, I argue that attempts to coin a collective water governance framework have failed because of its over-rigidity and lack of flexibility, causing countries to reject future similar attempts. In the Ministerial Declarations analysed, expressions have been found that suggest that Ministers acknowledge the differences among Mediterranean countries, and recall the need to embrace them. This is shown by (1) the use of the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), (2) the recognition of the different effects that the water crisis has on countries, and (3) the realisation of the specific needs of every single country. These three elements are elaborated as follows:

¹²² OECD, *Financing water: Investing in sustainable growth*, Policy Perspectives, OECD Environment Policy Paper n°.11, 2018, p.5.

¹²³ Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

¹²⁴ Interview with Redouane Choukr-Allah, undertaken on March 10th 2022.

¹²⁵ Interview with a UfM officer, undertaken on March 11th 2022.

1. *The principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)*. The CBDR principle, coined in the Rio Declaration of 1992, holds that all countries are responsible for global development but that each possesses a different set of capabilities to address it¹²⁶. Applied to UfM Declarations on water governance, this principle suggests that water crisis is an issue that concerns all Mediterranean countries and, yet, identifies differences of responsibilities between them.
2. *Disparities in effects*. Numerous calls are made by Ministers to recognize the different impacts that global events have had on certain countries. For example, in the UfM MD of 2021, Ministers acknowledged that “this socio-economic crisis may exacerbate pre-existing inequalities among countries and within communities” in the Mediterranean. Also, in the UfM MD of 2014, policymakers expressly recognized the “unequal economic development and social disparities among Mediterranean countries”. Put simply, the differences between countries determine that some countries -especially those whose welfare and development depend on water availability- will be more vulnerable to the water crisis than those who have more diversified sources of development and growth.
3. *Specific needs*. To the different responsibilities and impacts, UfM Ministers add the elements every Mediterranean country particularly requires to deal with the water crisis in its own context. For that, Ministers urge the provision of “tailor-made solutions” and transfer of capacity-building mechanisms and finance to “allow equal point of departure”¹²⁷.

All - the CBDR principle and differentiations on impacts and necessities - evince that differences exist among Mediterranean countries. However, calls for recognizing such differences are more likely formulated to identify the existing inequalities rather than to elaborate flexible governance solutions. In other words, UfM discourses are more based on a narrative which emphasises the causes of this unequal status, focusing on the values of inferiority, over-dependence and under-development, rather than employing a solution-centred approach that promotes flexibility, adaptation and replication. The disregard of national peculiarities slowly discourages countries from getting involved in such a regional regime.

Another argument that places rigidity as an impediment for a collective water governance, and perhaps contradictory to previous statements about UfM achievements, is mentioned by Almotaz Abadi, who declares that the main UfM’s objective is to implement “a water governance framework that is contemporary, that responds to all needs of social, economic aspects and human rights approach, but [that] respects the specificity of each country”¹²⁸. The express task of the UfM to institutionalise this ‘specificity’ in the Mediterranean suggests that this has not yet been accomplished, or not accomplished at the desired level, justifying the reluctance of countries to coin a common water governance framework with the existing non-discriminatory structures.

¹²⁶ United Nations, *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*. Doc. A/CONF.151/26 (vol. I), 31 ILM 874, 1992.

¹²⁷ Union for the Mediterranean, *Ministerial Conference on Blue Economy*. Declaration, Brussels, 2015.

¹²⁸ Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

Conclusion

The notion that there is a lack of flexibility when applying water policies at national level is clearly shown in UfM's Ministerial Declarations (MD) and further backed by targeted interviewees. Three ways to express such differences are identified in MD. First, Ministers often recognize that Mediterranean countries have different duties towards water crisis management by reclaiming the Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) principle. Second, Ministers recognize that the effects of the water crisis on countries vary significantly, depending on each' levels of resilience and development. Third, Mediterranean countries are thought to need different solutions to deal with water issues as they present different political, social, economic and environmental contexts.

The recognition of such differences at high-level Ministerial negotiations does not guarantee that these are also taken into account in the implementation process. In fact, it is precisely the disregard of these differences in this phase that makes countries hesitant to create a regional-based governance system for water. They may be afraid that such disregard will inevitably condemn water governance to ineffectiveness and failure.

At the UfM level, contradicting observations have been found in this regard: while senior officers from the UfM affirm that the organisation has the mandate to embrace such differences and national specificities, in practice Ministers only acknowledge these in the Declarations without providing real solutions. It is therefore concluded that, seemingly, Mediterranean countries do not provide remedies to set more flexible policies to the UfM, even though this has been recommended beforehand by the organisation. This once again shows that, after all, national politics are what steer the water agenda in the region, and only with the support of States, will the aim of the UfM to create tailor-made water policies will be addressed.

3.4. Final remarks of the analysis

The findings from the three separate analyses of the UfM Ministerial Declarations in the previous chapter leads us to reflect on the true reasoning behind water governance in the Mediterranean. The aim of this section is to combine and see them in perspective, and establish cause-effect arguments that help understand how water governance truly functions.

In order to be as coherent as possible in the further study, this chapter will be divided into thematic areas, each one devoted to a particular conclusive remark. The first section will give an overview of the overall political framework for water governance in the Mediterranean. A further section explains, once domestic politics are embedded into water governance, what this brings to the agenda, making specific reference to the absence of a collective water governance framework. Section 3 is devoted to the 'why' of this phenomenon, while section 4 explains the 'how'.

3.4.1. The needs to politicise water governance

Water governance has been defined by the Global Water Partnership as “the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society”¹²⁹. Put simply, water governance provides the political, social, economic and legal framework

¹²⁹ Global Water Partnership, *op. cit.*, nota 56, p.5.

for managing water. As this definition makes clear, politics are embedded in water governance as it involves all power relationships, negotiations and decision-making processes needed to manage water. Politics are, in fact, the main driving force behind water governance as it leads all other social and economic domains of water, such as water services provisions, legal reforms, and market economy; and brings the most important stakeholders in the decision-making: governments¹³⁰.

Whereas there is a discursive narrative of some scholars that see politics as an impediment for water governance, it is argued here that politics are actually an essential asset. Indeed, politics are needed to sustain water governance for two different reasons. First of all, politics bring economic and social context for water governance. In the case of the Mediterranean's, the political declarations of the UfM have highlighted the economic inequalities and social distress typical of the region. These have introduced a new logic in Euro-Mediterranean water governance based on fundraising strategies and development cooperation. Thus, politics bring a social dimension to water governance as it reflects social context, values and norms of societies. At the UfM, this has been reflected, for instance, in the 2010 UfM Ministerial conference on Water, which failed to adopt an action plan due to political disagreements over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict¹³¹. Embracing the social dimension is especially important in such a resource that has been the product of historically-rooted social actions, institutions and discourses¹³². Secondly, the politicisation of water governance allows governments to step in the domain and implement policies. It is true that agency has become more dispersed, but the power for transformational change still lies in the hands of States¹³³. They remain the drivers of global coalition-building, as they have demonstrated by creating the UfM and upholding the water Ministerial Conferences. In the end, the UfM will push water governance as far as states want her to.

Yet, the presence of national politics in water governance does not guarantee homogenous political positions towards its management. In fact, it is the opposite. Discrepancies on water management are precisely rooted by the already-mentioned social connotations of politics, which bring different understandings and meanings to water. According to the literature, the Northern coast of the Mediterranean, formed by industrialised liberal economies, objectivize water and treat it as a resource that should be globally free to maintain global markets¹³⁴. Conversely, Southern countries, which experience higher levels of poverty, malnutrition and under-development, see it as a common good, a human right, or a resource for human survival¹³⁵.

Before a scenario of overlapping legitimate political interests, the reconciling way is to combine all of them, or in the words of Almotaz Abadi "amalgamate" them. The UfM aims at reconciling positions and finding common grounds for cooperation between Euro-Mediterranean countries. More specifically, it seeks to minimise the differences between water as a commodity, water as a social contract, and water as a human right,

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ AYADI, R. and GADI, S., "The Future of Euro-Mediterranean Regional Cooperation: The Role of the Union for the Mediterranean", *7 Papers IEMed*, 2011.

¹³² MEISCH, S.P., *op. cit.*, nota 21.

¹³³ CHATHAM HOUSE, "Reflections building more inclusive global governance", *London: Chatham House, 2021*.

¹³⁴ MEISCH, S.P., *op. cit.*, nota 21, p.4.

¹³⁵ INGRAM, H., *op. cit.*, nota 3.

without depoliticizing the process but preventing excessive political interference. This reasoning is well explained by Abadi who, speaking on behalf of the UfM, states:

“We don’t want to leave the water sector away from the political sphere. You need to have an entity, a political entity that will be sitting at the Ministerial level to decide about everything, but that its function should be only limited to setting up policies and development plans and how to make sure that the whole governance approach will be linked together, especially those sectors that cannot function without water and the sectors that affect the water”¹³⁶.

3.4.2. The contribution of politics to regional integration

The Union for the Mediterranean was not only set up to elevate the role of national politics in Euro-mediterranean governance, but also to ensure no collective framework was created for water management. Among all theoretical explanations about the absence of such an arrangement, I agree with Almotaz Abadi and argue that this is due to political unwillingness.

Before elaborating on this, other scholars’ insights are worth mentioning. First, authors such as Choukr-Allah suggest that the reason behind the water governance crisis lies on policymakers, who are unable to properly implement water management mechanisms because they are too influenced by other stakeholders¹³⁷. Accordingly, private and public stakeholders such as water businesses, financial institutions, and other shareholders put pressure on policymakers to pursue their own goals. Thereby, implementation fails due to the influence of external interests in the political agenda. Second, other arguments behind the water management failure stand by the fact that water governance is a very relatively young domain¹³⁸. Youthfulness recalls lack of clear roles and responsibilities, insufficient institutional mechanisms, little research and information, and shortage of funding. Consequently, water is too new to be seen at the core of political agendas or public debates, and little discussion has taken place at the international level to implement an intergovernmental platform for it. Indeed, the only institution placed on a global scale is the UN Water and it merely has consultative competences¹³⁹.

Both, stakeholder pressuring influence and water prematurity, are plausible characteristics of the Mediterranean water sector. Indeed, the multiplicity of actors and the numerous calls for a greater regimental development have been prominent features of the UfM Ministerial Declarations framework. However, this study has shown that these do not constitute the main reason behind the absence of a regional water regime. This is because, with regards to the first argument, while more stakeholders intervene in the governance of water, they are stuck in consultative and negotiating areas and still do not have the sufficient capacities nor the legitimacy to pressure policymakers. Concerning the second one, the newness of water governance is not the reason why it is not at the core of the political agenda. It is instead the cross-sectoral nature of water that makes it very diffuse and difficult to address at regional political discussions.

The reason for the absence of a regional integrated water regime is thereby explained because there is no political interest in it. Governments, according to an officer at the UfM, are hesitant about regional integration, and do not seem very open-minded when it comes to discussing water issues at the regional level¹⁴⁰. While the reasons behind disagreements in

¹³⁶ Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

¹³⁷ Interview with Redouane Choukr-Allah, undertaken on March 10th 2022.

¹³⁸ Interview with UfM officer, undertaken on March 11th 2022.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

water discussions have not been the target of this study, they shall be further analysed as a contributing factor to the unpopularity of regional water governance within countries. Indeed, Mediterranean countries do not tend to agree on water policies at regional level due to three factors. The first one is the difficulty of having cross-border infrastructures. Transferring water from one country to another through these facilities is not easy and sometimes not economically viable. They require huge financial contributions and complex transboundary management, which countries can not always afford. The second factor is the regulation of already-shared resources. *Who and what should regulate these flows?* There is no consensus on international water law. There exist international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), but they are not enforced at the Mediterranean level. The third factor is the profitability of the water sector. Some countries believe it takes over the national budget, and cuts need to be implemented to avoid investment monopolisation. Some others see the water industry as a huge contributor to the GDP¹⁴¹. All in all, discrepancies about the cross-border management, regulation and profitability of the water sector in the Mediterranean move countries away from each other, and discourage them to create a common policy framework.

Before the impossibility of agreements, Mediterranean countries have resorted to national water management strategies. Literature shows that countries have started implementing Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), which is a system that integrates a holistic and coordinated approach of water management at all levels with the aim to promote better resource use and maximise environmental, economic and social development¹⁴². IWRM would likely function perfectly at the regional level given the transbordering and cross-disciplinary nature of water. If applied, IWRM would incentivize stakeholder participation in decision-making; include other social and gender perspectives; enhance environmental justice; promote optimal decentralised governance; provide mechanisms facilitating public-private investment; and strengthen policy integration and cooperation between countries¹⁴³.

However, history shows that Integrated Water Resource Management has only been successful at the national level. As nicely put by Scoullou, some action towards IWRM has been initiated by countries, but “despite the universal endorsement for transboundary Integrated Water Resources Management (...), the systematic attempts to translate intentions into concrete measures throughout the Mediterranean basin (...) are extremely limited¹⁴⁴.”

3.4.3. The ‘why’ behind the national politicisation of water

By now, there is sufficient evidence that demonstrates that there is no political will to make room for a collective governance framework for water in the Mediterranean. The previous section has explained what it entails that domestic politics are embedded in the water agenda, being this the anteposition of national interest before any common policy. It remains to be

¹⁴¹ Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

¹⁴² BENSON, D. *et al.*, “Water Governance in a Comparative Perspective: From IWRM to a ‘Nexus’ Approach?” *Water Alternatives*, Vol. 8, 2015, num. 1, pp. 756-773.

¹⁴³ CHOUKR-ALLAH, R. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 29; HAMDY A. and CHOUKR-ALLAH, R., *op. cit.*, nota 10; BENSON, D. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, nota 142, p.759.

¹⁴⁴ SCOULLOS, M., “Transboundary IWRM Attempts in the Mediterranean Emphasis on the Drin River Case and the Involvement of Stakeholders”. In: CHOUKR-ALLAH, R. and RODRÍGUEZ-CLEMENTE, R. (eds.) *Integrated Water Resources Management in the Mediterranean Region*. Springer, London, 2012, pp. 3-24, p.4.

seen, however, why States place their national interests before the regional agenda, which is going to be addressed next.

The governance of water through national politics is partly due to the already-stated facts. As supported by the first hypothesis, water can be seen as a matter of national security. That is why in this study an attempt is made to detect elements of nationalisation of water strategies that explain how much and why states control the agenda. In the UfM framework, Mediterranean states are the only ones establishing points of discussion, redirecting regional efforts and designing strategies. Parallel to their decision-making capacities, Member States also determine UfM's methodology, which is based on Ministerial and governmental representatives' meetings. Besides these meetings, States have established the Regional Dialogue Platforms where stakeholders can participate, contribute to discussion and make valuable contributions¹⁴⁵. Yet, no room is left for these stakeholders in the high-level political framework¹⁴⁶. This has been meticulously designed by States in order for them to remain the exclusive decision makers in the organisation.

Looking at our analysis, it is clear that this scenario is due to States predisposition to exclude other non-state actors from the table. It may be true that two decades ago, when the Millennium Development Goals were established, the integration of stakeholders from different domains was at its peak. However, if States once felt obliged to include stakeholders in the governance system, they don't feel compelled anymore, especially in times where regimes are as decentralised as ever. According to Oriol Costa, an International Relations specialist from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the decentralised governance system that we face nowadays makes States desist from being in charge of the system and adopt more unilateral moves as new leading actors emerge and agency becomes more dispersed¹⁴⁷. The loss of responsibility to guard the international governance has made States adopt a more unilateral position, and strengthen their influence over the agenda in order to keep their interests and assets under control.

The environmental regime is a clear example of this scenario: States are now obliged to adopt their national strategies to comply with the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) established by the United Nations¹⁴⁸. They are also forced to debate about the findings published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Reports and other external actors¹⁴⁹. Thus, States interact in the global arena under the directions of other actors. They no longer see themselves at the helm of international environmental governance, and don't feel responsible for setting precedence for the international community. Consequently, they do not feel the need to agree with other stakeholders to take next steps and, instead, they go on their own¹⁵⁰. The same case applies to the water sector.

The national politicisation of the water regime in the Mediterranean leads us to two major conclusions: first, moving forward in the water and environmental agenda is likely to entail more state-centric dynamics, greater power competition between states, and little intervention of external actors in decision-making. Second, the participation of States in international

¹⁴⁵ Union for the Mediterranean Official Website.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with a UfM Officer, undertaken on March 11th 2022.

¹⁴⁷ ESGLOBAL (Producer). “*Cambio Climático: una amenaza creciente para la seguridad global*”, Online Webinar, March 29th, 2022, intervention of Mr. Oriol Costa (Associate Researcher at IBEI).

¹⁴⁸ Nationally Determined Contributions are the climate actions plans adopted by States to comply with the Paris Agreement objectives.

¹⁴⁹ ESGLOBAL (Producer), *op. cit.*, nota 147, intervention of Mr. Oriol Costa (Associate Researcher at IBEI).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and UN's Nationally Determined Contributions, is motivated by obligation and legitimacy reasons, and not by the doctrine of the free will.

3.4.4. The UfM: The 'how'

What is perhaps more interesting than the politicisation and nationalisation of water governance by Mediterranean countries is the way by which they have used the UfM to achieve this. I now expose some negative as well as positive aspects that this has had on water governance in the Euro-mediterranean area.

If one takes the UfM, one can observe that it is not an independent international organisation but a mandated one. As stated by an expert on Blue Economy in the UfM, "we work as far as the countries want us to work. (...) As a Secretariat, we are under the mandate of countries"¹⁵¹. In this regard, it does not have an independent will that is later imposed on its Member States. Instead, it tries to gather the political will of Members and transform it into real action. The same narrative applies to the water sector, i.e. it aims to implement national water agendas and align them with UfM objectives.

The role of the UfM is well described in some of the UfM Ministerial Declarations (MD) analysed earlier. In short, Ministers task the UfM with the "[reinforcement of] regional cooperation (...) to improve policy coordination, share knowledge and best practices, mobilise means of implementation, identify possible regional solutions for common challenges, foster the green transition in the region"¹⁵². This labels the UfM as a platform for the development and dissemination of best practices, as a forum for political dialogue, as a regional cooperation driver, and as a policy recommendation engine.

As an international organisation, the UfM does not produce water legislation or policies. It rather assists Member States in the development of water strategies and other action plans that fall under its scope of action (specifically, six divisions¹⁵³). Evidently, it also cooperates with other regional and international actors to assist the policy process, such as the European Commission, the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med), the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)¹⁵⁴. However, unlike conventional international organisations, the UfM stands for its political framework, which makes it particularly interesting in two aspects. First, it fosters, as we have seen, Ministerial Declarations in water and other key topics of the UfM. These nourish the political dimension of the organisation, making it a key player in the governance of the region. Second, the UfM does not implement projects but 'label' them. According to a water specialist from the UfM, labelling entails supporting the preparation process, assisting and identifying sources of co-financing, and providing technical support and visibility¹⁵⁵. The UfM uses labelling to catalyse political support from its 42 Member States towards a particular project. Therefore, it has become clear that the UfM is a very useful instrument to channel political strategies and increase legitimacy at a regional level.

¹⁵¹ Interview with UfM officer, undertaken on March 11th 2022.

¹⁵² Union for the Mediterranean, *2nd Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action*, Cairo, 2021.

¹⁵³ The six divisions of the UfM are: Business Development and Employment; Social and Civil Affairs; Higher Education and Research; Water and Environment; Transport and Urban Development; and Energy and Climate Action.

¹⁵⁴ Union for the Mediterranean Official Website.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with a UfM officer, undertaken on March 11th 2022.

If the findings of this study which looked at the UfM were taken into account, the image of the UfM from before the analysis would change slightly: while the UfM is an international actor with an autonomous agency and mandate, it is in fact very much reigned by the will of its Member States. As foreseen in this paper, this mainly consists in the superposition of domestic politics and state supremacy. In the case of the water sector, States' wills stand beside keeping the control over water management, limiting the influence of external and non-governmental actors in their national affairs, and using international organisations, such as the UfM, for intergovernmental cooperation, little integration and dialogue promotion.

The initial understanding of the UfM as the driving force, the coiner and the creator of water governance in the Euro-Mediterranean region has been abandoned in introducing the reversing component of national politics. Furthermore, the 'mandated' agency has been introduced to the UfM, which already determines the role it plays in the global arena as a 'facilitator' of countries interests rather than as a 'commander'. In the political framework of the UfM, where Ministerial Declarations have taken place, a minor component of openness to the participation of other stakeholders has been added, which further explains the leading and exclusive domination of States in the matter of water governance.

After having made these observations, it can be concluded that the political will of States is what leads not only to the design of water governance but also to the work of the UfM in this area. In this line, the following reasoning presents itself: as the political will of countries to set national strategies instead of joint plans of action leads the UfM agenda, neither Mediterranean countries nor the UfM itself attempt to create a regional governance framework for water. It is consequently arguable that national politics have effectively hindered the creation of a common water governance in the Mediterranean, either by not prioritising it at national level or by not placing it in UfM's mandate.

Nevertheless, the current unwillingness to create such a framework does not mean that nothing has been done so far. In fact, a UfM officer mentioned, "now, in recent times, there is really an effort to try to bring some cohesion to all of these [water issues] in the Mediterranean basin"¹⁵⁶. Indeed, it is at the highest political level that the greatest number of contributions have been made. Starting with the Ministerial Declarations (MD), there is a clear progress from the MD 2014 to the MD 2021 on the involvement of non-state actors, at least in terms of language: while in the first MD, Ministers express the necessity to include stakeholders in decision-making (i.e. "*further steps must be made*"), in the most recent MD Ministers use a more assertive language by declaring to be "*actively engaging all stakeholders*", and include new ones, such as women and youth¹⁵⁷.

Also, the UfM positively contributes to promoting political commitment by legitimising and labelling projects that bring assets to politicians. Through what Almotaz Abadi calls "policy influence", the UfM tries to make politicians see potential benefits in cooperation on water management with other governments and non-governmental stakeholders. An instance of this is the Euro-Med Governance project, a UfM-labelled project starting in September 2022 that aims to create synergies between local, national and regional stakeholders based on shared

¹⁵⁶ Interview with a UfM officer, undertaken on March 11th 2022.

¹⁵⁷ Union for the Mediterranean, *Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change*. Declaration, Athens, 2014; Union for the Mediterranean, *2nd Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action*, Cairo, 2021.

knowledge, water exploitation and re-use experiences¹⁵⁸. Before this kind of projects, the UfM ensures the predisposition of political actors by showing them the bonus they get from implicating themselves.

Additional to the mentioned contributions, the UfM also helps to enhance national water policies by promoting cooperation on the know-how. Accordingly, it identifies how governance and regulation is adopted in a country and what has been done at the political and at the stakeholder levels that makes policies function. Once identified, the UfM aims at replicating it in other places. Unique to the UfM is the objective of not duplicating but replicating best policy practices¹⁵⁹. What becomes clear is that one single model of water governance cannot be implemented because water has a lot of social, economic and cultural connotations. Therefore, replication allows the UfM to respect the differences between countries and their specificity, and to implement external policies to different contexts.

Both inside the UfM and outside, national interests and conditions reign in water governance. At regional level, a kind of tendency to impose domestic politics among all initiatives of water governance and management can be observed. At this point, it has already been shown that politics are what have led to the current status of water governance in the Euro-Mediterranean region, which has not proven to be very successful before the remaining water crisis. Politicisation originally is not bad. In short, national politics bring socio-environmental context to water projects and reflect and materialise a particular social vision¹⁶⁰. The problem does not lie in the politics itself but on the way it currently works. The observations made in my Final Degree Thesis about Global Environmental Politics are helpful to explain this. Accordingly, we are before a reactive political system, in which “the community acts only after internationally relevant events take place and demand urgent and immediate political action”¹⁶¹. Political actors are incapable of adapting to the current context as they act at a slower pace than real events and do not want to adapt to new power dynamics. Arguably, as long as national politics lead water governance, the international community - incapable of adapting to current cross-cutting events and to structural power shifts - will never properly address water governance.

These observations demonstrate that at the UfM level, national politics constitute a delay in the production of solutions to the water crisis and the coinage of a governance framework. This conventional political approach makes it clear that the main goal of the UfM and of the overall community of States is not to improve the governance system to construct a collective framework, but to maintain and enhance the already national-based and politicised governance structure.

For the time being, some recommendatory insights about how the community of States and the UfM can move forward in this path are brought to the attention of the reader in the following section.

¹⁵⁸ Union for the Mediterranean, “Euro-Med Governance: Euro-MED 2021-2027 Governance projects and capitalization of the Interreg MED 2014-2020 governance approach and projects” [Online] Available at: <https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/euro-med-governance-2021-2027/> [Last accessed: April 14th, 2022]

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

¹⁶⁰ MEISCH, S.P., *op. cit.*, nota 21, p.4.

¹⁶¹ ARGEMÍ, J. “The Political Prospects of Geoengineering: An Assessment of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the London Convention”, *Final Degree Thesis, Faculty of Communication and International Relations, University Ramon Llull - Blanquerna*, 2020, p.33.

4. Avenues for better water governance

This dissertation has tracked the role that countries play towards achieving water policy goals set under the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and what the combined effects of these dynamics mean for water governance in the region. This section further expands on this analysis and exposes five mechanisms that countries could use to achieve a more effective water governance in the Mediterranean region. These are:

1. Building national ownership;
2. Enhancing actors' agency;
3. Re-thinking bottom-up initiatives;
4. Bringing inclusivity and cohesion.

Water governance has not been among the best means to increase regional integration in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Despite the common recognition that water is a common public good essential for socioeconomic development and security, its management has not served as a showcase for regional integration elsewhere. There has been a detrimental tendency of prioritising political interests over regional priorities. This has in turn converted water regional governance into a zero-sum game between Mediterranean countries who want their interests to prevail over the others'. As the nationalisation of water agenda increases, no efforts have been made to modernise existing institutional structures, and the only ones left - such as the UfM - have become obsolete and incapable to adapt to current national and global contexts. In parallel, the supremacy of States has left little room for the inclusion of key non-state stakeholders in the implementation of water policies.

4.1. Building national ownership

This scenario may sound like evoking disaster and hopelessness, but it is not. One of the views I aim to advance next is that bringing country ownership can build a fresh new relationship between countries and the UfM, and ultimately increase the effectiveness of the water governance framework. Ownership has been referred by the OECD as:

“countries take the lead over their development policies and strategies; [stakeholders] align their co-operation programmes to these policies and strategies; (...) countries improve their institutions and tackle corruption and; [stakeholders] focus their efforts on producing results that meet (...) countries' priorities”¹⁶².

In other words, creating country ownership enables countries to commit to a cause and align their agenda towards it. Applied to Mediterranean water governance, country ownership could empower countries to follow water regional directives more precisely, and embrace UfM's governance framework.

Until now, the feature of regional water policies into national agendas has been disregarded and the best way of working on water governance has tended to be based on States' own implementation of UfM directives. The practical benefit to countries from such dynamics is not insignificant, as they have been able to steer the water agenda as they please. This has intentionally led to the creation of trivial water management policies without a supervisory body that ensures correct implementation. Thus, building country ownership can be a driving force for stimulating policy implementation and increasing political leadership and

¹⁶² OECD, “Glossary of Development Effectiveness Terms” [Online] Available at: [Glossary of Development Effectiveness Terms - OECD](#) [April 26th, 2022]

coordination. David Booth considers two interventionist ways, which retain most of this analysis' emphasis on avoiding state monopolisation of the agenda¹⁶³. First, the creation of more flexible directives at the highest level can facilitate the implementation of water policies, help governments know where to place them for to tackle countries' main challenges, and minimise errors¹⁶⁴. Second, entrusting external actors, such as the UfM, with greater power and interventionist capacities may help countries access external support to overcome institutional shortages, unlock political grid-locked ties with other stakeholders, and improve their national strategies for water¹⁶⁵.

4.2. Enhancing actors' agency

The interconnectedness and dynamic nature of today's events require an international system that adapts at the same rate. However, we have seen nothing of the kind. Instead, we are before an outdated international political system that reacts to events that have already occurred. This is majorly seen in the environment, but more precisely, in the water regime, in which after witnessing geopolitical conflicts in the Jordan basin, water shortages in Libya, Algeria and Tunisia, and water floods in European Mediterranean countries, there is still not a coherent framework to govern and manage the resource in the Mediterranean region¹⁶⁶. One of the main reasons for such inadaptability is that water is not a permanent issue in the global agenda. Instead, it reaches higher and lower positions depending on the political momentum. Beyond exogenous factors that may intervene, agency is crucial to place water at the core of the international agenda. Bringing agency to States, empowering them to exert their power to control and implement policies will increase their willingness to place it back to the global agenda¹⁶⁷. This may in turn attract more political and institutional attention, resources and results delivery.

Countries alone do not have the capacity to acquire such 'agency'. They have already proven that they are no longer able to tackle current challenges without the technical and institutional support from other actors. This is where the UfM comes into practice, labelling and supporting projects, providing a political framework and negotiation platforms, and rendering technical assistance and political support to Member States¹⁶⁸.

4.3. Re-thinking bottom-up initiatives

The environment is a transboundary issue that concerns a wide range of aspects, from poverty and inequality to rule of law, human rights, development and peace. For this reason, many authors assess the necessity to put in place a transversal approach to its governance, and acknowledge the possible connections between elements, realities, methodologies and actors¹⁶⁹. Bottom-up initiatives, say proponents, are unquestionably successful to achieve such an approach. This is due to three reasons. They firstly embrace inclusive participation and collaborative initiatives, which allow to reach different domains at the same time through one single project¹⁷⁰. They secondly help governments align national agendas with

¹⁶³ BOOTH, D., "Aid effectiveness: bringing country ownership (and politics) back in", *Overseas Development Institute, Working Paper 336*, 2011, p.10.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ SCULLOS, M., *op. cit.*, nota 42.

¹⁶⁷ ESGLOBAL (Producer), *op. cit.*, nota 147, intervention of Mr. Oriol Costa (Associate Researcher at IBEI).

¹⁶⁸ Interview with a UfM Officer, undertaken on March 11th 2022.

¹⁶⁹ ESGLOBAL (Producer), *op. cit.*, nota 147, intervention of Ms. Montse Abad (professor at *Universidad Carlos III de Madrid*).

¹⁷⁰ INGRAM, H., *op. cit.*, nota 3.

local-based initiatives, increasing effectiveness and connectivity¹⁷¹. Third, they also bring governments to the ground, making them aware of community concerns and be more flexible towards policy implementation. The advantages of bottom-up initiatives have been very much identified through the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) principle, which brings an interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral dimension to water governance. While it is still too early to measure the effectiveness of IWRM at a regional scale, there are signs that the combination of bottom-up initiatives with traditional water management can be a key factor in implementing ambitious water policies and legitimising water governance.

4.4. Bringing inclusivity and cohesion

Like the major global domains that exist in the agenda, the formulation of water governance requires a collective process opened to stakeholders from a wide range of sectors: sustainable development, security, blue economy, maritime trade, tourism, health, etc. Following the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean, the cross-sectoriality of water governance has been one of the top priorities when taking important decisions. Gradually, awareness and consensus about the inclusion of new actors at the highest policy making levels have paved the way towards the creation of dialogue platforms and consultation processes, as it has been seen at the UfM. But recognising the importance of stakeholder engagement is not enough. Mediterranean countries should be constantly interacting with local public and private actors to optimise policy implementation processes, mainly because these have a direct impact on local realities and should be seen as part of the responsibility of local and non-state actors.

In the water regional setting that is greatly monopolised by States, the possibilities of non-state actors to influence policy-making are very low. An agenda seeking to include them in water governance has gradually been adopted by the Union for the Mediterranean, through the Regional Dialogue Platforms. However, after a decade, since UfM's origins, consultation mechanisms have shown little ability to place non-state actors at the 'small cabinet' along with States¹⁷².

The way to improve the level and scope of stakeholders engagement is not about improving existing consultation mechanisms. Indeed, the UfM has already proven successful in implementing such tools. Instead, the way through is by challenging the current resistance of national governments, and using the agenda of the UfM to raise their involvement also within domestic political systems. As stated by Leida Rijnhout, a Senior Advisor at Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future at a Webinar Series about the international conference Stockholm +50, non-state actors do not only bring innovative solutions, but they also are the implementers of policies on the ground¹⁷³.

While it is questionable whether governments are able or willing to ensure such inclusivity in water governance, the UfM can make it happen through its labelling capacity. It can catalyse and support projects that elevate the role of non-state stakeholders and promote public-private partnerships. It is important, however, that this inclusion is planned and implemented according to the capacities of the framework. The UfM has the challenging task to find the appropriate balance between inclusiveness and effectiveness, as "the more complex the

¹⁷¹ La Caixa (Producer), *op. cit.*, nota 18.

¹⁷² Interview with Almotaz Abadi, undertaken on March 15th 2022.

¹⁷³ STAKEHOLDER FORUM (Producer). "Towards Stockholm +50 Webinar 1", Online Webinar, April 20th, 2022, intervention of Ms. Leida Rijnhout (Senior Advisor at Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future).

policy chain, such as policies involving actors at multiple levels in public and private sectors, the more numerous are the veto points where policies can fail¹⁷⁴.

¹⁷⁴ INGRAM, H., *op. cit.*, nota 3, p.15.

5. Conclusions

“While there is much to celebrate about recent discourse and activity (...) including greater involvement of the social sciences in applied research and a general commitment to participation and openness, there simply are no universal remedies for good water governance”¹⁷⁵

The question at the heart of this dissertation is not whether the current governance framework for water in the Mediterranean is effective, but rather whether countries and national interests have had an impact on its current state. The bulk of this dissertation aims to analyse the dynamics that exist among States with regards to water governance under the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM), and how these dynamics have contributed to shape the reality we now live in.

Studying water governance in this way brings significant contributions to the existing literature. In general terms, it brings to light some of the ongoing political discussions on water governance issues. Unlike many other research papers, it has a more structural and political approach to water governance. Certainly, rather than conducting research on how to improve water governance, it aims at understanding how it is and how it functions.

How politics affect water governance in the Mediterranean? Evidence in this dissertation suggests that national politics have led to a monopolisation of the water agenda by countries, and has impeded the coinage of a collective governance framework at a regional level. In this line, we can assume that politics have effectively hampered the creation of a regional water governance through three different ways.

First, countries see water as a strategic asset that needs to be controlled directly by them, and whose governance shall not be delegated to external regional organisations, like the UfM. As repeatedly argued by UfM Ministers, water is a key element to tackle poverty, malnutrition, human rights, public health, sustainable development and security. Despite the fact that this perception is shared by all countries, when it comes to water management, Mediterranean countries prefer to keep it under national supervision, and relinquish any opportunity for regional integration.

Second, before a cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary regime, UfM countries are not willing to scale up water governance at the regional scale, as this would otherwise overcomplicate it and make them lose their monopoly over water resources. Yet the analysis has validated this hypothesis to a certain extent: while it is true that States cannot control the complexity of the water regime, they still have the power to decide which stakeholders can participate and to what extent, making them still capable of keeping their supremacy.

Third, UfM countries do not want to coin a collective water governance due to the lack of flexibility of regional mechanisms. Indeed, UfM countries are different between each other, and exhibit very distinct contexts. Without going deeper, the dichotomy between the European developed countries and the Southern developing ones showcases this variety. Although the public calls for further differentiation made by UfM ministers, no tangible initiatives towards more flexibility have been set so far.

The three reasons that feed UfM States’ opposition to a regional framework for water leaves us with a clear image of how its governance works in the Mediterranean: States are the ones controlling the agenda and they set the necessary institutional frameworks to satisfy their

¹⁷⁵ INGRAM, H., *op. cit.*, nota 3.

political interests. It seems from this perspective that the UfM is a tool of its Member States to accelerate their own agendas and catalyse their interests throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region. Contrary to my initial understanding of the UfM as a flagship regional organisation that has set a water governance framework in the Mediterranean, it is regarded as a State-based entity, with no independent mandate, and whose scope of action is limited to its Members States' ruling.

In actual fact, the water governance system in the Mediterranean showcases the crisis that the multilateral system is facing right now. This crisis is led by a loss of confidence in institutions and by the incapacity of global governance to keep pace with the complexity and urgency of certain global issues. As many others, water is a multi-dimensional and cross-sectoral issue that requires a governance framework that meets its necessities. This entails a collaborative approach and inclusive mechanisms that bring other non-state actors and sectors into the table. However, States are not willing to surrender their legitimacy by introducing such new measures. Instead, they isolate themselves and become overprotective of their autonomy. A clear example has been offered in this study, where it has been proven that States are not willing to build a collective governance framework for water, and use existing platforms, such as the UfM - to strengthen their national agendas.

Consequently, this kind of regime - the water regime - becomes more decentralised as States turn into their national realms to govern it, and the only cooperation they set is driven by traditional state-to-state diplomacy. It is precisely States' lack of commitment to the community that makes the regional governance of water a failure.

In light of this scenario, I reflect on four ways through which regional water governance could be improved: building more national ownership and enhancing States' agency can be a driving force for stimulating policy coordination and political commitment in the region; promoting bottom-up initiatives at the highest level could be a key factor to promote more realistic and effective policy making; and bringing more actors into the table would ensure State accountability and engagement in governance deliberations.

As the words of Helen Ingram at the beginning of this section indicate, there is no absolute remedy to improve water governance in the Mediterranean, let alone to scale it up at the regional level. The current water governance framework raises understandable concerns about the future role of national politics in our lives. However, with environmental challenges rising, the water governance debate is only the beginning of a new wave of national political alternatives to tackle global challenges. The nationalisation tendency and the institutional fragmentation of the water regime requires paying further attention to intrastate governance mechanisms and power distribution. Moving forward, it would be interesting to analyse how decisions will be made at a local level, how regional, national and local authorities will coordinate actions, and which role citizens and civil actors will have in the governance of water.

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7. Annex

7.1. Discourse Analysis

	UMD MD 2014	UMD MD 2015	UMD MD 2017	UMD MD 2021	2nd UIM MD 2021	
Premise 1: Nationalisation of water	<p>Indicator</p> <p>Number of times "national"/"nationally"/"NAP" has appeared</p> <p>Number of times "cooperation" has appeared</p> <p>Sentences that recall nationalisation</p>	<p>22</p> <p>22</p> <p>domestic; coordination (9)</p>	<p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>Charters; members to apply"; joint projects; "ministers recognise the crucial role played by national and local authorities"; "necessary domestic reforms"; "adopting (...) the adoption by several UIM countries of blue economy strategies"; "the need to enable all Mediterranean countries to fully enjoy the benefits of a sustainable blue economy"</p>	<p>27</p> <p>19</p>	<p>5</p> <p>5</p>	
Premise 1: Importance of water	<p>Number of times "common" appeared</p> <p>Number of times "regional"</p> <p>Number of times "integration"/"integrated" has appeared</p> <p>Characteristics of water</p>	<p>4</p> <p>26</p> <p>8</p> <p>"stressing the need for the Mediterranean region to make the best use of its water resources and to invest in water infrastructure and sanitation is a key element of the region's economic and social development and has a crucial role in human health" (p.2)</p> <p>"Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a key element of the region's economic and social development and has a crucial role in human health" (p.2)</p> <p>"Good water governance (...) is a key tool for achieving our regional objectives"</p>	<p>2</p> <p>21</p> <p>4</p> <p>"Reaffirming the potential of the blue economy to promote sustainable growth, and reduce poverty in the Mediterranean"</p>	<p>2</p> <p>21</p> <p>7</p> <p>"water is "a shared environmental asset" (p.2)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>21</p> <p>3</p>	
Premise 1: Links between water and security	<p>Deeply concerned by the growing environmental and climate-related challenges facing the entire region, which may be exacerbated by rapid population growth and urbanisation</p> <p>production and consumption trends, and acknowledging that, if unsustainable use of marine resources, and acknowledging that, if not adequately addressed, taking into consideration the respective capacities and living conditions of current and future generations in the region;" (p.2)</p>	<p>"The growing environmental and climate-related challenges facing the entire region, which may be exacerbated by rapid population growth and urbanisation</p> <p>production and consumption trends, and acknowledging that, if unsustainable use of marine resources, and acknowledging that, if not adequately addressed, taking into consideration the respective capacities and living conditions of current and future generations in the region;" (p.2)</p>	<p>"Regional socio-economic trends and environmental impacts are interlinked with water inadequacy, which can contribute to social and political instability." (p.2)</p> <p>"Stressing that Mediterranean fisheries are of vital importance for food security" (p.5)</p>	<p>"The significant risks posed by these challenges to ecosystems and their services, human lives and societies, including their cultural heritage, and economies, that becoming potential threats to the sustainability of the Mediterranean region, significantly impacting security, development and peacebuilding;" (p.4)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p>	
Premise 2: Multi-stakeholder	<p>Governments, agencies, civil society, relevant international institutions including international donors, private sector representatives and other experts" (p.7)</p> <p>"public and private donors and investors" (p.7)</p> <p>"cooperation between ministries, agencies, local and regional authorities, and the private and public sector" (p.8)</p>	<p>"International, regional and bilateral donors"</p> <p>"the private sector"</p> <p>"It is and donors, as well as private investors"</p> <p>"THE CONSULTATIVE ROLE that civil society, including recognised partners, academic, financial and research institutions, local and regional authorities; the private sector, and other stakeholders can play in achieving the blue economy sector" (p.6)</p> <p>"Cooperation and coordination between ministries, agencies, local and regional authorities, and private entities" (p.6)</p> <p>"Universities, research, governments, businesses, as well as the public" (p.6)</p> <p>"private sector, civil society, national/local authorities, etc.)</p> <p>"young people" (p.10)</p>	<p>"financial system and the private sector" (p.6)</p> <p>"private sector" (p.4)</p> <p>"IN CONSULTATION WITH regional institutions, donors and non-government actors" (p.5)</p> <p>"academic partners, regional institutions, stakeholders organisations, and the donor community" (p.6)</p>	<p>"public and private actors</p>	<p>"women's and youth engagement" (p.3)</p> <p>"regional and local governments, civil society, the scientific community and the private sector" (p.3)</p> <p>"Actively engaging all stakeholders, including administrations, civil society, the private sector and the academies in the design, development, implementation and monitoring of climate and environmental policies and actions" (p.4)</p> <p>"gender and youth" (p.4)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p>

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Premise 2: Cross sectorialism	Indicator	IUM MD 2014	IUM MD 2015	IUM MD 2017	IUM MD 2021	IUM MD 2021
<p>Initiatives mentioned</p>	<p>Joint Declaration of the Summit for the Mediterranean; - The Marseille Declaration; - UIM Ministerial Conferences; - The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the "Barcelona Convention"); - The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); - Memorandum of Understanding and Joint Programme of Work with the UIM; - The Mediterranean Action Plan and Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development; - The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment; - The Horizon 2020 Initiative for the de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea ("H2020 Initiative"); - The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development; - The Sustainable Development Goals; - The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; - The Conventions on Biological Diversity and on International Maritime Organization; - The 2015 Hyogo Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Reduction; - SWITCH-Med programme - EU's Neighbourhood Investment Facility; - The Low Emissions Capacity Building Programme; - The Global Climate Change Alliance; - CLIMA South; - Item Convention; - Euro-Union Waterflow Agreement; - Euro-Cities of the Mediterranean; - Covenant of Mayors; - Green Climate Fund; - Global Environment Facility; - EU's Twinning</p>	<p>Joint Declaration of the Summit for the Mediterranean; - The Marseille Declaration; - UIM Ministerial Conferences; - The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the "Barcelona Convention"); - The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); - Memorandum of Understanding and Joint Programme of Work with the UIM; - The Mediterranean Action Plan and Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (PEIMP); - The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment; - The Horizon 2020 Initiative to De-Pollute the Mediterranean; - EU Twinning Technical Assistance, Technical Assistance; - The European Neighbourhood Instrument-ENI; - The Sustainable Development Goals; - Horizon2020 Initiative for a Cleaner Mediterranean Sea; - UIM Urban Projects Finance Initiative (UPFI); - Conventions of the International Maritime Organization; - The 2015 Hyogo Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Reduction; - The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA); - The BLUEMED III initiative; - Joint and Growth in the Mediterranean Area; - The Sustainable Development Goals; - European Commission; - International Maritime Organization; - The United Nations Environment Programme; - 5-5 Dialogue; - Regional Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (RFMC) - UIM Forum on Blue Economy; - Virtual Knowledge Centre; - Interreg Mediterranean (MED); - ENI Cross Border Cooperation Mediterranean Sea Basin (ENI-CBC- Med); - Regional Plan on Marine Litter;</p>	<p>The Earth Summit; - The World Summit for Sustainable Development; - The Rio-20 Summits; - The UN Summit on Sustainable Development; - The 2030 Agenda/Sustainable Development Goals; - The Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment; - The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Local Water Management; - The Barcelona Convention; - The Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Environment; - The Horizon 2020 Initiative to De-Pollute the Mediterranean; - The Joint Declaration of the Summit for the Mediterranean establishing the UIM; - The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); - The UIM Ministerial Conferences on Environment and Climate Change, and on Blue Economy; - The UIM Euro-Med Ministerial Conferences on Environment; - The UIM Ministerial Conferences on Environment and Climate Change, and on Blue Economy; - The UIM General Assembly Resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals; - The UIM General Assembly Resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals; - A/RES/70/169 on The Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation; - The Declaration and Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development; - The UIM Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation (UNSGAB); - The 5-5 Dialogue; - The UIM Water Agenda; - The UIM Water Expert Group.</p>	<p>Joint Declaration of the Summit for the Mediterranean; - The Marseille Declaration; - UIM Ministerial Conferences; - The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the "Barcelona Convention"); - The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); - The Paris Agreement; - The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); - The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); - The Global Biodiversity Framework; - The UN Ocean Conference; - The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress; - The 2021-2030 UN Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development; - The UIM Blue Economy Working Group; - The UIM Blue Economy Platform; - The UIM Blue Economy Platform; - The Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean (WestMED); - The Research and Innovation for Blue Jobs and Growth in the Mediterranean area (RIUMED Initiative); - The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; - The European Neighbourhood Instrument; - The European Regional Development Fund; - The Connecting Europe Facility Programme; - The United Nations Environment Programme; - The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF); - The Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA); - BLUEMED Initiative; - EU's Copernicus programme; - The UIM Blue Economy Working Group; - The UIM Blue Economy Platform; - The UIM Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation (UNSGAB); - The 5-5 Dialogue; - The UIM Water Agenda; - The UIM Water Expert Group.</p>	<p>Joint Declaration of the Summit for the Mediterranean; - The Marseille Declaration; - UIM Ministerial Conferences; - The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the "Barcelona Convention"); - The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); - The Paris Agreement; - The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); - The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); - The Global Biodiversity Framework; - The UN Ocean Conference; - The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress; - The 2021-2030 UN Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development; - The UIM Blue Economy Working Group; - The UIM Blue Economy Platform; - The UIM Blue Economy Platform; - The Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean (WestMED); - The Research and Innovation for Blue Jobs and Growth in the Mediterranean area (RIUMED Initiative); - The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; - The European Neighbourhood Instrument; - The European Regional Development Fund; - The Connecting Europe Facility Programme; - The United Nations Environment Programme; - The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF); - The Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA); - BLUEMED Initiative; - EU's Copernicus programme; - The UIM Blue Economy Working Group; - The UIM Blue Economy Platform; - The UIM Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation (UNSGAB); - The 5-5 Dialogue; - The UIM Water Agenda; - The UIM Water Expert Group.</p>	<p>The 2014 UIM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change; - The 2021 UIM Ministerial Declarations on Sustainable Blue Economy of 2 February 2021 and Energy of 14 June 2021; - The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; - The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); - The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); - The Paris Agreement; - The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); - The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes; - The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; - The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; - The UN Environment Assembly (UNEA); - The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Biological Diversity (CBD); - The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development; - The UN Climate Action Summits of 2019 and 2020; - The UN Summit on Biodiversity of 30th September 2020; - The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; - The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Reports; - The UIM Blue Economy Platform; - The UIM Blue Economy Platform; - The Mediterranean Expert Group on Climate and Environmental Change (MedEECC); - The European Green Deal; - The International Platform for Sustainable Finance; - The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development and Finance (GPSDF) for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean; - The BLUEMED initiative for Blue Jobs and Growth in the Mediterranean region; - The UIM Environment and Climate Change Working Group; - The UIM Agenda 2030 towards a Greater Mediterranean; - The UIM Climate Action Roadmap.</p>
Premise 3: Flexibility	Calls for personalization	"woman but differentiated responsibilities" "paying attention to the unequal economic development and social disparities among Mediterranean countries" "intensifying efforts (...) consistent with national circumstances and priorities"	"Acknowledging that the Mediterranean region faces varying water-related stresses and challenges, and in among the world's most water-scarce, particularly in its southern and eastern countries." "We mandate the UIM Water Expert Group to undertake this work (...) aligned with countries' water policy priorities"	"Concerned by the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic activity and employment in the Mediterranean region and that this socio-economic crisis may exacerbate pre-existing inequalities among countries and within communities." "Minister reaffirm that research and innovation investments at all levels are needed (...) to provide tailor-made solutions for society at large (...) in the blue economy" "Ministers call for strengthening expertise and boosting investments in science taking duly into account the specific needs and priorities of Mediterranean countries"	"Concerned by the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic activity and employment in the Mediterranean region and that this socio-economic crisis may exacerbate pre-existing inequalities among countries and within communities." "Minister reaffirm that research and innovation investments at all levels are needed (...) to provide tailor-made solutions for society at large (...) in the blue economy" "Ministers call for strengthening expertise and boosting investments in science taking duly into account the specific needs and priorities of Mediterranean countries"	"Following constant but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities in light of countries' different national circumstances"

7.2. Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews to different international experts in the fields of water governance, research, politics and economy in the Mediterranean. As the research topic is strongly connected to international relations, natural resources management and governance, interviews to experts in these domains are likely to make major contributions

Interview with Dr. Redouane Choukr-Allah, conducted on March 10th 2022, on-line

The first interviewee is Dr. Redouane Choukr-Allah, a Moroccan Senior Fellow at the International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) and the author of the book ‘Integrated Water Resources Management in the Mediterranean Region’. His experience is mainly built upon integrated water management mechanisms, bottom-up initiatives and inclusive horizontal governance. As a specialist in this domain, his expertise was very much expected to help explain which role do stakeholders have in water governance; how integration of stakeholders could be achieved; and how it would benefit the current system.

(Due to technical problems, this interview was not properly recorded, and therefore no transcript has been produced).

Interview with a UfM Officer, conducted on March 11th 2022, on-line

The second interviewee is a Programme Officer and expert at the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat. One of the contributions expected to be brought forward by this Officer was her knowledge on the large variety of water utilities, from fresh water to sea water. In this line, questions were asked about the main challenges and opportunities of fresh and sea water governance in the Mediterranean, the role of funding, and water in the public eye.

(Introduction and ethical questions)

Joana: First of all, I was thanking you for this opportunity. It is such a pleasure to interview someone from the Union for the Mediterranean. Could you specify in which division do you work?

UfM Officer: I am under the division that covers the environment, water and blue economy. These are the main themes.

Joana: Perfect. So, just briefly, as I told you, my Master’s Thesis is on water governance in the Mediterranean. I am not trying to list the challenges that the Mediterranean has or is facing. But I am rather aiming to study the dynamics of water governance, and why we are facing this water crisis, right? And I have targeted the UfM as the main water governance initiative, we are going to talk about it later.

So, the first question: When conducting research on the Mediterranean, I could not find a flagship initiative on water governance. Of course, I am talking to you as I feel the UfM is one of the leading ones but do you think that the mechanisms established so far in water governance have failed? And, if so, why?

UfM Officer: Okay, so just to start, to conceptualize a little bit, one thing that I want to clarify with you and I think it might help you even more. In terms of the topic of your thesis, when you mention ‘water governance’ is fresh water governance, correct?

Joana: Yes, I have not specified it. But yes we could talk about fresh water in general. I am not talking about rivers, no internal water.

UfM Officer: You may know about it better than me probably but when you say water governance, what people are going to understand overall is fresh water governance. Fresh water, ground water, rivers .

Joana: I would talk about the basin.

UfM Officer: Okay. (...) So I support the UfM focused on the sea part. I can give you insights more from the Blue Economy part. I think, as a recommendation, it would be interesting that you also spoke with our colleague Almotaz Abadi.

Joana: Yes, I will, next week.

UfM Officer: Perfect, so you already contacted him.

Joana: Yes

UfM Officer: Okay. May be going back to the Blue Economy insight, as someone who works in the Secretariat, we can't express opinions in a way (I mean each one has its own way of approaching this, Almotaz will probably have a different way) but for inside, on my side, we work as far as the countries want us to work. Obviously, as a Secretariat, we are under the mandate of the countries. I can inform you a little bit of our work, I can give you an insight, but I cannot give you opinions about the status. You can understand.

Joana: Yes, no problem. If we focus on the UfM, what would you say are the main challenges that the UfM has faced when trying to coin a water governance framework.

UfM Officer: (*She again restates that we refer to fresh water*) On the blue economy part and the governance of the sea, perhaps one of the main challenges is the concept of 'blue economy' is relatively young. In the realm of International Relations, the topic came at the forefront in the Rio+20 Conference, where, especially Insular Developing States sort of brought the question to the forefront, that the Green Economy was very much growing as a concept and what would it look like to apply that a little bit more to the challenges of small island states. And the concept of 'blue economy' started to sort of evolve in the international context. That, of course, has expanded in the regional areas, including of course the Mediterranean Basin. I did not [evolve only] in the context of the UfM countries, which are 42 as you know, but also in a framework that is key to us, which is the EU framework. As you know, the UfM is co-presided by the EU, so we call it the co-presidency: the EU and then a country from the Southern Basin of the Mediterranean, which has been historically always Jordan and is still Jordan. So for you to have an idea of the framework, as it remains also to Blue Economy. So the way that we define it ('blue economy' as such) is simply in a way associated to the development approach to marine, maritime, coastal activity, sources and resources applied to the Mediterranean Sea Basin.

Joana: To do a recap, for you the main challenge is the fact that it is too young.

UfM Officer: It is important that makes it a very dynamic environment also, but it also means that there are a lot of players, things are still being built. It is not an area, such as fresh water governance that has a long history, it implies a serious of challenges: water is still a relatively young area, but it makes it extremely dynamic and enriching. This means, as you can imagine, that there are many players, many actors involved in the area, a lot of funding streams. But there is a lack of cohesion of mainstreaming. In some areas, there are parallel efforts that are sort of advancing at the same time and being financed by different type of institutions. Now, in recent times, in the last couple of years, there is really an effort to try to bring some cohesion to all of this in the Mediterranean basin.

Joana: Actually that is really interesting because we are back on that in the end of the interview. But, I wanted to mention that yesterday I was talking with an international expert from Morocco, and he said: ‘you know the main problem here is that is not the fact that we do not have water regulation, but that we do not know how to implement it’. Let me rephrase. The thing is that he said that implementation is impacted by not the lack of capacities of the government, but [by] the interest of stakeholders. So there are some stakeholders which are kind of inflicting or influencing the governments in order for them not to implement in the right way water governance. My question is: do you agree with him?

UfM Officer: (*Again, she reassures referring to Blue Economy and not fresh water*). I agree that the challenges are common to many environmental policy areas. It could be forests, climate change, Blue Economy, it could be fresh water as well. As you were saying, the status back to what I was mentioning goes even further. It is not so much cohesion, it is also obviously aligning policy regulations, laws with mainstream and with action. How to operationalize the policy into action and progress mainstreaming on the ground, and that is precisely what international organisations such as the UfM are there for: to create the nexus between the policy sphere and progress and action on the ground. And doing it from a multi-stakeholder perspective, which is what you were mentioning. Involving all spheres of society: private sector, civil society, NGOs, obviously state actors, financiers, etc.

Joana: Actually, you have been talking a lot about funding. Would you say there is a lack of funding, or has funding led to a challenge when it comes to coining a good water governance in the Mediterranean?

UfM Officer: You are right, I am mentioning a lot funding because it is precisely a topic we are working a bit on. On the blue economy part (also applicable to other environmental areas), the funds are there. There are locally enough funds to address the challenges that we need to address, to achieve the SDGs (in this case it would be the SGD related to targeting the oceans, of the fresh water target). This requires vast amounts of funding. You will find different sources, I mean, to find the right figures is different, but, for instance, I used to work in fresh water and the figure was in the trillions of dollars a year. This is what we need to achieve the SGD targets in 2030. So, the funds are there but the issue is that private funds unfortunately will not suffice to address the various environmental challenges, whether it is for the ocean, the sea face, or fresh water face.

Joana: So, just to rephrase, when you say “suffice”, you say enough.

UfM Officer: Exactly, there are simply not enough public funds at this point to address the complexity and the vast needs related to these issues. This is why, you will see, in the

more funding face, there are water innovative ways that we can identify, for instance, blend public and private investments. Blended finance might be possible, which works very well for climate change and energy, but in water governance, it is still a topic that needs evolvement because fresh water is a more risky business than, for instance, energy.

Joana: Why?

UfM Officer: One of the reasons is because water infrastructure, in the developing world, requires a very important initial capital to implement. (...) By investors, it is considered a risky sector to invest in. But by no means I am a finance expert, so I would prefer not to get into that further.

Joana: Moving on a little bit. When I was trying to conduct research on water governance I found that there has not been a lot of research on water governance in the public sphere. So, I have seen that in the public domain, there are not a lot of mentions about water governance. So, why do you think water governance is not anchored in the public debate? Is it because it is not in the core of the political agenda? Why there has been so little attention from the political and public spheres on water governance?

UfM Officer: (*She restates that she comments on Blue Economy*). One thing is academic research related to fresh water governance at the international level, national level, regional and sub-regional. That is quite vast and exists for sure. But I think what you are getting at is more the real presence finally of water governance in the political agenda and may be in terms of the public opinion on the water crisis. I think you are absolutely right. Many organisations that work precisely to position fresh water as high as possible in the... from my perspective, I have been working more in the international arena, so to position water highly as possible in the international political agenda, and also at national level. One of the challenges perhaps at the national level, as you can imagine, is also that fresh water is an extremely cross-cutting topic (in a way so is the sea and ocean) but fresh water in particular is extremely cross-cutting. If you think on a specific country, water can be treated from all industries. It is rare that you have a ministry only on fresh water for instance. Usually fresh water is positioned under the Ministry of Environment, or sometimes agriculture. That is a challenge at national level. At the international level, one of the reasons, for instance at UN level, there isn't really an intergovernmental platform (intergovernmental I mean where countries meet to discuss unfortunately fresh water issues at the highest level). This exists, for instance, there is UNEP (...). You have UN Water, but it doesn't work on the same way. UN water operates more as a consultative organisation framework, but within UN Water, you don't have regular meetings at the highest level with the countries to discuss fresh water issues on a regular basis.

Joana: Why is there no ministry on fresh water? Why is there no intergovernmental platform within the UN?

UfM Officer: One of the answers unfortunately is simple. It is that the UN response to the mandate of the countries. (...) It is advancing but there is not yet a global consensus that water should be discussed at this level. That is not to say, you know, that nothing is happening. No, a lot of things are happening but... . And I really mean at UN level,

because Almotaz will go into more detail but at UfM level, for instance, which would be the Euro-Mediterranean region, there are Ministerial Declarations on Water (...).

Joana: That was really interesting by the way. Then, moving on and getting back to the beginning and linking it to the end of the interview. My main hypothesis here is that I think a collective Euro-Mediterranean-based initiative on Water Governance would be really effective actually. Would you think that this is a solution, or is rather to implement plurilateral water governance mechanisms as we have seen so far? You mentioned there is overlapping overwhelming among of initiatives... What would you say is the solution? Or either create a framework to the North and other to the Southern?

UfM Officer: I have to leave this to Almotaz, but there is no sort of one quick solution. From the perspective of the Union for the Mediterranean, it is clear that one of the responses is more cooperation, more regional cooperation, more cohesion. You mentioned North-South separately. Our position is always no. I mean, North and South together, this is literally the mandate of the UfM.

Joana: You work for more cohesion regardless of the national differences of countries?

UfM Officer: I mean, considering carefully the differences. As a basis of cooperation, of course.

Joana: I think here, what the UfM is doing and you can confirm on that, is kind of setting the basis of water governance, and then the basis/the directives can be implemented flexibly to the national countries, taking into consideration their context and characteristics. Right?

UfM Officer: Yes. The UfM is an international organisation, so we don't produce policy, we don't produce legislation but we assist the countries and the region in advancing through national policies and where appropriate international agreements and policies work, in advancing in the objectives of the UfM which stand six divisions. So one is water, environment and climate change, but then you have of course other topics for the region. So we work, in a comfortable way with other international organisations, where we assist the policy process as an international organisation. There is also the policy part, may be this is interesting (...), the policy framework that we assist. I mentioned also the Ministerial Declarations, that is a huge part of the UfM's policy process (...) but we have fostered a series Ministerial Declarations in the different topics that are key to the UfM. That is the skeleton, the key part of the policy framework. And then, we call it the three Ps: the Policy Framework, the Stakeholders Platforms (that also feed into this process. In the different areas, water has a series of multi-stakeholder platforms that meet regularly, Blue Economy also involving a all types of stakeholders), and the third P is the Project part. So, as an international organisation, here the difference is (of course international organisations manage and implement projects and programs) but in the case of the UfM it is very important to understand is that we don't implement projects, but we label projects (if you look for UfM labelling, you will see immediately what it means). That is the particularity of the UfM, but we do not implement projects internally in all areas (water, blue economy...) but we label projects, which means that we support the preparation process, we can eventually maybe assist in completing the funds, identifying sources of co-financing, we can

provide up to a point technical assistance and visibility and of course, political support. The ‘labelling’ is first and foremost a mark for political support for a specific project from the 42 countries of the UfM because it is particularly relevant or involves a number of partners from the North and the South, following a series of criteria (...)

Joana: The last question. How do you think a better water governance. Let me rephrase. How do you think a better water governance would enhance the global environmental politics in the Mediterranean?

UfM Officer: *(Again, she restates that talks about a topic outside her domain)*. As an ex-fresh water professional, as fresh water is so cross-cutting, in the UfM, it is a topic that plays into all 6 divisions of the UfM. For instance, you have the Division of Civil and Social Affairs, so water also plays a role there because for instance, with the links between water and gender. We have a division on Economy, water plays a role there. I think one of the key challenges of fresh water governance is that it is so cross-cutting. Unfortunately, if we don’t address... it is like a basis, right? It is the basis for Sustainable Development Agenda, involving the economic, environmental and social axis. I would argue that health is equally cross-cutting. But fresh water is truly cross-cutting.

Joana: Regarding to this, and last but not least. What do you think could be the aspect that would improve UfM’s framework in water governance? You mentioned that the basis is cohesion between countries (cooperation*), would you say that the aspect that would improve water governance is more cooperation between countries?

UfM Officer: This one I will leave up to Almotaz but my answer would be yes, of course. (...) I hope some of my answers help you frame some of the answers from Almotaz.

Joana: Yes, and thank you very much.

Interview with Mr. Almotaz Abadi, conducted on March 15th 2022 at the Union for the Mediterranean Headquarters

The third interviewee is Mr. Almotaz Abadi, Managing Director and Senior Regional Cooperation expert at the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat of the Environment and Water Division. As the head of water governance in the UfM, the intention of this interview was to get an overview of water governance from a UfM’s perspective. This is why questions were asked about the role of the UfM in regional water governance, the burden of national politics in UfM’s water agenda, and opportunities for improvement of UfM’s mandate.

(Introduction and ethical questions)

Joana: First of all, I just wanted to brief a little bit my research. My research here is to analyze the politics behind water governance in the Mediterranean. When I talk about water, I talk about fresh water. So, my first question to you. Actually it is my hypothesis: How do you think politics is affecting water governance in the Mediterranean? Do you think it is a positive leverage, or is it, in fact, a kind of preventing to coin a collective water governance framework

Mr. Abadi: The politics of what? The internal politics of individual countries?

Joana: National politics, yes.

Almotaz: Or the regional, overall political situation in the region?

Joana: Both.

Mr. Abadi: Because you have two level of things. Of course, yes, the water sector is part of all other issues, across sectors that are governed by political leaders. The situation in the Mediterranean varies the different level of governance that is independent of political processes but the majority are attached totally to the political processes. Within the countries and within the overall sub-region. Having the Ministerial level of positions, whether you have water ministers in many of our countries, it requires that you have a water law, meaning that the water sector is working inside those, which is not so contemporary at this stage.

For us, at the Union for the Mediterranean, we believe that water should be pend of political processes. That means that you have to put in a new governance framework, a new regulatory framework that [ensures that] water is working in a commercial not-profitable approach. The commercial non-profitable approach require us to do a lot in terms of the way we govern and regulate the water sector. At the same time, we don't want to leave the water sector away from the political sphere. You need to have an entity, a political entity that will be sitting at the Ministerial level to decide about everything, but that its function should be only limited to setting up policies and development plans and how to make sure that the whole governance approach will be linked together, especially those sectors that cannot function without water and the sectors that affect the water. This is a dramatic situation: you have to have a balance between spinning from the political system but this shall be done at management level, which is commercial and establishing entities and public or private companies and enhance the relations between public and private partnerships. But at the policy framework, you need to have them sitting at the political level because it is very important to have the water people sitting at the cabinet.

In other countries, it is difficult. You will find that the water issue is a national security issue. When there is a national security issue, you will find the water representatives sitting at the 'small cabinet'. [In it], not all Ministers are brought but the Minister of Defense, of Finance, of Water... Some other countries do not have even a Minister of Water. They bring the water issue within the framework of the Ministry of Ecology, of Transition, or Demographic expansion.

At the governmental level, if you don't have a Ministry and you work at that level, you need to introduce us to regulate them, which is the regulator not to bring things at the political level but to maintain the affordability for the citizen and to protect the environment. The regulator has three functions; environmental regulation; social regulation and political regulation to make it independent and free from politics.

Joana: I want to highlight something that you said. Because I posed the same question to [another UfM Officer] and she said that the main challenge of water governance is the newness of water. She said that water governance is so new that it has not been able to be elevated in the political agenda. But, as I was conducting research, I kind of agree with you, with the fact that one of the main challenges is that water is so needed, it is a crucial element, that, at the end, it is within national interests to be in the national agenda and not in the international realm. So my question is do you think that the main

reason why water is not in the core political agenda is due to its defence and security connotations?

Mr. Abadi: I disagree with the fact that water is not on the political agenda. I feel like water is very much politicised in the region. I don't think that water is not politicised. In the Mediterranean region, I think water is very very politicised, the water sector especially, when it comes to the international water cooperation, international treaties, and global framework of action. You will find a lot of hesitation from people to cooperate or to be very open-minded when it comes to discussing the water issue.

Joana: They are not open-minded?

Mr. Abadi: No, because there are many elements of bushing countries to be like this. The first one is the difficulty of having cross-border infrastructures. The water transferred as such from country to country is not so easy, not *duable*, and sometimes is not economically visible. The other part is related to the already-shared resources. Sometimes you have a stream coming from Country A and cross borders [and asks] transboundary water resource management. There is no consensus about this international water law. There are conventions but they are not enforced. You have only one which is the European one and it was globalised, but you have a few countries that access this outside the European [sphere]. The third element is the nature of understanding the water sector. Because many countries understand the water sector as an element that wants to take out the budget. They don't look at the water as a contributor to the GDP. (...) The government already has water and does not want people to administrate it and have other sectors undercut.

The regulation of water is the most old and antiquous regulation and law. There are two laws that people know about: the social law that makes people live together, and the second law is things related to water. Since the Greeks, and before them (...) even in Valencia, you still have the water bought until now, which was established in the 12th century. This is, how people dealt with the water in terms of if it is public property or private property, the share of farms, the working hours... [These things were established] many many hundreds of years ago. There was a conventional framework between people and non-regulated practices.

The new narrative we are trying to build around this is that we can cooperate on the issues related to either, swapping water with other things. As an example, you could manage if a country that has a lot of water is *duable* to transfer water from point A to point B and then people do not want to feel insecure, they will offer you, as an example, to give them energy. [This is] you will find some countries that have a lot of water and other countries have a lot of energy, they can swamp. But this is minor, there are no huge cases. There are some thoughts about some ideas, but there still not much of it.

The most important part of the story is to enhance two levels of cooperation: one, the know-how. The know-how is not about management, not how to manage the water, how to collect it (...). The most important thing in this regard is how the governance and regulation was adopted in that country and what has been done at the political level and at the stakeholder level that make it function well and then we try to replicate this in other places. You can not really have an European-Mediterranean governance framework.

Joana: There is no collective water governance framework?

Almotaz: There is no collective. Even in Europe, you have water directives, which is related to the quality of things, but there is no kind of collective directive for governments because you have to respect the specificity of each of the countries.

Joana: The differences.

Mr. Abadi: Yes, the differences. But what you can do is influence some contemporary and efficient governments that are functioning well, connecting them with some nations and through access to finance, to put them in the checklist of funding projects of either the private sector, nations or international funding institutes. [These] will say: “okay, we will do this, but they need to start reforming”. As an example, we have many of our regions that do not have utility, they have many services provided but they are not putting them in *utility*. This will make it difficult to sustain the services. Why? Because if you have each village responsible for sending water to the citizens, then this is very difficult because there are a lot of costs (costs for engineering, operations...). If you amalgamate (...) the services provided with the utility, then this will minimise the costs. And here we can talk about measures that should be taken into consideration. But all of these measures, if you manage to split the governance out of the management, then everything is okay. So, water is not going to be depoliticized at all, in any way in the world (...) but what can be done is to minimise the interference between the water as a commodity and water as a social contract of the government and basically as a human right to be provided to the citizens. Because at the end of the day, if you have a citizen that cannot pay for water, they have to have water, you cannot let people die. So, there are two things: it is (...) a basic service, basic human right. This is why we have to think about commercial and non-profitable. The CocaCola company talked commercial, and did not care about Corporate Social Responsibility. But the water companies are not shareholders entities, they are stakeholders, which is different. CocaCola is a shareholder. But the water utility companies are stakeholders, they need to keep working at the minimum level: they have to have salary, maintenance and enhance the internal revenue of the water sector. The government should not take any money from the budget because they will take it from the water sector [as this will impact] the services. If you have a lot of water, you have a lot of agriculture, you have a lot of water you have a lot of tourism, if you have a lot of water you have a lot of investment. The water sector should lessen the revenue, should [have], from the Minister to the one who fixes the plan pack, the balance 0. They should not have from the water circuit any revenue, but from the service sector you can.

Joana: There are some many points you highlighted that are really interesting, and actually I address this in my research. I wanted to talk about two in particular: the first one you said “it is to prevent pharmas and stakeholders to influence” and this is something I want to tackle because I interviewed another researcher on water governance and he said “you know the main problem is not newness, is not national politics but is the influence of private interests, interests from stakeholders in governments. Do you think that stakeholders are the reason why the implementation of regulation is not effective in the Mediterranean?”

Mr. Abadi: The problem is that you don’t bring the right stakeholders to the table. And many people do not like change. If you map out the right stakeholders and see what is going

on in the book, then you can understand what is the situation. But absolutely, always, in any place in the world, there are defenders of the status quo and if you want to change this status quo, you will find resistance.(...) You cannot complain about anything. There are some countries, the private sector in the water sector [is] not really looking at it because they think it is not a place where they will be gaining profit. We wanted to enhance the regulatory framework to bring more private actors into the water sector because we believe that the water sector should not be privatised but public-private partnerships can be a good idea. Because in managing utilities, the private sector doesn't think like the public sector: *if you give me a penny, I give you a penny. No penny, no penny.* This is the formula we need to keep. We need to understand what is behind everything. Amalgamating utility. If I am head of a small utility, why will I join another utility? There will be an issue for me. This is a paradigmatic situation. They need to be done in terms of applying regulation which makes the small utility a burden for them (...). An example, you have a car but the car is old. But I have a bus and I need the bus to come to the village and take the people. (...) The bus system is not working. What can be done? I cannot take your car, but I can put high fees, I can put penalties if they catch you using your car for public services. People will stop [using your car] and will go with the bus. Reforms and policy influence are very good businesses but do not [influence] people. You need to be patient, and go slowly. Reform of governance and regulation, and influence on new policies is not about two, three of five years.

Joana: It is long term.

Mr. Abadi: It is minimum ten years. But you need to start from the right place, by bringing all stakeholders around the table. In the stakeholder [level], you should not define the stakeholder that I think that is the stakeholder. No. Let the stakeholders say that they are the stakeholders or not. So, to start a stakeholders process, you don't send an invitation, you make a public announcement for the table and they will tell you they are stakeholders or not.

Joana: Why is this important?

Mr. Abadi: Because you need to map out the real stakeholders, who can really contribute and who really can jeopardise. So you don't invite people to these processes, you open a public debate (...). And then you can start identifying groups and narrow the interests. But it takes time.

Joana: You mentioned the role of stakeholders, but I kind of imagined this at the national level. At the UfM level, have you seen that or have you noticed whether stakeholders' interest affect your effectiveness?

Mr. Abadi: No, this is the issue. The UfM is not a company, not a utility. Stakeholders are the ones you give you mandate. You cannot complain from the people that give you a mandate that they are jeopardising me. Otherwise, if you want to implement your ambition, then yes they are absolutely halting us. But if I want to implement a mandate given by them, I need to accept the process and I need to put myself in the middle. It is not easy to work in a multilateral organisation because we are not a church or an elected government or entity, we are not a stakeholder as such. We are a mandated organisation. So if you want to keep yourself mandated, you need to follow those people because they are your stakeholders. By the way, if they are fine without it, you will stop functioning, you will next not signify any price. Now, if the weed factory in

Barcelona stopped, you would find profit. But what will happen if the UfM does not exist, people will lose connection, platform to talk, to learn from each other, and to influence somehow, smoothly.

Joana: Also, talking about what you mentioned before, there is the role of funding. How do you think funding has affected water governance? Do you think there is a lack of public funding? Whether it should be improved, whether a public-private funding is a leverage towards good water governance framework?

Almotaz: There is investment and financing. When it comes to the financing of the water sector, there is a dilemmatic situation that people believe that water [comes] from God and they should not pay for the water. In most of our region, even the European countries, the collection of fees of the services is very limited. You have next month may be, if a utility reach 90% (...), there is a problem financing the water sector on its own. There are no means to capitalise the internal living of the water sector, because people don't pay. And people don't pay because of misunderstanding or affordability (they cannot pay because it is expensive for them). But at the same time, the utility guy will tell you "oh but the person he has a mobile, he is paying 30 euros each month for (...) the internet, why he cannot pay 20 euros for water?" And they will tell you: "Water is coming from God". The misunderstanding that the water is coming from God, but God does not put it in to the system, God put in into the river, and your mother or my father used to go the river to collect the water. Now, someone took the water from the river to the system. You don't pay the water, you pay the cost of water coming from the river to your house. The cost of salary of engineers, maintenance people, of many jobs as well as the process to comply with the environment. All of these are costs. They are not tariffs, (...) but the cost of water. (...) This financing should come from the internal revenue. The financing comes from the national budget, because this is something they have to put for the water sector.

And then you go to the investment. (...) When you have a lot of water investment without regulation or good governance, then you have a lot of corruption. Because people want to take money from these international financing institutes (...) , but they don't know the clear contracts to be regulated by a clear law. There is a missing - what we call- public-private partnership laws and regulations. Everybody regulates these regulations with a special contract, and the special contract can be influenced by the politicians. This is why the investment in the water sector can be a little bit hectic. What happens is that the people who have money and want to pause investment, they put conditions: "okay you want to have 500 million euros to construct a facility. You need to do two things, you need to have a regulator, you need to have a utility and we need you to make regulation with the consumer. Because, I will need to make sure that in 20-30 years you will give me the money back. And how to do it? You need to put very good regulation between the consumer and the utility. And this is something that can be influenced.

At the end of the day, what can make this happen is a political will. If there is no political will, nothing can happen. And the political will here can be changed through policy influence. This is what the UfM Secretariat is doing. Without conditioning and making the eye open of for the politicians to say "hey, this is good. If I start connecting the water sector with the energy sector, and making this reform, I will have a lot for me because I will irrigate a lot of land, and will get rid of 200 families who will not take money from the Social Security as they will start producing their own agriculture", as an example. This is what we call 'policy influence'

Joana: My last question, because you mentioned a lot of the questions that I had, is about what do you think is the best governance framework for the Mediterranean? Do you think is it better to have a collective or still a plurilateral national initiative? What would you think would be the solution to this water crisis?

Mr. Abadi: You need to have a water governance framework that is contemporary, that respond to the all needs of social, economic aspects and human rights approach. But you need to respect the specificity of each country. This is the [main] feature we are working on here. We cannot make one model for everybody because water has a lot of social, cultural connotations. You need to respect the differences and showcase the contemporary ones. What works for Spain, does not work for Portugal; but many of the things that work in Spain, could work in Portugal.

Joana: This is what you talked about “replicating”, right?

Mr. Abadi: Yes. Replicating not duplicating.

Interview with Mr. Franc Cortada, conducted on April 27th 2022, on-line

The fourth interviewee is Mr. Franc Cortada, CEO of Oxfam Intermón. As an expert in non-governmental development cooperation, he was expected to bring to light some of the main challenges that non-state actors face in water governance in the Mediterranean.

This interview was conducted in Catalan.

(Introduction and ethical questions)

Joana: Estic estudiant com la política, en tant que, interessos nacionals, és a dir, els interessos dels Estats, estan influenciant la governança de l'aigua al Mediterrani. En aquest sentit, entenem l'aigua com a tot: aigua potable, aigua de rius, aigua de mar, tot en general. No m'he especificat en ningun format. I de governança entenem la implementació de polítiques a nivell institucional. Sí que m'he focalitzat molt en la Unió pel Mediterrani (...) però m'interessava més de tu saber la perspectiva dels actors no-governamentals. La meva primera pregunta era: segons el teu coneixement i la teva experiència, quin és el rol dels actors no-governamentals en la governança de l'aigua en el Mediterrani?

Sr. Franc Cortada: (...) Tenia ganes de contestar primer la última (pregunta) perquè crec que ens ajuda a entendre. Tu ara ho enfoques en governança, i jo crec que és el tema adequat, pero feies una pregunta que deia algo així com “perquè això tan important no està a les agendes”? I jo pensava: és molt important i serà més important, i segur que tu has fet tot un capítol de tot el tema de l'aigua al Mediterrani i els nivells d'estrès hídrics actuals i futurs posen la pell de gallina. I quan ho creues amb canvi climàtic i veus com tots els estudis a més diuen que el canvi climàtic al Mediterrani és encara més exacerbat en termes d'increments de temperatures, estrès hídric, deserts en les precipitacions. I això ho creues amb increment demogràfic. Allò és una tempesta perfecta que realment és molt molt preocupant. I és molt preocupant, i ara ho parlarem, perquè quan parlem de governança, parlem de Mediterrani, però és veritat que les problemàtiques del Nord i del Sud del Mediterrani també són molt molt diferents. I quan parlem d'estrès hídric al Mediterrani i problemes al Mediterrani, una altra vegada,

si tu t'ho mires des del Sud del Mediterrani, el problema encara és molt més greu perquè els nivells d'estrès hídric són molt més grans, la competència pels recursos de l'aigua són molt més grans, i els reptes demogràfics seran molt més grans que el Nord del Mediterrani. En lo qual, és evident que és un 'problemón'. És un 'problemón', ara, ho serà en el futur, i a part és una cosa que no és nova. Ara ho parlarem, però molts dels conflictes, si tu penses en el conflicte Israelo-Palestí, té un substrat de conflicte de l'aigua, i estem parlant dels anys 60. I encara ara, si mires un contexte com Cis-jordania, el 90% dels recursos de Cis-jordania s'en van a territori Israelí, i només un 10% són pels Palestins. I estem parlant d'una diferència en litres d'aigua que pràcticament es multiplica per 5. El col·lectiu Palestí deu estar als 50 l per persona a dia i els Israelís a uns 300. Ara agafarem l'exemple del Nil perquè és molt interessant com exemple de falta de (...) del que vol dir de forma exponencial un conflicte per l'aigua de 3 països i tota una regió on els interessos nacionals primen per sobre, i el perquè primen. Però si volia començar per la última pregunta perquè em sembla que contextualitza molt la gravetat de la situació i just aquesta pregunta que tu fas, d'interessos nacionals/regionals, i ara quan parlem de governança i de tensions, perquè hi ha una dimensió tecnològica que podem parlar, però que hi ha moltes altres dimensions que s'han d'abordar quan parlem de governança.

Joana: Aquí, has tingut la sort que aquesta entrevista ja és la última de tot l'anàlisi que he fet i ja sé molt del tema. I tinc preguntes molt més profundes de les que et vaig enviar perquè en aquell moment no havia acabat l'anàlisi. I hi ha un dels arguments que m'acabes de dir que va una mica en aquesta línia: sí que és molt important, hi ha molta literatura (és el que tu dius), és un tema d'una gravetat super alta, però tot hi així, no trobo ningú que m'expliqui perquè l'aigua no està permanentment en el centre de l'agenda del país. Sí que va guanyant *momentum*. Per exemple, hi ha un conflicte, sabem que té una dimensió hídrica i podem l'aigua allà [al centre de l'agenda], però entre el conflicte d'Ucrania, i s'envà l'aigua, i entren altres coses. I penso, com és que un tema tant important i tant *cross-sectorial* i *transboundary*, que finalment sí que té efecte en aquest conflicte i segurament en altres situacions, no es manté a l'agenda. La meva resposta de la Tesis és que no hi ha interès nacional, però no entenc perquè no hi ha interès nacional, aquí va la meva pregunta.

Sr. Franc Cortada: Ostres, són preguntes molt tossudes. Jo t'escolto i intuïtivament se m'acudeixen tres respostes complementàries. La primera de perquè no és un tema central d'agenda la comparo una mica amb canvi climàtic. Tot i tenir *momentum* mediàtic i de soroll i propostes, tots els temes que tenen un greu impacte a llarg plaç, costen molt a nivell polític i d'Estats que adquireixi rellevància perquè no va amb els cicles electorals. Ara tot és molt curt-placista i el tu estàs parlant del Mediterrani és molt molt greu perquè tu està dient que d'aquí a 20-30 anys, la disponibilitat d'aigua al Mediterrani baixa a la meitat, i estarem parlant de pobresa en termes de vulnerabilitat d'aigua. La meitat de població del Mediterrani estarà per sota dels mínims anuals. Estem parlant de cada normalment estem a 1000m³, doncs estarem per sota dels 500. És un tema molt molt greu però és a llarg plaç. Això té poc rèdit polític i poc rèdit electoral. Això lo primer. Lo segon té molt a veure amb el que tu dius. Quan parlem d'aigua hi ha tota aquesta narrativa d'estrès hídric i, en front d'un estrès hídric, quines són les solucions tecnològiques. Hi ha molta literatura sobre els usos eficients de l'aigua, sobre el sistemes de regadiu eficients, sobre processos de salinització, re-aplicació d'aigües residuals, evitar contaminació d'aigua... com si el problema fós l'abastament d'aigua però hi ha un problema central que és l'ús de l'aigua i la

competència per les demandes de l'aigua. I aquí és on hi ha processos integrals interessants com el WEBE que intenten mirar els usos de l'aigua des d'aquesta part energètica, aigua per regadiu...i mirar la competència de recursos. Aquí és on hi ha l'enjundia, i hi ha l'enjundia si tu mires un cas tan obvi com Espanya, on tens una competència dels recursos de les demandes d'aigua molt evident però el cas del Nil és un altre. On tu tens un Estat com Etiòpia que fa la gran presa amb una vocació energètica i és la gran presa (...) la 'presa del renacimiento' i serà el complex hidroelèctric més gran de tot Àfrica. Però, a la vegada, amb una competència enorme, amb totes les necessitats agrícoles, sobretot aigües avall a Egipte, (...). Jo crec que no és que no hi hagi interès nacional, sinó que crec que hi ha molts interessos, molts lobbies diferents que competeixen pels usos dels recursos de l'aigua. (...) Just parlava amb vosaltres del cas d'Osaka, a Mèxic, on s'havia conseguit capgirar la jerarquització dels usos de l'aigua: Hi havia un ús de l'aigua pel sector privat a costa de les comunitats que no tenien accés a l'aigua, s'havia capgirat. Jo crec que hi ha un tema enorme amb marcs regulatoris i sistemes de governança que jerarquitzin els usos de l'aigua i les demandes.

Joana: M'interessa molt el que m'acabes de dir perquè el primer expert que vaig entrevistar, li vaig preguntar 'perquè creus que la governança de l'aigua és tan deficitària'? I això és una pregunta que vaig preguntar tant a ell com a dos treballadors de la Unió pel Mediterrani. I mentre els dos últims em van parlar més de falta de cohesió, falta de sincronització, falta de flexibilitat, etc., el primer em va just dir el que m'acabes de dir. I és que hi ha molts lobbies intervenint en la presa de decisions. Clar, això és un tema que no vaig voler abordar molt ja que només m'ho va comentar ell, i vaig pensar que només és una opinió personal. Però m'agradaria saber des de la teva opinió quina influència tenen els lobbies en els governants?

Sr. Franc Cortada: Alta. Només cal que miris el cas espanyol. No cal anar molt lluny. Quan tu mires el que passa en l'Estat espanyol amb l'explotació d'aqüífers per sistemes de regadiu molt poc eficients i on els propis governants d'aquestes regions no poden afrontar els seus propis lobbies agrícoles, sabent que están condemnant els seus propis territoris a mig plaç, quan tu mires el que està passant en tota Castilla La Mancha amb la sobreexplotació d'aqüífers (...), quan tu mires tot el que passa a Doñana, amb tots els regadius del voltant, ja ho veus. I ara el que passarà és el que regulitzaran moltes d'aquestes sobreexplotacions, i moltes d'aquestes captures il·legals d'aigua, que és el què està passant ara en el Sud d'Espanya. És molt complicat perquè et poses en contra, i hi ha molts llocs de treball que hi depenen, i hi ha molta pressió també de segons quins sectors, de sindicats agrícoles, etc. Després, lligat amb el que tu deies d'interessos nacionals versus governança regional, una altra vegada el cas del Nil és molt interessant perquè si tu veus el que està passant, d'alguna forma retroalimenta nacionalisme. Tan en el cas etiop i en el cas egipci, hi han unes narratives molt nacionalistes, de soberania nacional, d'interessos nacionals, de l'orgull nacional que pesen molt sobre el sentit comú en la gestió d'una conca com és la conca del Nil que travessa 10/11 països, 3 països que són Sudan, Etiopia i Egipte, que pràcticament el 60-70% dels recursos hídrics depenen de la gestió del Nil i on el sentit comú hauria de dir que aquesta gent s'ha de sentar a la taula. Però és que l'última vegada que es van assentar a la taula va ser al 99 per l'NBI, porten des del 99 i encara no han arribat a un acord. Jo recordo (...) al 2010-2011-2012, quan van voler entrar Ruanda i una sèrie de països més que van voler ratificar, i en aquell moment Kenia es va tirar enrere i encara no hi ha un sistema de governança per tot el que és la conca del Nil.

Joana: És una mica la contradicció que trobo: diem que sí que els lobbies, els sindicats i els actors no-estats tenent molta influència sobre els governants, posen molta pressió, impeding una implementació coherent i correcta de les polítiques, però, per altra banda, sí que és veritat que (i això ho ha indicat molta literatura) que estem encara dins d'un sistema de governança regit pels Estats, pels interessos nacionals. Són al final els governants que diuen el que diuen va a mida. I finalment és la conclusió de la meua tesis: no hi ha governança regional, sinó que està fragmentada, i al final són els Estats que controlen tant la Unió pel Mediterrani com tota la governança del Mediterrani. Clar, jo trobo aquesta contradicció entre que els stakeholders estan fent que no hi hagi una política coherent de la gestió de l'aigua, però per altra banda veig que finalment són els Estats. Llavors, on trobem aquí la coherència?

Sr. Franc Cortada: Sí, però té molt a veure (...), la intuïció em diu aquests elements que ja hem parlat: per una banda, Estats que cedeixen sobrania i renúncien a interessos nacionals sobre els seus lobbies nacionals pel bé comú (això d'entrada ja és un estil de lideratge molt diferent que no crec que ara es primi). Molt lligat al que deiem de tenir una mirada de mig-plaç. Tu ara tens interessos curtplacistes, tens una sèrie de sectors que depenen de la teua gestió de l'aigua, tens inclús interessos polítics (un Govern com l'Etíop fa bandera de la gran presa del renacimiento tampoc és neutral ni trivial. És un Govern que té un conflicte tigray, que té molts altres problemes). Un ha de treure pit i ensenyar allò que interessa i explicar a la teua ciutadania com defenses els interessos nacionals. Però hi ha perdedors pel camí. Parlàvem abans del conflicte Israelo-palestí, aquí qui té la paella pel mànec és Israel i surt perdent (...).

Hi havia tota la part de societat civil, que és el que tu volies parlar amb mi, i deies quin és el rol de la societat civil, quin és el paper que podrien tenir.

Joana: I et volia preguntar també que em diguis una via recomentòria/una recomenació sobre alguna alternativa que es pugui utilitzar per elevar el seu rol a nivell polític, en la presa de decisions.

Sr. Franc Cortada: (...) Se m'acudeixen 3 o 4 elements importants. El primer és el context: de quins països estem parlant quan parlem de societat civil. Tota la ribera sud del Mediterrani, tots els països, sense cap excepció, són tot Estats que, o bé, són Estats clarament repressors, opressors, o tancats. Si tu et mires els índex de CIVICUS (Síria, Egipte, Jordània...). Tots són països que tots estan en àmbar o en vermell. Per lo qual, ja d'entrada l'espai per la societat civil per exigir drets per defensar i per tenir una veu és molt limitat, en aquest tema i en qualsevol. L'espai que té la societat civil que té per demandar drets és molt molt baix i ara, si aquest és el punt de partida, ja no et dic pensar en espais inclusivius de diàleg. No hi ha espais inclusivius de diàleg, ni espais de consens, ni taules de diàleg. És molt difícil trobar en qualsevol d'aquests espais aquest tipus.

Joana: Al nivell de la Unió pel Mediterrani, sí. El que passa és que s'han quedat en espais de diàleg. No pugen, perquè no hi ha interès polític, no hi ha interès dels Estats. Clar, jo vull saber si hi ha alguna via per que passin de tenir un estat consultiu a tenir un rol important en la presa de decisions.

Sr. Franc Cortada: No tinc clar, et sóc honest (...), no se m'acudeix cap [exemple de salt], però crec que lo primer és el marc regulatori que defineix tots aquells espais. Si tu tens

un marc regulatori on hi ha espais consultius i de diàleg, o d'informació, però no hi ha cap mecanisme d'incidència real en la presa de decisions, a partir és molt complicat. Tinc molt present el cas de Mèxic, on realment ha sigut una lluita de les comunitats de 10 anys per fer-se escoltar. Són processos molt lents i hi ha una asimetria de poder molt gran. Una altra vegada, sortint del cas del Mediterrani, però pensant en el cas de Mèxic, tu tenies un lobby de tota la indústria molt gran, amb una accés al poder directe, amb una corrupció del poder (...) i tenies unes comunitats exigint un dret tan bàsic com és el dret a l'aigua però no tenien cap tipus d'entrada. I al final s'ha aconseguit, però és una lluita molt fran.

Hi ha un altre espai que és quan creues tota la part de societat civil amb conflicte on hi ha tot un espai de la societat civil que és tot l'espai d'organitzacions de dones, drets de les dones, que tenen una capacitat de diàleg molt diferent també i hi ha totes aquestes iniciatives de '*women, peace and security*' que estan a tota la part del Mediterrani i tota la part de les agendes africanes que reclamen espais de participació pública per organitzacions de dones en tots els espais de construcció de pau. Intuitivament, hi ha una molta capacitat de diàleg quan tens dones a la taula i això té molt a veure amb espais de governança jo també diria. I quan parlem d'espais de governança de l'aigua [parlem de] quin és el paper de participació de les dones en espais públics amb una capacitat de generar també diàleg, espais win-win, etc. molt diferent. Però les dones en molts d'aquests contextes no tenen accés a l'espai públic, ni de participació ni de lideratge.

Hi ha tot un tema, quan pensem de societat civil, que és nous conflictes. El que ens passarà és que, cada vegada, aquesta tensió per la demanda de l'aigua serà més gran, perquè tindrem menys recursos hídrics i més interessos creuats, i aquí les asimetries de poder i els lobbies tornaran a jugar un paper important. Si ara estem pensant en el sector privat - *agrobusiness* (perquè quan parlem d'agricultura hi ha agricultura del petit agricultor però també hi ha el *agrobusiness*. Tota la presa del Marruecos no és de petits productors, és una *agrobusiness* de grans corporacions que també fan una sobreexplotació, hi ha tota la part d'explotació minera d'aigües fòssils, hi ha tota la part de contaminació d'aigua en marcs regulatoris mediambientalment molt baixos i amb interessos del sector privat i de les grans corporacions que tenen deslocalitzades les empreses al Sud per tenir marcs regulatoris beneficiosos i que contaminen aigües). En lo qual, una altra vegada, quan pensem en governança de l'aigua, per mi, hi ha tres nivells molts diferents: hi ha un primer nivell de governança de l'aigua que és un espai de drets, inclús de que com s'han de canviar marcs regulatoris (...) per garantir el dret de l'aigua com un dret de la ciutadania. És un marc de governança des del punt de vista de drets bàsics del conjunt de les persones i un dret universal de costos de l'aigua (perquè pensem que, en aquest sentit, en molts d'aquests països de la ribera sud del Mediterrani, els preus aniran pujant, perquè cada vegada hi haurà més competència pel preu de l'aigua). (...) Hi ha un primer nivell del marc regulatori pensant en la universalitat del dret de l'aigua, de que igual que tenim ara tot això de la crisi energètica i com les famílies vulnerables no poden pagar-se l'electricitat, jo crec que ens passarà el mateix amb l'aigua: aniran pujant els costos de l'aigua, els cànon de l'aigua... I això és un primer marc de reglament i de governança de drets. Hi ha un segon marc que té molt a veure amb la competència dels usos de l'aigua. I aquí tens una sèrie de polítiques que haurem de vetllar ja que totes aquestes polítiques i la jerarquia de polítiques garanteixi aquest ús i la gestió de la competència pels recursos hídrics. Té un caire més aviat nacional. I després entrem en la governança de la que tu parles que és la governança de les conques hídriques, que és aquí on és transfronterera i és aquí on necessites espais de governança entre països per garantir un ús i una gestió dels

recursos hídrics en la qual tothom hi guanya. I que no succeeix que els governs que estan conques amunt, com una vegada més el cas del Nil on tu tens Etiòpia que ara, amb les noves preses d'Etiòpia, controla bàsciamment l'accés i garantitza l'accés de l'aigua aigües avall de la resta de països. És aquí on necessites aquests mecanismes de governança supranacionals.

Joana: Una última pregunta ràpida. En aquest tercer nivell, ets pessimista o optimista en el sentit de que una governança integral, regional, coherent i integrada pot ser possible?

Sr. Franc Cortada: Molt pessimista. *Ojalà* em diguis que sóc l'únic dels entrevistats que és pessimista però sóc pessimista des de l'evidència de que només a nivell d'Estats, com l'Estat espanyol la governança entre les comunitats autònomes és un malson. Sóc pessimista des de l'evidència com una vegada més exemples com el Nil on hi ha països amb un altíssim nivell de dependència per sobreviure i tot i així son incapaços de trobar acords tot i saber que s'hi juguen la supervivència a nivell d'Estat, a nivell socioeconòmic, a nivell de les seves poblacions, a nivell de la seva agricultura, a tots els nivells, i són incapaços de trobar aquests espais de concessió, de cessió i d'articulació. I *ojalà* m'equivoqui, *ojalà* la tensió sobre els recursos forci converses molt diferents però no ho sento perquè no veig cap espai. No puc ser optimista.

Joana: De fet era jo. Aquesta era la meva tesis. Jo pensava que a través de la Unió pel Mediterrani es podria. Però veig que la Unió pel Mediterrani és una altra plataforma al servei dels Estats.

Sr. Franc Cortada: La Unió pel Mediterrani no és res. (...) Em sap molt greu Joana que pensessis que la Unió pel Mediterrani era una espècie de 'Nacions Unides' en el Mediterrani.