

The Implementation Boundaries of Data and Information Exchange in the Palestinian-Israeli Water Context

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## **Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture**

### **„The Implementation Boundaries of Data and Information Exchange in the Palestinian-Israeli Water Context“**

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Source of the binding picture: <http://www.theglobaleducationproject.org/mideast/info-maps/israel-water-systems-map2.jpg>

## **8. Conclusions**

D&I Ex. is often recommended as an appropriate mechanism to deal with uncertainty in transboundary water contexts, a mechanism that enhances cooperation between riparian parties and advocates progressive joint management of transboundary water resources. This study has decided while counting on previous studies that D&I Ex.

typically aims at achieving two major goals: achieving better scientific-practical management of shared water resources, and enhancing cooperation and promoting mutual trust and confidence creation. Yet the realization of these goals has been found to be restricted by differing factors, including narrow interests, political linkages and low trust among parties.

Though D&I Ex. is a commonly recommended mechanism, no systematic work has been done to evaluate the ability of D&I Ex. to effectively act under different political, geographical and economical settings. This work contributes to the closing of this theoretical gap with reality-based empirical evidence based on two methodological steps. The first step is the creation of an evaluation method for D&I Ex. effectiveness and extensiveness through the development of two integrative indicators – effectiveness and extensiveness indicators, while the second is the systematic examination, codification and statistical test of the D&I Ex. occasions along the years of joint Palestinian-Israeli water management (1995-2009).

The results have proved to be less optimistic, or even disappointing, regarding the ability of D&I Ex. to be effectively implemented and balanced regarding the scope, or intensity of its implementation (as demonstrated by the extensiveness indicator). Political uncertainty (resembled in this specific case study by periods of negotiation on a Final Status Agreement<sup>27</sup>) has reduced the effectiveness achievements of D&I Ex. occasions. Moreover third party involvement has been shown to be significant to extensive D&I Ex. within the scope of joint inter-governmental water management, and only out of this scope has it contributed to more qualitative D&I Ex. (as demonstrated in the discussion chapter). Professional and subject-specific forums of exchange, as opposed to more general and political forums (the JWC forum), have been found to be more adequate for efficient D&I Ex..

The Palestinian-Israeli shared water management has a unique stance; the legitimacy of the shared water management mechanism is derived from the Interim Agreement, which is temporal and partial. As such, the situation influences the parties' motivation to manage water jointly, and as part of that, to openly share and exchange data and information about the resource. If D&I Ex. had been exclusively bounded to political

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<sup>27</sup> Sometimes also complementary negotiation on the Interim Agreement.

interests, it might have resulted in technical and reduced scope data and information being exchanged among the parties, which tend to incorporate water in the negotiation process as a part of broader political dispute. The water issue is therefore especially for Israel a "strong card" for achievements in other potential spheres of negotiation on a Final Status Agreement with the Palestinians as could have been derived from the interviews.

The findings of this work have shown some interesting trends regarding D&I Ex. in the Palestinian-Israeli case. D&I Ex. tends to be less efficient under the main forum of the shared water management mechanism – the JWC<sup>28</sup>, which is also the place for decision making on general issues of water management as well as political issues related to water. The message is clear, efficient D&I Ex. takes place in subject-focused professional committees, as is more the case under two other main forums of the JWC – the Technical Sub-committee and the Sewage Sub-committee. These are significant results evidenced by the statistical test and the results of this study.

Third party participation under the scope of Palestinian-Israeli water management is restricted, as the roles of the third parties was reduced to project facilitation, financing and implementation; therefore, when examining the contribution of these bodies, (e.g. donors and American diplomats involved in the course of D&I Ex. within the bounds of the shared Palestinian-Israeli water management process) to D&I Ex., the scenario is disheartening and opposite from what would logically be expected (that their participation would increase the effectiveness D&I Ex.). The main role in facilitating and improving the flow of information is thus being done by third parties out of the scope of the inter-governmental joint management mechanism, which is almost exclusively bilateral. Third parties have significantly impacted the facilitation and improvement of exchange and sharing of information through conferences, studies and projects, which were not bounded to the official bilateral mechanism.

The statistic test of this work has proved that when negotiations on general political agreements between riparian parties are being conducted, the parties tend to exchange data and information in a less effective manner. This occurs so that each party may increase its bargaining power on other issues. Although the aim of this paper is not to

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<sup>28</sup> Notice that JWC is also the name of the general shared mechanism of water management.

recommend a determinate and timesaving conclusion for the Final Status Agreement, it is still worth mentioning that lack of progress on a general political agreement does not necessarily prevent the ability to improve the D&I Ex. process on shared water resources. In these periods, when no negotiation on Final Status Agreement occurred, the effectiveness annual average spanned from the lowest to the highest level of effectiveness. This might suggest that constant and rather practical-technical exchange eventually leads to more effective D&I Ex. even under conditions of political uncertainty and a lack of permanent agreement.

Some of the limitations of this study center on the inability to check and make conclusions on activities which have taken place beyond the scope of the official shared water management mechanism and within the official mechanism but in a way that was not cited in the protocols (with the exception of information supplied in the interviews). D&I Ex. would also not necessarily function as it did in this study under different conditions, since the work is focused on a setting of political and economic-technical asymmetries.

Recommendations for improving D&I Ex. under conditions of political uncertainty and political and economic-technical asymmetries are wanting:

1. When acting under uncertain political circumstances, such as when complete political arrangements among the riparian parties do not exist or are fragile, it is the constant work of subject-specific forums which can achieve more effective D&I Ex..
2. The role of third parties is significant for improving the achievements of D&I Ex., but ways have to be found to allow activity which is not bounded to the political restrictions of the official intergovernmental mechanism (as demonstrated in the discussion chapter).