

IRRIGATION AND STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION: TURKEY AS A CASE-STUDY

Prof. Dr. Aysegül Kibaroglu

Chair

Dept. of Political Science and International Relations

MEF University

Istanbul, Turkey

aysegul.kibaroglu@mef.edu.tr



18 Better Basin Management with Stakeholder Participation

Jurgen Schmandt and Aysegül Kibaroglu

18.1 RIVER BASIN STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR ROLE

Most SERIDAS rivers are overseen and managed by government-appointed or elected basinwide organizations, often called river agencies or commissions. One of their main functions is to allocate water to farmers, cities, and industries – the end users. End users want to have their voices heard in river management. For this purpose, they form intermediate or stakeholder organizations, such as irrigation districts and city water utilities. In some river basins there are additional stakeholders, such as native tribes, industry groups, and nongovernmental organizations working on environmental, economic, or social issues. In each case, stakeholders represent the interests of water users in specific river segments or sub-basins. In this chapter we discuss the role of stakeholder organizations in river basins, using the example of two SERIDAS rivers – the Rio Grande and Euphrates–Tigris.

2017, p. 8). In the same vein, the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6.5, which aims at implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), emphasizes stakeholder participation as a major target and indicator for operationalizing sustainable river water management (UN Environment, 2018).

While the establishment of robust stakeholder institutions at all river basin levels should be the aim for sustainable, equitable, and integrated management of a river system, current stakeholder participation represents a mixed picture in the SERIDAS river basins. We use our work in the Rio Grande/Brávo to illustrate the important role assumed by stakeholders in sustainable basin management. In the case of the Euphrates–Tigris, we find that the lack of a basinwide management organization, has led to a much smaller role played by stakeholders. While irrigation districts/irrigation associations and city water utilities exist, their impact on basinwide management is minimal and mostly limited to ad hoc arrangements.

Stakeholder Engagement for Inclusive Water Governance



- Starting in the 1960s, countries/geographies as varied as Taiwan and the United States began to turn over the management authority for irrigation systems from government agencies to farmer cooperatives or user groups
- Management transfer has taken many forms, ranging from total privatization to co-management Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT) or Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM), where responsibilities are shared between public sector agencies and water user associations or groups

An Overview of Worldwide Experience in Irrigation Management Reform



- According to FAO at least 50 countries have implemented some kind of national irrigation transfer program
- The 50-year history of IMT/PIM, and especially its last 20 years, has provided a vast literature in the form of case studies, impact assessments, qualitative reports and a variety of implementation guides for decision-makers
- Case studies (e.g. Turkey, Mexico, China) form the building blocks of our knowledge of IMT/PIM effectiveness

Irrigation management reform in Turkey



- Turkey has been a front runner in irrigation sector reform. The almost complete turnover of irrigation systems to irrigation associations dramatically empowered irrigators
- Irrigation associations have overcome some long-standing problems in collection of irrigation fees and operation of the irrigation network
- They have not shown any significant change in irrigation efficiency, however. Moreover, management decentralization, particularly in its effect on participatory performance, has displayed mixed results

Irrigation management reform in Turkey: When? Why?

- DSI has the primary task of O&M of the irrigation systems
- DSI is also entitled to transfer the O&M of irrigation systems to irrigation management organisations such as cooperatives and irrigation associations (IAs)
- From the early 1960s, DSI had a programme for such transfers for secondary and tertiary canals
- The process has gained momentum since 1993
- Since then, the management of irrigation systems covering more than two and a half million hectares has been handed over to local administrations or to irrigation associations



Irrigation management reform in Turkey: Key background conditions

- Irrigation Association (IA) is a form of transfer considered innovative, where the irrigation scheme covers more than one local administrative unit, for example, a village or municipality
- Key background conditions leading to the irrigation management transfer include: a national budgetary crisis that led to limitations on financial allocations to DSI, and progressive deterioration of the irrigation infrastructure due to deferred maintenance

- Pros:
 - The almost full transfer of irrigation systems to the IAs has helped to overcome some of the problems such as collection of irrigation fees
- Cons:
 - An increase in water use efficiency remains a challenge
 - Outcomes of irrigation management decentralization particularly in terms of participatory performances of IAs display mixed results

IAs performance: economics and efficiency

- A comparison of the DSI expenditure for O&M before and after transfer shows a substantial decrease from 100 to 16 percent
- Thus, the economic target of the transfer process was achieved
- However, the irrigation efficiency has been around 40 percent in irrigated areas managed by the IAs
- Considering the period before and after transfer to irrigation associations, there is no significant change in irrigation efficiency

IAs performance: participation

IAs' performances display mixed results:

- IAs were unable to implement participatory irrigation management (PIM) in some local contexts characterized by power asymmetries
- In other contexts, local PIM enabled a more efficient co-management of irrigation, especially at times of drought: DSI and the IAs were able to devise new payment mechanisms to reduce the amount of irrigation without endangering the crops

After a quarter of century of IAs in action, a whole-of-Turkey study on the participatory performance of them is absolutely necessary





Under the accelerated transfer program IAs were established according to various local government laws (1990s-2011)

IAs finally gained a clear legal status following the legislation of the Irrigation Associations Law No. 6172 in 2011

However, in 2018, major amendments (Law No. 7139) have been made into this law, which put IAs strictly back under the control of the central state water agency (DSİ)



Irrigation Associations Law No. 6172 (2011)

Many changes were brought to the structure and functioning of the IAs:

- The **chairperson** of the association is **elected** by the members of the IA assembly for a 4-year term and is the head of the executive committee, which decides on matters related to the management of the IA
- An **audit committee** was also created, however, the extent to which this committee can perform its duties depends on the **power asymmetries** in the local context
- There are **external** checks and balances in the system as well: it is the responsibility of the Governor to monitor the activities of the IAs and to approve their fees and budgets

IAs under severe criticism by the government

- However, even after the adoption of the 2011 Law, the government developed negative opinion on IAs performance
- Regarding the administrative performance of IAs, some cases of corruption particularly generated through illegal actions of chairs were highlighted



On 19 April 2018, with a new Law No. 7139, major amendments were made in Law No. 6172:

IA chairs will be appointed by the Minister from among the civil servants upon the suggestion of DSI

IA will be abolished with the approval of the Minister upon the suggestion of DSI

- The fact that IA assembly will not elect the chair anymore is against the main principle of Law No. 6172, which is based on the principle of decentralization
- The responsibility for abolition of an IA is taken away from the IA assembly
- These changes bring back central control of irrigation by DSI and the Ministry



Conclusion

Turkish case of irrigation management devolution demonstrates that a broader consensus among major stakeholders, namely farmers, government, private sector, civil society and the academia becomes absolute necessity for any reform to make positive impact on equity and efficiency in irrigation management