

Good Water Neighbors?

A Study of Environmental Peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine

by

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A drawing on the wall at Sharhabil Bin Hassneh EcoPark, Jordan.
Source: Personal image.

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ABSTRACT

Water scarcity, pollution, and unequal distribution add complexity to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In response, EcoPeace Middle East engages Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians in cross-border environmental cooperation while promoting dialogue and trust among members of all three societies. This study explores how EcoPeace fosters environmental peacebuilding between Israel and Palestine, looking specifically at what motivates Israelis and Palestinians to engage in cross-border cooperation, how their involvement in the organization affects their relationships, and the organization's key challenges and strengths. The study relies on theories of water conflict and water cooperation, social cubism, and environmental and multi-track peacebuilding. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and critical auto-ethnography. The study found that by creating linkages between water and other sectors of society, the organization has been able to procure tangible results, and sustain limited dialogue and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, even in the context of physical, legal, political, and psychological barriers.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

More than two-thirds of our “Blue Planet” is covered by water, yet only a miniscule amount of it is accessible to humans and is suitable for drinking without prior treatment. Water, the substance of all life on earth, is abundant in some places and scarce in others. The Middle East and North African (MENA) region is one of the most water-stressed regions in the world. Approximately five percent of the world’s population have access to only one percent of earth’s freshwater resources. The region’s rivers, most of which are transboundary, provide two thirds of its freshwater supply, making it the highest rate of dependency on international basins in the world.¹ Today, the total water demand in the MENA already exceeds naturally available water supplies by almost 20 percent.² Several factors are putting this valuable source of humanity at additional risk. Our rapidly growing population exacts ever greater amounts of water; unsustainable environmental practices are polluting and overexploiting resources; and competition among water users is causing uneven resource distribution.

Situated in the heart of the MENA, Israel and Palestine face issues of prolonged drought, pollution, and unequal distribution of water resources. Within this ecological context, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict adds an additional layer of complexity. Even though the conflict does not emanate from an ecological cause – its core revolves around one piece of land that is culturally, spiritually, and historically significant to two peoples – issues of water quantity and quality have long been a major area of contention between both peoples and continue to shape the dynamics of the conflict.

¹ See The World Bank, “Making the most of scarcity: Accountability for better water management in the Middle East and North Africa” (report by The World Bank, Washington, 2007), 8.

² See The World Bank, “The Grain Chain: Food Security and Managing Wheat Imports in Arab Countries” (report by The World Bank, 2012), as cited in Oded Eran, Gidon Bromberg, and Giulia Giordano, “Israeli Water Diplomacy and National Security Concerns” (EcoPeace Middle East and INSS, January 2018), 5.

The availability and control of water resources is imperative for the survival, sustenance, and development of Israel and Palestine. For a long time, scholars and politicians considered the issues of water quantity and quality a question of technological innovation, separate from the political conflict and answered primarily by engineers and scientists. Yet because the physical world of water is closely connected to the socio-political world, especially in contexts of protracted, ethnoterritorial conflicts like that between Israel and Palestine, water is entangled in a web of complex linkages of politics, power, and the overall sociopsychological characteristics of the conflict.

In Israel and Palestine, issues of water, sanitation, and related environmental concerns have been a source of both conflict and cooperation. In the absence of a fair and effective water agreement between Israel and Palestine, both parties continue to vie over the resource in what they believe to be a zero-sum game. At the same time, growing awareness about the unsustainability of the current system has prompted regional civil society actors to take matters into their own hands. Realizing that a continuation of the status quo is bound to bring harm to all people of the region, environmentalists, peace practitioners, and concerned citizens have come together to promote fair and sustainable environmental practices to protect their shared resources.

EcoPeace Middle East is one such example. As a non-governmental environmental organization, EcoPeace brings together Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians to promote cooperative efforts for protecting and rehabilitating transboundary resources and the shared environmental heritage of the Levant. The organization works with high-level officials to

advocate for cross-border environmental management, as well as with local communities to raise environmental awareness and foster dialogue and relationships among the peoples of the region.³

This thesis examines three theoretical frameworks. First, a discussion of different theories on water conflict, cooperation, and environmental peacebuilding explores the connection between water and human security. Secondly, building upon the notion that water is inseparable from other physical, social, and economic aspects of society, this thesis draws on the theory of social cubism to examine the question of water security as part of the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, because this is a case-oriented study focusing on the work of EcoPeace Middle East, theories on civil society and multi-track peacebuilding provide an analytical framework for understanding EcoPeace's role and function as a non-governmental environmental organization in the Middle East.

The primary research question of this thesis asks how EcoPeace fosters environmental peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians. The question is unpacked through three sub-questions, which explore the motivations of EcoPeace members to engage in cross-border cooperation (SQ1), the effect that EcoPeace's projects have on the Israeli-Palestinian relationship (SQ2), and the key challenges and strengths of cross-communal water cooperation projects (SQ3). To answer these questions, this study relies on data collected through semi-structured interviews with Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian members of EcoPeace; in-depth observation of the organization's work and modus operandi; as well as auto-ethnographic components formed during a three-month internship with EcoPeace. This study also builds upon two previous studies

³ See EcoPeace Middle East, <http://ecopeaceme.org>.

specific to the work of EcoPeace: Dabelko's 2014 and Ide and Fröhlich's 2015 study of EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbors project.⁴

A note on terminology

The terminology used in discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is as contentious as any other aspect of the conflict. This thesis uses the following terminology:

- ✿ **Palestine**, defined here as comprising the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Due to the contentious status of Palestine as a sovereign state, some scholars and political bodies use the term "Palestinian territories" or "occupied Palestinian territories". The Israeli government as well as large parts of the Jewish-Israeli society often label the West Bank as "Judea and Samaria," the names for two areas of the ancient Kingdom of Israel. Because the State of Palestine has been recognized by the majority of members states of the United Nations, this thesis uses the term Palestine, except when referring specifically to one of its component areas.
- ✿ **Barrier**. There are many different descriptions of the fences and walls that Israel has built around the West Bank since 2002. The term "Security Fence" or "Security Barrier" is often used among the Israeli population, while "Separation Wall" or "Apartheid Wall" is a term frequently used by Palestinians and other Arab states. Since the barrier is neither exclusively a fence nor a wall and to sidestep any debate about the intentions behind this project, the term "Barrier" is used in this thesis.

⁴ Geoffrey D. Dabelko, "Environmental Peacebuilding: The Good Water Neighbors Project," in *Green Planet Blues: Critical Perspectives on Global Environmental Politics*, eds. Ken Conca and Geoffrey D. Dabelko (Boulder: Westview Press, 2014); Tobias Ide and Christiane Fröhlich, "Socio-environmental cooperation and conflict? A discursive understanding and its application to the case of Israel and Palestine," *Earth System Dynamics* 6 (2015).

✿ **Israeli Palestinians.** Around twenty percent of Israel's population are Israeli citizens with Palestinian heritage. The Israeli government refers to these citizens as Arab Israelis or Arab citizens of Israel, while many (including all of this study's participants) self-identify as Palestinian citizens of Israel or Israeli Palestinians. Therefore, unless otherwise noted, this thesis adopts the term Israeli Palestinians when referring to Israeli citizens with Palestinian heritage.

The following chapter provides a contextual overview of this study and outlines the complex relationship between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the question of water. Chapter 3 presents some of the most prominent theories on water conflict and cooperation, approaches to holistic analyses of protracted conflicts, and the role of civil society organizations. Chapter 4 details the research methodology and research instruments. Chapter 5 presents the research findings, which are divided into topical sections and contain several case studies and auto-ethnographic components. The final chapter discusses the research findings and gives an outlook on future studies.

CHAPTER II. CONTEXT

2.1 The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

With a big smile Miri Regev unveiled the logo for this year's anniversary events in honor of Israel's 70th birthday. The Israeli Minister of Culture presented big plans for the spring of 2018, including a nonstop party for 70 hours on the beaches of Tel Aviv and a week full of festivities across the country with spectacular fireworks, parades, and street parties. The year 1948 marked the beginning of a new chapter in the long and sometimes dark history of Jewry. Centuries of persecution, extermination, and the denial of a homeland had preceded the birth of the Jewish state. Only seventy years later, Israel is home to 8.8 million people⁵ and has developed into one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The slogan that was chosen for this year's anniversary – A Legacy of Innovation – truly represents Israel's image around the world as the number one start-up country.

The 1.8 million Israeli-Palestinians that also live in Israel are not likely to join the festivities.⁶ For them and the rest of the Palestinian people, the memory of 1948 is anything but a cause for celebration. Known as *al-Nakba* (the catastrophe), the 1948 war that granted Israel's its independence also led to the expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians from their homeland.⁷ Today, almost five million live in Palestine, comprising the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Since September 2015, the *de jure* sovereign State of Palestine is recognized by 136 out of 193 member states of the United Nations, most recently by European-Union member Sweden and the Vatican. Many western nations, including the United

⁵ Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018.

⁶ Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018.

⁷ See Sumantra Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 234; Edy Kaufman and Manuel Hassassian, "Israel and Palestine," in *Regional and Ethnic Conflicts: Perspectives from the Front Lines*, ed. Judy Carter, George Irani and Vamik Volkan (Upper Saddle River: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008), 101.

FIGURE 1: ISRAEL, PALESTINE, AND ITS NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES



Source: David Brooks and Julie Trottier, “An Agreement to Share Water between Israelis and Palestinians: The FoEME Proposal” (EcoPeace Middle East, 2012). Used with permission.

States, Canada, Germany, France, and Britain do not recognize Palestine as a sovereign state.

Israel and Palestine are two places that could not be more different. Tel Aviv's glass-paned skyscrapers and high-speed trains remind visitors of the technologically advanced country that is Israel. Just seventy kilometers south of the metropole, the Gaza Strip has developed into one of the most impoverished, most densely populated places on earth. Further east, a 710-kilometer long barrier, consisting of a combination of fences, trenches, and cement walls, cuts the land in two.⁸ At the same time, Israeli settlements continue to sprout across the West Bank. Over 400,000 settlers are estimated to live in the Israeli-controlled parts of the West Bank, in addition to more than 200,000 Israelis in annexed East Jerusalem.⁹

Over the past seventy years, no generation of Israelis and Palestinians has lived during a time of peace and stability. Children are born into conflict and raised in an environment of anxiety, increasing ethnic segregation, and recurrent violence. The Oslo Accords, the most prominent effort to install peace in the region so far, have failed to produce a resolution that goes beyond a symbolic handshake to address the existential fears of both Jews and Palestinians and the deep psychological barriers they have built around themselves.¹⁰ The "final status issues" in the Oslo Accords have not been addressed. Instead, both sides have been stuck in a deadlock in the belief that, in order to reach an agreement, all of the conflict's core issues must be solved simultaneously.¹¹

⁸ Local Aid Coordination Committee (LACC), "The Impact of Israel's Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities" (Report of the Mission to the Humanitarian and Emergency Group (HEPG) of the Local Aid Coordination Committee, 2003), 6.

⁹ European External Action Service (EEAS), "Six-Month Report on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (January – June 2017)" (Six-Month Report presented to The Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA, December 2017), 1.

¹⁰ Tami Jacoby, "Gender relations and national security in Israel," in *Redefining security in the Middle East*, Tami Jacoby and Brent Sasley, eds. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 97. See also Bose, *Contested Lands*.

¹¹ Gidon Bromberg, Nada Majdalani, and Munqeth Mehyar, "Commentary: To make peace in the Middle East, focus first on water," *Reuters*, n.d., <https://mobile.reuters.com/article/amp/idUSKBN1FM22F>.

2.2 The Israeli-Palestinian Water Conflict

In 2014, then President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz addressed the Israeli Knesset. The German politician made a comment about what he heard was a clear discrepancy in water use between Israelis and Palestinians. “A Palestinian youth asked me why an Israeli can use 70 cubic liters of water and a Palestinian just 17. I haven’t checked the data. I’m asking you if this is correct,” Schulz offhandedly asked the members of the Israeli Parliament. Some of them were so outraged by his statement that they walked out of the room in protest of what they called “an untrue sermon on morality directed at Israel in Israel’s parliament. Definitely not in German.”¹²

While the exact numbers that Schulz mentioned were debatable, and while his source was arguably biased, this incident illustrates the fact that water continues to be a highly contentious subject for both Israelis and Palestinians. Located on the outskirts of the desert belt, Israel and Palestine are part of one of the most naturally water-stressed regions in the world. The area has an exceptionally diverse landscape and climate, ranging from snow-covered mountains in the north, fertile grounds of the Jordan River Valley in the east, to the coastal area along the Mediterranean Sea and the dry sandy dunes of the Negev Desert (*negev* meaning *dry* in Hebrew).

Israel and Palestine’s freshwater sources consist of coastal rivers, lakes, aquifers, and the Jordan River, which originates on Mount Hermon, flows along Israel and the West Bank’s border with Jordan, until it is ultimately deposited in the Dead Sea. The Jordan River’s water is shared by four riparians: Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Although the Jordan River runs along the West Bank, the Palestinians are currently denied access to its water resources. The Mountain Aquifer¹³ is the largest groundwater reservoir in the region. It consists of three

¹² Naftali Bennet cited by Ian Black, “Israeli rightwingers walk out during president of EU parliament’s speech,” *The Guardian*, February 12, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/12/israel-walkout-knesset-german-mep-speech>.

¹³ An aquifer is an underground geological formation from which water can be extracted.

component aquifers and underlies the West Bank and central Israel. The Mountain Aquifer's recharge area lies in the West Bank, making the Palestinians upstream, and the Israelis downstream riparians. Because it is an important source of freshwater for both Israel and the Palestinians, regulations for its use were set forth in the 1995 Oslo Accords.

In a region in which freshwater is scarce and often impacted by prolonged droughts, the control over a clean and sufficient water supply inevitably becomes a question of national survival. In the early days of the Zionist movement, water was recognized as critical for the development of a Jewish state.¹⁴ Out of this immense importance to the Israeli state, water became an indispensable “value in and of itself, a symbolic practice and a vital condition for Jewish-Israeli identity.”¹⁵ The securitization of water, meaning the portrayal of water resources as an existential threat and a matter of national security, has prompted Israel to move the issue “out of the sphere of normal politics into the realm of emergency politics.”¹⁶

This perception of water as a prerequisite for national security has shaped Israel's relations with its neighbors, with whom it shares many of its water resources. Thirty-one cases of water-based aggression have been recorded between Israel and its neighbors.¹⁷ Several researchers argue that the 1967 Six Day War counts as one of them.¹⁸ They argue that, while not

¹⁴ Clive Lipchin, “Water, agriculture and Zionism: exploring the interface between policy and Ideology,” in *Integrated water resources management and security in the Middle East*, Clive Lipchin, Eric Pallant, Danielle Saranga, and Allyson Amster, eds. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 251-268, as cited in Tobias Ide and Christiane Fröhlich, “Water conflict or water cooperation? A discursive understanding of water conflict and cooperation in Israel and Palestine” (Article presented at the 46th annual Colloquium of the German Association for Peace and Conflict Studies (AFK), April 3-5, 2014), http://www.afk-web.de/fileadmin/afk-web.de/data/zentral/dokumente/AFK-Kolloquium_2014/Paperroom_2014/Ide_Froehlich_Paper.pdf, 7.

¹⁵ Ibid. See also Philip Jan Schäfer, *Human and Water Security in Israel and Jordan* (Berlin: Springer, 2013).

¹⁶ Rita Floyd, “The environmental security debate and its significance for climate change,” *International Spectator* 43, no. 3 (August 2008): 6, as cited in Erika Weinthal, Neda Zawahri, and Jeannie Sowers, “Securitizing Water, Climate, and Migration in Israel, Jordan, and Syria,” *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 15 (2015): 296.

¹⁷ Aaron Wolf et al., “International Waters – Identifying Basins at Risk,” *Water Policy* 5, no. 1 (2003): 39, updated by Jacob Peterson-Perlman, Jennifer Veilleux, and Aaron Wolf, “International water conflict and cooperation: challenges and opportunities,” *Water International* 42, no. 2 (January 2017): 107. See also Aaron Wolf, “Shared Waters: Conflict and Cooperation,” *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 32, no. 3 (2007): 260.

¹⁸ Brahma Chellaney, *Water, peace, and war: Confronting the global water crisis* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 41; Mark Zeitoun, *Power and Water in the Middle East: The Hidden Politics of the Palestinian-Israeli Water Conflict* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 3; Leif Ohlsson, “Introduction: The Role of Water and the Origins of Conflict,” in *Hydropolitics*, ed.

the primary cause for the conflict, the prospect of acquiring near complete control over the region's most important water resources had a significant impact on Israel's military strategy. Whether or not water did in fact influence Israel's strategy, the war's outcome completely overturned the hydro-political structure of the region. Having occupied the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, Israel was able to secure additional sources of water supply and effectively gained control over 80 percent of the West Bank's water.¹⁹

In numerous conflicts, countries have targeted water resources and water infrastructure as a strategic means to politically and militarily undermine the enemy by causing humanitarian harm and inhibiting the other's capacity to wage war.²⁰ In the context of Israel and Palestine, destroying sanitation facilities or water delivery systems such as water pipelines and rooftop water tanks has become part of the overall conflict. During the 2014 Gaza War, Israel destroyed Gaza's only electricity plant, and damaged a wastewater treatment plant and a desalination facility, leaving over 1.2 million Palestinians with limited fresh water or sanitation facilities and \$34 million in damages to Gaza's water infrastructure.²¹

Human rights groups have documented that since September 2000, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have strategically targeted Palestinian pipelines, roof-top water tanks, and wells within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.²² The Israeli military was reported to have destroyed

Leif Ohlsson (Dhaka: University Press and Zed Books, 1995), 20. See also Mostafa Dolatyar and Tim Gray, *Water Politics in the Middle East: A Context for Conflict or Cooperation?* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2000).

¹⁹ See Joe Stork, "Water and Israel's Occupation Strategy," *MERIP Reports* 116, no. 3, (1983): 19-24; Christiane Fröhlich, "Water: Reason for conflict or catalyst for peace? The case of the Middle East," *L'Europe en Formation* 365 (2012): 149.

²⁰ See Chellaney, Water, peace, and war.

²¹ Stephanie Nebehay, "Acute water crisis looms in Gaza, aid agencies warn," *Reuters*, July 15, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-aid/acute-water-crisis-looms-in-gaza-aid-agencies-warn-idUSKBN0FK1M020140715>; Isabel Kershner and Fares Akram, "Israeli Leader Calls for 'Full Force' in Effort to Quell Hamas Rocket Attacks," *New York Times*, July 11, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/12/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-strip-conflict.html>; Elena Lazarou, "Water in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" (Briefing Paper, European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), 2016), 7.

²² Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), "The Right to Water in Palestine: A Background" (2003), 2; Al-Haq and EWASH, "Israel's violations of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights with regard to the human rights to water and sanitation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" (Joint Parallel Report submitted by the Emergency Water,

nine water tanks in the Bedouin village of Amniyr in the South Hebron Hills in the West Bank. Soldiers are said to also have destroyed pumps and wells in the Jordan Valley villages of Al-Nasaryah, Al-Akrabanyah, and Beit Hassan.²³

Because water has been a vital resource for the existence and growth of Israel, the country has invested heavily in the development of water technology to reduce its dependency on ground- and freshwater and widen its pool of accessible water resources. In 2007, the Israeli government ordered the installation of low-flow toilets and showerheads in households and public spaces all across the country. Through secondary (sometimes even tertiary) water reclamation, Israel now recaptures 86 percent of its wastewater to be repurposed for drip-irrigation. To further reduce the amount of water needed in the agricultural sector, the country imports ‘virtual water’ in the form of water-intensive food like cereals. (‘Virtual water’, sometimes also called embodied water, refers to the amount of water needed for the entire production process of goods. Coffee beans growing on a plantation, for instance, require great amounts of water and thus have a large ‘water footprint’, even though they are ultimately much lighter than water and easily transported. By importing water-intensive products, water-stressed countries are able to conserve their own water resources.)²⁴ However, the key change in Israel’s water situation results from its innovations in desalination. Five desalination plants already operate along the Mediterranean coast, with plans for an additional plant in the western Galilee already under way. With the Sorek Desalination Plant located about 15km south of Tel Aviv,

Sanitation, and Hygiene (EWASH) and Al-Haq to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the Occasion of the Consideration of the Third Periodic Report of Israel, September 2011).

²³ Arwa Abuwara, “Can water end the Arab-Israeli conflict?” *Al Jazeera English*, July 29, 2011, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/07/20117278519784574.html>.

²⁴ See Marq de Villiers, *Back to the Well: Rethinking the Future of Water* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Press, 2015), 26.

Israel has built the largest reverse-osmosis desalination facility in the world and has thus gone from suffering from chronic water shortage to having a water surplus.²⁵

The situation looks drastically different on the Palestinian side, where chronic water stress, exacerbated by periodic droughts and malfunctioning water infrastructure, are still taking their toll on the Palestinian people and economy. With an average of 70-80 liters per capita per day (l/c/d) depending on the area within the West Bank, the Palestinian water consumption rates lie significantly beneath the minimum consumption rate of 100 l/c/d set by the World Health Organization (WHO).²⁶ They also lie at a fraction of those of the Israelis. Most international organizations estimate that Israel's per capita water consumption rates range between 230 and 300 liters per day,²⁷ although the Israeli government, refuting these estimates, reports per capita consumption rates of 90 liters per day.

Over the years, many of Israel's settlements in the West Bank have been connected to the regional water and sanitation infrastructure. In contrast, many Palestinian villages that are located within the Israeli-controlled areas of the West Bank receive no or too little or no water to meet their domestic or occupational demands, while entire communities have been cut off completely from Israel's water network owing to the construction of the separation wall

²⁵ Rowan Jacobsen, "Israel Proves the Desalination Era is Here," *Scientific American*, July 29, 2016, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/israel-proves-the-desalination-era-is-here/>.

²⁶ Mohammed Ahmed, "Water Resources and Management Issues," in *Handshake across the Jordan: Water and Understanding*, ed. Markus Aufleger and Michael Mett (Innsbruck: University Press, 2011), 245; UN-Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication and Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, "The Human Right to Water and Sanitation," (media brief, 2015), 2; Lazarou, "Water in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," 5.

Note that exact consumption rates of Palestinians and Israeli settlers vary depending on the source. A report by Human Rights Watch from 2016 puts the water supply of some Israeli settlements at 7.5 times higher than the average Palestinian household in the same region (see Human Rights Watch, "Occupation, Inc.")

²⁷ "The Gap in Water Consumption between Palestinians and Israelis," B'Tselem, last modified January 1, 2011, <https://www.btselem.org/gap-water-consumption-between-palestinians-and-israelis>; Camilla Corradin, "Israel: Water as a tool to dominate Palestinians," *Al Jazeera*, June 23, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/israel-water-tool-dominate-palestinians-160619062531348.html>.

(examples include Qalqilya City and many of its surrounding communities such as Jayous, Ad Dab'a, Ras at Tira, Wadi ar Rasha, and 'Azzun 'Atma).²⁸

In the absence of an adequate water supply, many Palestinian communities are forced to purchase weekly rations of freshwater, delivered by Israel's state-owned water company Mekorot. Water rations, however, come at a high price. Depending on the distance to the village and the time that is required to cross the numerous checkpoints along and within the West Bank, the Mekorot sells water to the Palestinians at prices that are up to three times more than the highest tariff for its Israeli customers. During the dry summer months, some Palestinians spend almost half of their entire household expenditures on water purchases.²⁹ The result is a spike in other means of extracting water, such as syphoning water pipes or building wells without prior approval.³⁰

Both Israel and the Palestinians have accused each other of violating the regulations set forth in the water sharing agreement as part of the Oslo II negotiations in 1995. Against the baselines that were determined to ensure the sustainability of water bodies, overextraction (meaning a rate of extraction greater than the rate of replenishment) has led to steadily lower water levels, resulting in constantly rising levels of salinity.³¹ Over the past fifty years, the Jordan River has been reduced to 10 percent of its original flow, due to the continued diversion of 96 percent of its freshwater. Additionally, both the Mountain Aquifer and the Jordan River

²⁸ Ray Dolphin, *The West Bank Wall: Unmaking Palestine* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 88; LACC, "The Impact." 42. See also Julie Trottier, "A wall, water and power: The Israeli 'separation fence'," *Review of International Studies* 33, (2007): 105-127.

²⁹ "Undeniable discrimination in the amount of water allocated to Israelis and Palestinians," B'Tselem, last modified February 12, 2014, https://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20140212_discrimination_in_water_allocation.

³⁰ Brooks and Trottier, "An Agreement," 64.

³¹ Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, "Occupied Palestinian Territory" (report, 2009), 7; David Brooks and Julia Trottier, "A New Paradigm for Transboundary Water Agreements: The Opportunity for Israel and Palestine," in *Management of Transboundary Water Resources under Scarcity: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, eds. Ariel Dinar and Yacov Tsur (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2017), 168.

suffer from pollution and salt intrusion that make their untreated water unfit for human consumption.³²

Issues of pollution and salinization have reached critical levels in the Palestinian territories, particularly the Gaza Strip, where less than 5 percent of water resources are fit for consumption. At the same time in the West Bank, less than ten percent of wastewater is recycled or treated before entering rivers, aquifers, or flows downstream into Israeli territory. Only two wastewater treatment plants are currently serving more than 2.8 million Palestinians in the West Bank, while less than one percent is being reused for irrigation purposes.³³ In addition, because the waste management system in the West Bank is subject to much less rigorous environmental laws, unregulated landfills and insufficiently supervised (electronic) waste treatment facilities continue to emit hazardous pollutants affecting the West Bank's water reservoirs, land, and inhabitants.³⁴

2.3 Water and the Peace Process

After the launch of the Middle East Multilateral Working Group on Water Resources as part of the Madrid Conference of October 1991, the question of water became one of the central points in the Oslo negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement acknowledged (but did not define) Palestinian water rights in the West Bank, regulated needs-based water extraction rates from shared water basins (excluding the Jordan River), and established the Joint Water Committee (JWC) to jointly

³² "Quick Facts about the River," EcoPeace Middle East, n.d., <http://ecopeaceme.org/projects/lower-jordan-river/quick-facts-about-river/>. See also Noa Hillel et al., "Water quality and discharge of the Lower Jordan River," *Journal of Hydrology* 527 (2015): 1096-1105.

³³ Sharon Udasin, "Experts call for urgent construction of wastewater treatment facilities in West Bank," *Jerusalem Post*, May 25, 2015, <https://www.jpost.com/Business-and-Innovation/Environment/Experts-call-for-urgent-construction-of-wastewater-treatment-facilities-in-West-Bank-404035>.

administer all water-related matters inside the West Bank.³⁵ With the designation of water as a final-status issue,³⁶ the Joint Water Committee was supposed to function as a provisional institution for an interim period of five years.³⁷ Because the final-status negotiations did not take place, however, the JWC was never replaced, and the agreement's quotas on water extraction and distribution never were revised to account for environmental changes or demographic and socioeconomic developments (such as population growth and increasing water demand).³⁸

Throughout its eighteen years of existence, the JWC can hardly point to any cooperative success. Instead, the JWC has been widely criticized for what Jan Selby calls Israel's domination and colonization of Palestinians.³⁹ Selby, along with other scholars, such as Mark Zeitoun, argue that the JWC rather than being a platform for fair cooperation, has become another venue for Israel's domination over the Palestinians, in which Israel uses its superior bargaining and coercive power to block Palestinians motions for the construction of new facilities or the maintenance of existing water infrastructure. At the same time, Israel is able to coerce the Palestinians into making concessions for the approval of water projects that serve Israeli settlements within the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

³⁴ B'Tselem, "Made in Israel: Exploiting Palestinian Land for Treatment of Israeli Waste," (report, 2017), https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/201712_made_in_israel_eng.pdf.

³⁵ *The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip* (Washington, September 28, 1995).

³⁶ Final-status issues, also sometimes called permanent status issues, were defined in the Oslo Accords and include 1) the status of Jerusalem, 2) a decision on Palestinian refugees, 3) a solution for Israeli settlements and specified military locations, 4) the final delineation of borders, 5) security arrangements, 6) foreign relations with neighboring countries, and 7) other issues of common interest. The permanent status issues were intended to start no later than May 4, 1996, but have not yet taken place.

³⁷ Lazarou, "Water in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," 7.

³⁸ Lazarou, "Water in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," 7. See also Andrew Godlewski, "'Damming' the Peace Process: Water Politics and its Impact on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no.2 (2010): 153-166; and Rana Barakat and Roger Heacock, eds., *Water in Palestine* (The Birzeit Strategic Studies Forum, The Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies, 2013).

³⁹ Jan Selby, "Cooperation, Domination and Colonisation: The Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee," *Water Alternatives* 6, no.1 (2013): 1-24. See also Zeitoun, *Power and Water*.

In 2010, protesting what they called continued colonization by Israel, the Palestinians withdrew from the JWC.⁴⁰ In early 2017, after almost seven years of standstill, Israeli Major General Yoav Mordechai and Palestinian Authority Civil Affairs Minister Hussein al-Sheikh agreed on a revised mechanism that empowers the Palestinians to implement necessary maintenance projects in the West Bank without prior approval from the JWC.⁴¹ The re-established committee will work to devise a 23-year strategic water plan for the region, taking into account population growth, droughts, and hot summer months. Critics remark, however, that the new terms of the committee still fail to enforce equitable regulations for the fair and sustainable management of shared water and environmental resources.⁴²

2.4 EcoPeace Middle East

The Oslo negotiations prompted a wave of optimism for peace in the region and spawned a number of NGOs working on related issues. Born in December 1994, in the wake of the Oslo negotiations, EcoPeace Middle East (previously Friends of the Earth Middle East) has become one of the best-known environmental civil society groups in the region. EcoPeace operates as a tri-lateral nongovernmental organization (NGO) uniting Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians in a joint environmental peacebuilding mission. The organization has a twofold mission. First, EcoPeace works to advance environmental cooperation fostering sustainable regional

⁴⁰ Amira Hass, “No Shortage of Discrimination When It Comes to Water in the West Bank,” *Haaretz*, July 2, 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-no-shortage-of-discrimination-when-it-comes-to-water-in-the-west-bank-1.5404471>.

⁴¹ Tovah Lazaroff, “UN Official: Israeli-Palestinian Water Talks Important for Two-State Solution,” *Jerusalem Post*, January 16, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/UN-official-Israeli-Palestinian-water-talks-important-for-two-state-solution-478599>.

⁴² “Israel and the Palestinian Authority Re-Establish Joint Water Committee,” EcoPeace Middle East, last modified February 1, 2017, <https://ecopeaceme.wordpress.com/2017/02/05/february-1st-2017-ecopeace-middle-east-environmental-peacemaking-newsletter/>.

development. Second, it seeks to promote the conditions for lasting peace among the people of its region on the basis of a two-state solution.⁴³

EcoPeace's activities are based on the premise that shared natural resources necessitate cross-border cooperation, and that such cooperation can become a platform for intergroup dialogue and trust building, which EcoPeace describes as environmental peacebuilding:

[...] the concept of environmental peacemaking (or environmental peacebuilding) draws upon the three pillars of sustainable development: economic sustainability, socio-cultural sustainability and ecological sustainability. Cross-border environmental cooperation integrates the processes of economic and socio-cultural development and societies benefit mutually from the common management of shared resources. Furthermore, cooperation between societies offers a platform for ongoing intercultural dialogue, enables a process of trust building and fosters the establishment of peaceful cross-border societal linkages.⁴⁴

As a tri-lateral NGO, EcoPeace operates from three offices located in Tel Aviv, Israel; Ramallah, Palestine⁴⁵; and Amman, Jordan. The organization employs around 60 paid staff members and engages hundreds of volunteers throughout the region. The NGO utilizes an integrated strategy of both advocacy ("top-down") and grassroots/community work ("bottom-up"). In doing so, the organization hires researchers and environmentalists from all three communities to analyze the region's underlying environmental issues and their root causes. On the basis of their findings, EcoPeace formulates a common vision about how regional environmental and peacebuilding issues can be addressed. This vision is then communicated to policymakers, the media, and the general Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian publics.⁴⁶

EcoPeace's advocacy programs include the Water Cannot Wait campaign, which promotes a new Israeli-Palestinian agreement on water allocation and management; the Jordan

⁴³ See EcoPeace Middle East, <http://ecopeaceme.org>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ The Palestinian office was relocated from Bethlehem to Ramallah at the end of 2017. During the field portion of this study, the office was still located in Bethlehem, Palestine.

⁴⁶ See EcoPeace Middle East, <http://ecopeaceme.org>.

Valley Master Plan, which seeks to implement changes of practices related to mineral extraction, pollution, and water diversion of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea; and the Water-Energy-Nexus, which foresees the creation of an interdependent Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian Water Energy Community. Through its bottom-up programs, EcoPeace coordinates cross-border community projects to educate and empower local constituencies and advance their community interests against the background of the on-going conflict on the ground. Initiated in 2001, the Good Water Neighbors (GWN) program engages Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian communities of shared water basins in cross-border environmental activities. Currently, EcoPeace works with 28 participating communities, of which half share the Jordan River/Dead Sea Basin, and the other half share the Mountain and Coastal Aquifer as well as Coastal streams watershed.⁴⁷

The GWN includes multiple projects:

- Faith-Based Initiatives that draw on the Jordan River’s religious and cultural significance to the three Abrahamic faiths to empower clergy and members to promote the rehabilitation of the Jordan River;
- Green Economy Initiative, which incentivizes regional businesses to advance sustainable development through economic activities;
- EcoCenters, where tourists and youth learn about the region’s shared environment; and
- EcoPeace’s educational activities, through which the organization works with schools and communities to educate students and teachers about sustainable environmental practices and approaches to regional environmental management.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ EcoPeace Middle East, “Community Based Problem Solving on Water Issues: Cross-border “Priority Initiatives” of the Good Water Neighbors Project” (handbook, November 2016), 4.

⁴⁸ See EcoPeace Middle East, “Strategic Five Year Plan, 2017-2021” (report, 2017), http://ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/EcoPeace_5_yr_strategy_2017-21.pdf.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict leaves little political space for effective cross-border water cooperation, despite the fact that both sides suffer from issues of water quality and quantity. In this context, modest entry points for environmental cooperation and relationship building are being created by civil society organizations such as EcoPeace Middle East.

Do issues over shared water always lead to conflict, like in the Israeli-Palestinian context, or are they more likely to result in multilateral cooperation? And are all forms of cooperation inherently good? These and other questions will be addressed in the following chapter by looking at some of the most prominent theories on water conflict and cooperation, civil society, and the interrelated forces of ethnoterritorial conflicts.

CHAPTER III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The question of whether shared water resources are a source of conflict or cooperation has been the subject of numerous scholarly papers.⁴⁹ Researchers of many of those papers sought to find a definitive answer to the question at either end of the spectrum, accepting all conflict as ‘bad’ and labelling all forms of cooperation as inherently ‘good’.⁵⁰ Others dismiss the theory of conflicts over water resources by arguing that technical innovations, such as seawater desalination and water re-use, will be an effective remedy for disputes over increasingly scarce water resources.⁵¹ These assumptions of water as a purely technical subject matter causing either conflict or cooperation have clouded the view for two important realities. First, by dichotomizing the discourse and attributing water the potential to either cause conflict or induce cooperation, researchers have overlooked the fact that water-based conflict can coexist with water-based cooperation on different levels of society. Second, viewing water as a technical matter prohibits a holistic examination of the water question embracing the full scope of political, economic, and psychocultural forces that play their role in the development of water disputes.

⁴⁹ For example, see Ahmed Abukhater, *Water as a Catalyst for Peace: Transboundary Water Management and Conflict Resolution* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Alwyn Rouyer, *Turning Water into Politics: The Water Issue in the Palestinian, Israeli Conflict* (New York: Palgrave, 2000); Storck, “Water and Israel’s Occupation Strategy”; Trottier, “A wall, water and power”; Hillel Shuval and Hassan Dweik, eds. *Water resources in the Middle East: The Israeli-Palestinian water issues: from conflict to cooperation*. Hexagon series on human and environmental security and peace (Berlin: Springer, 2007); Zeitoun, *Power and Water*; Selby, *Cooperation, Domination, and Colonisation*; Sharon Megdal, Robert Varady, and Susanna Eden, eds., *Shared Borders, Shared Waters: Israeli-Palestinian and Colorado River Basin Water Challenges* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013); Ide and Fröhlich, “Water conflict or water cooperation?”; and Peter Gleick and Matthew Heberger, “Water and Conflict: Events, Trends, and Analysis (2011-2012),” in *The World’s Water*, Peter Gleick, ed. (Washington: Island Press and Chicago Distribution Center, 2014).

⁵⁰ See Elizabeth Kistin, “Trans-boundary Cooperation in SADC: From Concept to Implementation,” paper prepared for the 8th WaterNET/WARFSA/GWP-SA Symposium in Lusaka, Zambia, October 30-November 3, 2007, who cites United Nations Development Program (UNDP), “Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis” (UNDP, New York, 2006), 28; and Green Cross International (GCI), “National Sovereignty and International Watercourses.” Green Cross International, *National Sovereignty and International Watercourses* (Green Cross International, Renens, 2000), 33. See also Mark Zeitoun and Naho Mirumachi, “Transboundary water interaction I: reconsidering conflict and cooperation,” *International Environmental Agreements-Politics Law and Economics* 8, no. 4 (December 2008): 302.

⁵¹ George Dunn, “Water Wars: A Surprisingly Rare Source of Conflict,” *Harvard International Review*, November 20, 2013, <http://hir.harvard.edu/article/?a=10414>. See also “The Clean Water Challenge: Can technology solve the world’s water crisis?” *Here* (International Magazine from Alfa Laval) 34 (December 2012/January 2016), https://www.alfalaval.com/globalassets/documents/media/here-magazine/34/here34_en.pdf.

Against this notion, this thesis builds its analysis on the premise that within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, water cooperation and conflict over water resources coexist on different levels of society, with water-based conflict occurring predominantly on the governmental level, and water-based cooperation taking place on the civil society and grassroots level. In the discussion around water conflict and cooperation, this thesis relies on the definition of water security provided by UN-Water, which defines water security as “the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socioeconomic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability.”⁵²

3.1 Theories of Water Conflict and Cooperation

3.1.1 Water Conflict

The list of politicians, philosophers, and other prominent figures who declared water as a looming threat to peace is long.⁵³ First and foremost is former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali who is often attributed with the proclamation that the next war in the Middle East would be fought over water, not politics.⁵⁴ His statement has been repeated, rephrased, and has provided authors of popular literature with catchy headlines: the looming threat of global wars over the ‘blue gold’.

⁵² “What is Water Security? Infographic,” UN-Water, last modified May 8, 2013, <http://www.unwater.org/publications/water-security-infographic/>.

⁵³ For example, “Water security for us is a matter of economic security, human security, and national security, because we see potential for increasing unrest, conflicts, and instability over water.” Statement by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, March 22 2011, World Water Day; “The national security implications of this looming water shortage...will be felt all over the world.” US Senate Foreign Relations Committee report, Feb. 22, 2011; “Fierce competition for fresh water may well become a source of conflict and wars in the future.” Speech by Kofi Annan in a speech delivered at the 97th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers on March 1, 2011; and “The consequences for humanity are grave. Water scarcity threatens economic and social gains and is a potent fuel for wars and conflict.” Ban Ki Moon in a message to the Inaugural Asia-Pacific Water Summit on December 3, 2007.

Two things are problematic about such statements. First, while we are indeed witnessing an increasing amount of conflicts in which water plays a contributing role, the argument that water will become the primary cause for a full-scale military war remains unlikely.⁵⁵ Second, little of what is labelled as a global water crisis is in fact global. Rather, these are regional, basin-wide water crises, some of which occur within states while others erupt between states, that stem from two different but often overlapping root causes: water scarcity (lack of availability of, or access to enough water to meet the demand) and water quality (contamination of water resources with pollutants that are harmful to the environment and the public health).

Even though many scholars now dismiss the theory of looming large-scale military water wars, there is substantive evidence that issues of water quantity, quality, or unequal distribution can emerge as contributing factors in contexts of societies that are already marked by political tension, power asymmetry, and social injustice.⁵⁶ Drivers of water conflicts can broadly be sorted into two categories: environmental and/or demographic changes (i.e. the lack of water resources due to population growth, rising water demand, the unequal distribution of water resources, or natural and human-made climate change, etc.), and political and/or strategic reasons (i.e. the

⁵⁴ The exact origins and circumstances of this statement are unclear.

⁵⁵ Generally, researchers distinguish between ‘water wars’ and ‘water conflicts’. The term ‘water war’ refers to organized violence initiated between states to resolve a water conflict, which by definition must claim more than 1,000 civilian and combatant lives. Records of the past 4,000 years point to the absence of wars that were waged specifically over water resources. In fact, the last known “true” water war occurred between the city-states of Lagash and Umma in the Tigris-Euphrates Basin in 2500 BCE. Peter Gleick, one of the most prominent researchers in the field of water conflict developed a comprehensive chronology of water conflicts in which he argued that “the ‘water wars’ discussions are almost always found in the popular media, not academic analyses, and while wars are almost never solely or primarily about water, water-related violence, at many different scales, does occur.” Important to note is, however, that water-related violence, or “acute water conflicts” are significantly smaller in size and scope than water wars, but still involve the use of violence or “a substantial probability of violence.” See Jeffrey Sosland, “Understanding environmental security: water scarcity, the 1980s’ Palestinian uprising and implications for peace,” in *Redefining security in the Middle East*, Tami Jacoy and Bren Sasley, eds. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 108; Aaron Wolf, “‘Water Wars’ and Water Reality: Conflict and Cooperation Along International Waterways,” Paper prepared for the NATO Advanced Research Workshop on Environmental Change, Adaptation and Human Security, Budapest, 9–12 October, 1997, 8; Aaron Wolf, “A Long Term View of Water and International Security,” *Journal of Contemporary Water Research & Education* 142 (August 2009): 67-75; Gleick and Heberger, “Water and Conflict”, 77.

⁵⁶ Sosland, “Understanding environmental security,” 107-108.

securitization of water resources, tactical attacks on water infrastructure, etc.).⁵⁷ Rapid population growth, at times exacerbated by migration waves, intensifies the pressure on already-water scarce regions and in an attempt to meet the demands of the rising population may lead to unsustainable methods of water extraction. For example, coastal aquifers can be threatened by salinization when prolonged over-exploitation of groundwater creates a steadily sinking water table. In turn, this allows salty seawater to infiltrate the aquifer and associated wells, thus polluting the water source and exacerbating water scarcity.⁵⁸

When the gap between water needs and water supply is not remedied (for example through the development of new water sources or state-enforced cutbacks) members of society become deprived of their biological and physiological needs. According to Maslow,⁵⁹ these most basic human needs sit at the very bottom of the hierarchical structure and are an essential prerequisite for the pursuit of other advanced human needs such as love, esteem, and self-actualization. Building on this theory, Lundqvist and Gleick argue that the inability to lead a healthy and fulfilling life, in this case caused by the absence of sufficient and clean water, may develop into a catalyst for armed conflict.⁶⁰ They are among those that identify water shortages as one of the forces that contributed to the onset of the first Palestinian intifada in 1987.⁶¹ Their hypothesis is supported by a number of other studies⁶² that revealed a direct link between water scarcity and poverty, with the latter being one of the major drivers of social conflicts.

⁵⁷ Peter Gleick, "Water and conflict," in *The World's Water 1998-1999*, Peter Gleick, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998), 105-135; Sosland, "Understanding environmental security," 108. See also Thomas Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 5-40.

⁵⁸ Nawal Alfarrak and Kristine Walraevens, "Groundwater Overexploitation and Sewer Intrusion in Coastal Areas or Arid and Semi-Arid Regions," *Water* 10 (February 2018): 1.

⁵⁹ Abraham Maslow, "A theory of human motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370-396.

⁶⁰ Jan Lundqvist and Peter Gleick, "Comprehensive assessment of freshwater resources of the world: sustaining our waters into the 21st century" (report, Stockholm: Stockholm Environment Institute, 2000).

⁶¹ See Chellaney, *Water, Peace, and War*, 41; Ohlsson, "Introduction," 20; Zeitoun, *Power and Water in the Middle East*, 3. See also Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities"; Sosland, "Understanding environmental security."

⁶² See Randolph Barker, Barbara van Koppen, and Tushaar Shah, *A Global Perspective on Water Scarcity and Poverty: Achievements and Challenges for Water Resource Management* (Colombo: International Water Management Institute, 2000); Eric Kemp-Benedict et al., "Connections between poverty, water, and agriculture: evidence from ten river basins," *Water*

Water scarcity is not only the product of growing populations and increasing water demand. It can also develop as a result of unequal resource distribution and the domination of water resources by one group over another. Dabelko points out that in contexts marked by stark inequalities between classes or ethnicities, unfairly distributed or poorly treated water resources can exacerbate already existing social tensions between different groups of society. If these frictions remain unaddressed by the state, or if the state structures are too weak to deal with the effects of environmental stress, local disputes may develop into large-scale uprisings.⁶³ In the Israel-Palestine context, for instance, where socioeconomic inequality and power imbalances have resulted in the domination of water resources by Israel, water has become an additional force with the potential to create violent and/or verbal conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.⁶⁴

The second group of drivers of water-related violence pertains to the strategic targeting of water infrastructure for political or military gains. Studies conducted by Gleick and Heberger, Klare, and Chellaney⁶⁵ point to a link between water resources and national security, whereby a state's lacking control or availability of water resources creates an actual or perceived threat to national security. Supporters of the 'hydraulic imperative' theory cite water as the primary motivator for military and territorial conquests.⁶⁶ In doing so, they refer to an extensive study on

International 36 (2011): 125-140; Thomas Homer-Dixon, "Project on Environment, Population and Security," *The Woodrow Wilson Center, Environmental Security and Change Report 2* (Spring 1996): 45-48; Sosland, "Understanding environmental security," 115; Mark Sanctuary and Tropp, "Making water a part of economic development: the economic benefits of improved water management and services" (report, Stockholm: Stockholm International Water Institute, 2005).

⁶³ Geoffrey D. Dabelko, "An Uncommon Peace: Environment, Development and the Global Security Agenda," *Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 50, no. 3 (2008): 35.

⁶⁴ Dabelko, "An Uncommon Peace"; Idean Salehyan, "From Climate Change to Conflict? No Consensus Yet," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 3 (2008): 315-326.

⁶⁵ See Gleick and Heberger, "Water and Conflict"; Michael Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001); and Chellaney, *Water, peace and war*.

⁶⁶ Frederick Frey and Thomas Naff, "Water: An Emerging Issue in the Middle East?" *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 482, no. 1 (November 1985): 65-84; Peter Beaumont "Transboundary Water Disputes in the Middle East" (paper presented at a conference on Transboundary Waters in the Middle East, Nakara, September 1991); and "Hydroconspiracy theories: The 'hydraulic imperative,' and 'hydronationalism,'" United Nations University website, n.d., <http://archive.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/80859e/80859E0a.htm>.

water-based aggression undertaken by researchers at Oregon State University, which identified 414 cases of verbal hostility, 56 hostile, and 38 military actions between the years of 1948 and 2008. Thirty-one of those 38 cases of water-based military aggression occurred between Israel and its neighbors, making the Israel-Palestine water conflict the most prolonged, severe, and violent water conflict in recent history.⁶⁷

To date, Boutros-Ghali's prediction about water wars in the Middle East has not been fulfilled. Still, we know that systemic water insecurity on the national or sub-national level can play a substantial role in the eruption and development of social unrest to the point of military political conflicts, as evidenced by the numerous cases of water-related violence between and within states. Consequently, "it is not water wars that the international community must address but the far broader lethal causes of water conflicts overall, especially conflicts over equitable access to water, strategies for sharing during shortages, and water contamination."⁶⁸

3.1.2 Water Cooperation

Other academic and popular writing has developed around the notion of water as a stimulus for cross-border or intergroup cooperation.⁶⁹ Proponents of this idea point to data collected by Wolf, Yoffe, and Giordano (2003) which found that the overwhelming majority of 1800 water-related events that transpired from 1948 to 2000 ended in water cooperation. Similarly, the Transboundary Freshwater Dispute Database (TFDD) compiled by Oregon State University

⁶⁷ Wolf et al., "International Waters": 39, updated in Peterson-Perlman, Veilleux, and Wolf, "International water conflict and cooperation," 107; Gleick and Heberger, "Water and Conflict," 163.

⁶⁸ Gleick and Heberger, "Water and Conflict," 161.

⁶⁹ See Dabelko, "An Uncommon Peace"; Zeitoun, *Power and Water*; Ide and Fröhlich, "Water Conflict or Water Cooperation?"; Fröhlich, "Water". See also Annika Kramer, Aaron Wolf, Alexander Carius, and Geoffrey Dabelko, "The key to managing conflict and cooperation over water," *A World of Science* 11, no.1 (January – March 2013): 4–12.

catalogued 650 cases of formal water cooperation that have resulted in international water treaties since 1820.⁷⁰

Because water resources are indispensable to all aspects of society and human survival, nations are more likely to invest in cooperation with others rather than waging a war that might lose them even more water resources. Instead of predicting looming threats of water wars, existing research should focus on how to use the potential of interstate environmental cooperation in regions marked by water stress and pre-existing conflict. Under such conditions, water can reveal itself as the lowest hanging fruit and a platform for dialogue and cooperation even in times of conflict. A prominent example is the Israel-Jordan Water Treaty, which was signed as part of the 1994 Peace Treaty between both countries. Despite several setbacks and occasional demands for an abrogation of the Treaty, Israel and Jordan continue to uphold lines of communication and negotiations over regional water issues even in times of heightened tension.⁷¹

At the same time, shared transboundary water basins create inescapable hydrological dependencies among its users. This circumstance creates what Jägerskog calls ‘hydrosolidarity’⁷² and becomes the basis of long-term transboundary water cooperation. Advances in the field of water technology, such as desalination plants, water treatment facilities, or virtual water trade, have the potential to enlarge the reservoir of water resources even in water-stressed environments. Moreover, transferring knowledge and water technology as well as sharing water

⁷⁰ Oregon State University Transboundary Freshwater Dispute Database (TFDD), 2016, <http://gis.nacse.org/tfdd/index.php>.

⁷¹ Munther Haddadin, *Diplomacy on the Jordan: International conflict and negotiated Resolution* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 337. See also Farooq Mitha, “The Jordanian-Israeli relationship: The reality of “cooperation”,” *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 2 (2010): 105-126.

⁷² Anders Jägerskog, “The Jordan River Basin: Explaining Interstate Water Cooperation Through Regime Theory” (Water Issues Study Group. School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, 2001), 1.

infrastructure creates valuable financial incentives for states to engage in cross-border environmental cooperation.⁷³

Still, not all forms of international agreements of water cooperation are constructive. Mark Zeitoun, citing Zawahri explains that, “if important components of the agreement are not implemented, or favour one actor at the expense of a collective win, the result would likely be rated as some form of ‘poor’ cooperation, or even ‘non-cooperation’.”⁷⁴ Ariel Dinar suggests the following criteria to measure the effectiveness and sustainability of water agreements:

- ✿ the degree to which all parties pursue the same interests,
- ✿ the degree to which all parties share similar environmental standards,
- ✿ the degree to which all parties gain relatively equally high benefits,
- ✿ and the level of trust on which the agreement is built (preferably in a context of at least negative peace).⁷⁵

The notion that scarce water resources can provide impetus for parties to engage in cooperation provides the rationale for an organization like EcoPeace to exist. To reach fair and sustainable agreements on cross-border water management, EcoPeace bases its work on the Zawahri criteria. By promoting a sound understanding of environmental protection across the region and ensuring that water cooperation is aimed to benefit all of the participating parties, the organization signals

⁷³ See Ram Aviram, David Katz, and Deborah Shmueli, “Desalination as a game-changer in transboundary hydro-politics,” *Water Policy* 16, no.4 (2014): 609-624; Shuval and Dweik, *Water resources*.

⁷⁴ Neda Zawahri, “Capturing the nature of cooperation, unstable cooperation, and conflict over international rivers: The story of the Indus, Yarmouk, Euphrates, and Tigris rivers,” *International Journal of Global Environmental Issues* 8, no. 3 (2008): 286–310, as cited in Zeitoun and Mirumachi, “Transboundary water interaction,” 303.

⁷⁵ Ariel Dinar, “Exploring Transboundary Water Conflict and Cooperation,” *Water Resources Research* 40 (W05S01, 2004): 1-3; Ariel Dinar, “Cooperation in Managing Transboundary Water Resources: Evaluation Approaches and Experiences” (Paper presented at the 4th Rosenberg International Forum on Water Policy, Ankara, Turkey, September 3-9, 2004). See also David LeMarquand, “Developing river and lake basins for sustained economic growth and social progress,” *Natural Resources Forum: A United Nations Sustainable Development Journal* 13, no. 2 (May 1989): 127-138.

that joint water management on all societal levels is not a zero-sum game. Instead it creates a win-win situation that comes at a low political cost, yet with high mutual gains.⁷⁶

The organization's works has become the center of a number of studies. Two studies that are of particular interest as a frame of reference for this study are Geoffrey Dabelko's and Ide and Fröhlich's examination of environmental peacebuilding as part of EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbors project. Both studies use similar methods to study socioenvironmental conflict and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians (questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and discourse analysis). Both Dabelko and Ide and Fröhlich conclude that cooperation on shared environmental issues provides a basis for ongoing dialogue and the opportunity to exchange and explore different mindsets and perspectives. They further concur that the creation of linkages between the GWN partner communities reinforces shared practices, common values and norms that can serve to establish a mutual respect and responsibility for the common ecological heritage (the superordinate goal). Although they generally praise EcoPeace's efforts around cross-border cooperation through the GWN, Ide and Fröhlich remark that Israeli and Palestinian members of the organization often show clearly diverging interests, identities, and situation assessments.⁷⁷

3.2 Social Cubism and the Water Conflict

Few conflicts have been studied as extensively and from such a variety of different angles and lenses as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite the complexity and scope that the conflict has assumed, researchers often focus on one particular aspect of the conflict, such as identity, land,

⁷⁶ Bromberg, Majdalani, and Mehyar, "Commentary."

⁷⁷ See Dabelko, "Environmental Peacebuilding"; and Ide and Fröhlich, "Socio-environmental conflict or cooperation." Also see Brooks and Trottier, "An Agreement"; Fröhlich, "Water"; Godlewski, "Damming"; Ide and Fröhlich, "Water conflict or water cooperation?"; Lazaroff, "UN-Official"; Lazarou, "Water in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict"; Tobias Ide, "Space, discourse and environmental peacebuilding," *Third World Quarterly* 38 (July 2016): 544-562; Marina Djernaes, Teis Jorgensen and Elizabeth Koch-Ya'ari, "Evaluation of Environmental Peacemaking Intervention Strategies in Jordan-Palestine-Israel," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 10, no. 2 (August 2015): 74-80.

religion, economics, or the environment. To fully understand the roots and dynamics of an ethnoterritorial conflict, Sean Byrne and Neil Carter developed an interactive analytical tool with which to examine social conflict as a construct of interrelated forces. While the individual configuration of each conflict may vary depending on the interplay of different variables, Byrne and Carter posit that every ethnoterritorial conflict revolves around six interrelated forces, namely history, religion, demographics, political institutions and non-institutional behavior, economics, and psychocultural factors.

Byrne and Carter's Social Cubism theory is based on the concept of a Rubik's cube, whereby each side is able to independently turn and interact with any of the other forces around a shared nucleus⁷⁸, and in which "parts of each side may [...] serve as catalysts for other factors and sub-factors or facets"⁷⁹ (see Figure 2). They noted that the dynamics and interactions of these forces produce patterns of intergroup behavior and thereby determine the shape and trajectory of the conflict.⁸⁰

The Historical Force

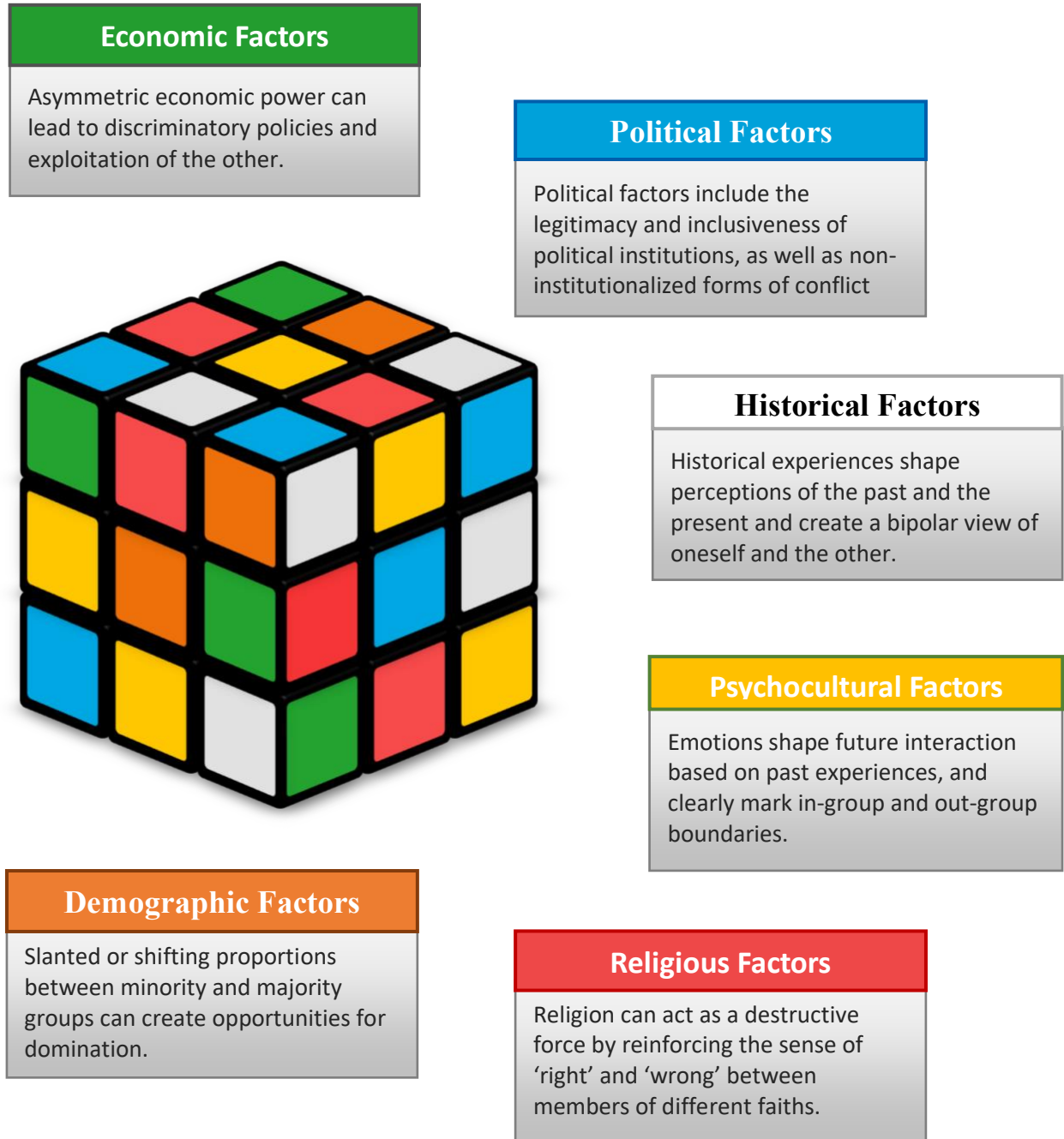
The historical force of a conflict can be divided into several sub-categories. Intergroup conflicts often rely on historical frameworks that exclude minorities and involve strictly defined in-group/

⁷⁸ Sean Byrne and Jessica Senehi, *Violence: Analysis, Intervention, and Prevention* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012), 141.

⁷⁹ Judith McKay, "The Use of Social Cubism in the Analysis of Community Conflicts," *ILSA Journal of International & Comparative Law* 8, no. 3 (September 2002): 883-899.

⁸⁰ Neil Carter and Sean Byrne, "The Dynamics of Social Cubism: A View from Northern Ireland and Quebec," in *Reconcilable Differences: Turning Points in Ethnopolitical Conflicts*, Sean Byrne and Cynthia Irvin, eds. (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 2000); Sean Byrne and Loreleigh Keashley, "Working in Ethno-Political Conflict: A Multi-Modal and Multi-Level Approach to Conflict Intervention," *International Peacekeeping* 7, no. 1 (2000): 97-120; Sean Byrne, Neil Carter, and Jessica Senehi, "Social cubism and social conflict: Analysis and Resolution," *Journal of International and Comparative Law* 8, no. 3 (2003): 725-740; Sean Byrne and Amos Nadan, "The Social Cube Analytical Model and Protracted Ethnoterritorial Conflicts," in *Critical Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies: Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy*, Thomas Matyók, Jessica Senehi, and Sean Byrne, eds. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011).

FIGURE 2: THE SIX FORCES OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICTS



Source: Own figure.

out-group boundaries. In the case of Israel and Palestine, the concepts of birthright (i.e. “all Jews everywhere are Israeli citizens by right”⁸¹) and the notion of ethnic belonging “all Jews everywhere are Israeli citizens by right determine who, and who is not, “an integral part of that volk.”⁸² Palestinians, for example, may deny that Israelis have a right to return to the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, whereas some Israelis deny the existence of the Palestinians as an indigenous Palestinian people.⁸³ These perceptions of the in-group/out-group are reinforced through selective historical narratives, destructive stories, and local folklore, through which the own culture is purified and the other is demonized.⁸⁴

Each group establishes a worldview in which they alone possess the right and legitimacy to reside in a specific territory. Although many Israelis are thoroughly secular, others refer to themselves as God’s chosen people with a long history and special relationship to the land. Israel grants the opportunity for Jews anywhere in the world to establish themselves as citizens through the Law of Return. Meanwhile, Palestinians point to their own long existence in the land, sometimes referring back to the Philistines as their ancestors.⁸⁵ The right of return has become solidified as a key component of Palestinian identity.

The Religious Force

Religion is a force that can intensify in-group/out-group perceptions and reinforce division between members of different faiths. Often, both groups believe that their religion (or their particular version of religion) is the only true religion and that they alone are true believers. In

⁸¹ “The Law of Return,” The Jewish Agency for Israel, n.d., <http://www.jewishagency.org/first-steps/program/5131>.

⁸² Byrne and Nadan, “The Social Cube,” 75.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Byrne and Nadan, “The Social Cube,” 76.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

both the Israeli and the Palestinian societies, religion can also lead to intra-group conflicts, for example between Palestinian Muslims and Christians, or between religious and secular Jews.

The Political Force

Multiple sources of political power are at play. Israel exerts military control over Palestinian territory, and controls all land, air, and sea access. Terror attacks and Hamas's openly proclaimed desire to eradicate the state of Israel has led to a state of constant vigilance and a mentality of siege within Israel. This, in turn, has (at least partially) been the reason for the erection of the Barrier, which sought to increase the security of Israel's citizens by stopping suicide bombers from entering the country, and the Barrier becomes a further exercise of power in controlling movement. Palestinians respond by currying international support for their cause and calling for economic and social sanctions against Israel.

Another component of ethnic conflict is the existence of structural violence, as defined by Johan Galtung as a form of violence that is institutionalized in social structures and through which a certain group of people is prevented from meeting their basic needs.⁸⁶ Israel, for example, has been criticized for its apparent discrimination against non-Jewish citizens, who, while enjoying most of the privileges of Israel's Jewish citizens, have a different type of status within the society.⁸⁷

The Psychocultural Force

Identity, self-definition, and self-esteem play critical roles in the dynamics of ethnoterritorial conflicts. Group identity establishes a sense of belonging and, at the same time, a sense of

⁸⁶ Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969), pp. 167–191.

⁸⁷ Byrne and Nadan, "The Social Cube," 79.

differentiation from others. Israelis and Palestinians alike see themselves as part of the Indigenous people with the legitimacy to reside on their land, while the other is portrayed as the “illegitimate invader”.⁸⁸ Israelis and Palestinians both define themselves in exclusively positive terms, using characteristics such as brave, courageous, intelligent, and hardworking to describe their traits and values, while often referring to the other in derogatory and dehumanizing ways.

The Demographic Force

To a significant degree, both groups live largely segregated lives, whether divided by checkpoints and fences, within the separate residential and educational patterns for Jewish and Palestinian Israelis. Changing demographics, for example through a higher percentage of Israeli Palestinians in Israel, or a growing number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank, can challenge the existing majority-minority composition, which could potentially influence the level of power that both groups hold over each other. Since the Israeli-Palestinian context revolves around land at its most fundamental level, both sides try to bargain over the exact delineation of their political borders. While many Palestinians have come to accept the 1967 borders, most refuse to recognize Jewish settlements in the West Bank. On the other side, many Israelis believe that the Jewish state should encompass all of Palestine and they refer to the West Bank in its biblical terms of Judea and Samaria.

The Economic Force

Asymmetrical economic power often leads to discriminatory policies vis-à-vis the minority or less powerful group. The Palestinian society suffers from widespread unemployment and

⁸⁸ Byrne and Nadan, “The Social Cube,” 80.

impoverishment. This, in turn, has led to the establishment of paramilitary organizations that use political violence to achieve their economic and political goals.⁸⁹

In sum, evidence of all six forces can be found in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These six interacting forces have direct impacts on the environmental conflict factors that form the focus of the current thesis. Table 1 illustrates how the six forces of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have shaped the conflict around water.

TABLE 1: THE SIX FORCES OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN (WATER) CONFLICT

| <u>Force</u> | <u>Significance</u> |
|--------------------------|--|
| Historical Force | The question of supplying enough water to a thriving population was crucial to the creation and flourishing of Israel’s state. |
| Economic Force | Israel’s economic superiority allows it to pursue environmental unilateralism with little to no need for cooperation with the Palestinians, who are dependent on third-party donors. |
| Political Force | The asymmetrical power relationship between Israel and Palestine is manifested in the JWC, where the issue of water is continuously held hostage for political gains. |
| Demographic Force | Rapid population growth and rising water demand in the domestic and industrial sector exacerbate issues of water quantity and quality. |
| Religious Force | Many water sources of the region bear religious significance to members of the Abrahamic faiths. The West Bank, historically known to Jews as Judea and |

⁸⁹ Byrne and Nadan, “The Social Cube,” 83

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| | Samaria, becomes home to a growing number of Israeli settlers that require additional water and sanitation infrastructure. |
| Psychocultural Force | Anti-cooperation lobbies seek to hinder any efforts for cross-border cooperation and reinforce psychological barriers and mistrust between both groups. |

3.3 Environmental Peacebuilding and the Role of Civil Society

3.3.1 Peacebuilding

As mentioned earlier, EcoPeace describes its work in terms of environmental peacebuilding. In order to examine this work, the concept of “peacebuilding” needs to be understood. This term was coined in the 1970s by Norwegian sociologist and pioneer in the field of peace and conflict studies Johan Galtung, and subsequently promoted in the United Nations Agenda for Peace in 1992.⁹⁰ According to Galtung, sustainable peace can only be achieved through establishing peacebuilding structures that address the root causes of conflict. In further defining the concept, Galtung introduced the terms ‘negative peace’ (absence of overt conflict) and ‘positive peace’ (collaborative and supportive relationships among states). Galtung further distinguished between ‘direct violence’ (direct acts of violence carried out either by an individual, a group, or an organization), ‘structural violence’ (indirect violence that emerges out of the systematic harm of certain groups of people by social structures of social institutions,⁹¹ and ‘cultural violence’ (aspects of culture are used to “justify or legitimize direct or structural violence.”⁹²

A further understanding of peacebuilding emerges from Lederach’s description of conflict as a natural occurrence within the dynamics of human relations and a possible driver for

⁹⁰ United Nations Secretary General, “An Agenda for Peace” (report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on January 31, 1992).

⁹¹ See Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research.”

⁹² Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (August 1990): 291.

constructive change, innovation, and (personal) growth.⁹³ Conflicts can occur on the interpersonal level, the intergroup level, and on the global level.⁹⁴ Peacebuilding needs to address the underlying causes of direct, structural, or cultural violence on different levels of society, and transform those conflicts to achieve positive, lasting peace.⁹⁵

Distinguishing structural from direct or cultural violence helps to understand the nature of conflicts and develop strategies to prevent certain patterns of conflict in the future.⁹⁶ A current critique of the peacebuilding literature known as critical and emancipatory peacebuilding can broadly be understood as “the researcher’s commitment to unveil dynamics of oppression and the questioning of dominant discourses of power that reproduce these dynamics.”⁹⁷ Born out of growing skepticism about the concept of (neo-)liberal peacebuilding, scholars such as Roger MacGinty, Tania Paffenholz, Michael Pugh, and Oliver P. Richmond have promoted the idea of emancipatory peacebuilding as a “liberal-hybridized alternative which places more weight on “bottom-up” policies, peace at the “everyday” level, and the participation of local actors.⁹⁸ According to Richmond, the notion of “liberal peace” and security derives from realist and

⁹³ John Paul Lederach, *The little book of conflict transformation* (Intercourse: Good Books, 2003), 15. See also Louis Kriesberg, *Constructive conflicts: From escalation to resolution* (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); and David Johnson, Roger Johnson, and Dean Tjosvold, “Constructive controversy: The value of intellectual opposition,” in *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice*, Morton Deutsch, Peter Coleman, and Eric Marcus, eds. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2006), 69-91.

⁹⁴ See Mark Umbreit, *Mediating interpersonal conflicts: A pathway to peace* (West Concord: CPI Publishing, 1995); John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995); John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington: USIP Press, 1997); Ho-Won Jeong, *Peace and conflict studies: An introduction* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000); Charles Hauss, *International conflict resolution* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

⁹⁵ See Johan Galtung, *Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilization* (London: Sage Publications, 1996); and Johan Galtung, “Introduction: Peace by peaceful conflict transformation – the TRANSCEND approach,” in *Handbook of peace and conflict studies*, Charles Webel and Johan Galtung eds. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 14-34.

⁹⁶ Paul Rogers and Oliver Ramsbotham, “Then and Now: Peace Research – Past and Future,” *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 740-754; Heikki Patomäki, “The Challenge of Critical Theories: Peace Research at the Start of the New Century,” *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 6 (2001): 723-737; and Ian Atack, “Peace Studies and Social Change: The Role of Ethics and Human Agency,” *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review* 9 (2009): 39-51.

⁹⁷ Lee Harvey, *Critical social research: contemporary social research* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Zina O’Leary, *The Essential Guide to Doing Research* (London, Thousand Oaks, 2004), 144; Carol Grbich, *Qualitative data analysis. An introduction* (London, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2007), 7, as cited in Roberta Maschietto, “Dilemmas of Peace Studies Fieldwork with Emancipatory Concerns,” *Journal of Peace, Conflict & Development* 21 (2015): 168.

liberal thinking in international relations and embraces only a narrow window of security, namely that of physical security. In contrast, the emancipatory approach focuses on strengthening the resiliency of the local people as well as on empowering individuals and marginalized groups to develop forms of human security that fit their individual contextual political, economic, and social needs of societies.⁹⁹

Critics of emancipatory peacebuilding argue that researchers inevitably construct a normative framework based on their subjective understanding of concepts such as freedom, social justice, and equality, etc., which have largely been influenced by Western ideals and may or may not be culturally appropriate.¹⁰⁰ Since the very idea of emancipatory peacebuilding is to detect and reveal oppressive structures through social transformation, researchers are faced with the responsibility of deciding what and who is right or wrong, who is the oppressor and who is the oppressed, and how realistic (or desirable) it is for researchers to promote social transformation.¹⁰¹ Maschietto argues that while it is important to conduct research on conflicts through a critical ethnographic lens, it is also vital not to tie the researcher to a “predetermined agenda that may be oppressive in itself”¹⁰² but to be constantly aware of our tendency to classify information according to dichotomous categories of good and bad.¹⁰³

3.3.2 *Environmental Justice*

Environmental justice and environmental peacemaking/building are interdisciplinary areas of peace research that emerged in the 1980s but gained momentum only after their inclusion into

⁹⁸ Oliver Richmond, “Emancipatory Forms of Human Security and Liberal Peacebuilding,” *International Journal* 62, no. 3 (2007), as cited in Chuck Thiessen, “Emancipatory peacebuilding: critical responses to (neo)liberal trends,” in *Critical Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies*, Thomas Matyók, Jessica Senehi, and Sean Byrne, eds. (New York: Lexington Books, 2011).

⁹⁹ Richmond, “Emancipatory Forms,” 460-461.

¹⁰⁰ Maschietto, “Dilemmas of Peace Studies.”

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 177.

the United Nation's agenda in the early 2000s (UNEP, 2004; Halle, 2009; Carius, 2006). Environmental justice is a concept that focuses on a) the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, so that everyone has the opportunity to “use, share and access resources equally, individually and collectively”¹⁰⁴ and b) the involvement of all people irrespective of their race, colour, national origin, or economic status.¹⁰⁵

The aspect of involving everyone regardless of their personal situation or group affiliation is particularly challenging in an ongoing conflict situation. In the case of Israel and Palestine, where decades of conflict and segregation have manifested victim-based identities and a clear in-group and intergroup division,¹⁰⁶ EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbors program creates a rare circumstance in which Israelis and Palestinians can meet as equals and in which they are presented the chance to see each other as like-minded human beings.

3.3.3 *The Role of Civil Society*

EcoPeace Middle East understands itself as a civil society organization. Paffenholz defines civil society as a sector that is separate, but interacts with the economic, political, and private spheres. It is comprised of voluntary associations that pursue their respective interests and objectives,¹⁰⁷ and includes, but is not limited to social movements, non-governmental and non-profit

¹⁰³ Ibid., 172.

¹⁰⁴ Asfia Kamal and Shirley Thompson, “Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue” (Conference Paper #46, presented at the International Conference Yale University September 14-15, 2013), 15. See also David Schlosberg, *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁵ “Environmental Justice,” Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), n.d, <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>. See also Amy Braun, “Governance Challenges in Promoting Environmental Justice,” *Beyond Intractability*, last edited May 1, 2011, <https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/environmental-justice-challenges>; Shirley Thompson, “Flooding First Nations and Environmental Justice in Manitoba: Case Studies of the Impacts of 2011 Flood and Hydrodevelopment in Manitoba,” *Manitoba Law Journal* 38, no. 2 (2015): 220-259; and Benjamin Pontin, Vito de Lucia, and Jesus Rus, “*Environmental Injustice In Occupied Palestinian Territory: Problems And Prospects*” (report by Al Haq, 2015).

¹⁰⁶ See Bose, *Contested Lands*; Stefan Wolff, *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Tami Jacoby, “A Theory of Victimhood: Politics, Conflict and the Construction of Victim-Based Identity,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 43, no. 2 (LSE, London, 2015): 511-530.

¹⁰⁷ Tania Paffenholz, *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 6.

organizations, advocacy networks, public policy networks, and religious organizations.¹⁰⁸ Depending on their purpose, civil society organizations can perform one or more of seven functions: protection, monitoring, advocacy, social cohesion, in-group socialization, intermediation, and/or service delivery. Table 2 applies Paffenholz’s typology of civil society functions to EcoPeace Middle East.

TABLE 2: FUNCTIONS OF ECOPEACE MIDDLE EAST AS A CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION

| Functions of Civil Society | Functions of EcoPeace Middle East |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Protection | - |
| Monitoring | Monitoring and publishing research on regional environmental developments. |
| Advocacy | Promoting each side’s interest in engaging in regional environmental cooperation to advance EcoPeace’s policy recommendations on the governmental level. |
| Social cohesion | Coordinating cross-border water projects and establishing a platform for dialogue and trust building. |
| In-group socialization | Educating and empowering local constituencies to pursue EcoPeace’s vision of healthy cross-border cooperation. |
| Intermediation | Working with third-party donor agencies, INGOs, and other government authorities to develop and advance water management strategies. |

¹⁰⁸ Mary Kaldor, “Civil Society and Accountability,” *Journal of Human Development* 4, no. 1 (2003).

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Service Delivery | Building global leadership in the field of environmental peacebuilding and water security. |
|-------------------------|--|

John Paul Lederach describes civil society as “a web of human relationships made of individual people, their networks, organizations, and in situations around which social and community life is built.”¹⁰⁹ According to Lederach, one of the distinct features of civil society organizations is that they lie outside of the national and formal structures of political governance, but have the capacity to create a link between the governmental and the grassroots level (see Figure 3).¹¹⁰ By allowing parties to take a step back from official Track-I negotiations, civil society organizations can stimulate the development and evaluation of new perspectives and ideas, which may presently not be feasible on the governmental level, but may be introduced and further developed and realized at a later stage. At the same time, integrating community-based approaches into the peacebuilding process serves to reconnect the state with its citizens, builds capacity, and strengthens local agency and governance.¹¹¹

Civil society organizations such as EcoPeace, for example, whose mission is to advance fair and sustainable regional environmental management by creating dialogue and trust between Israelis and Palestinians, have become one of the only entry points for cross-border cooperation in the region. In line with Lederach’s understanding of civil society organizations as a connector of all three levels of society, EcoPeace approaches regional environmental management with a dual strategy of top-down advocacy and bottom-up capacity building. Its activities on the top

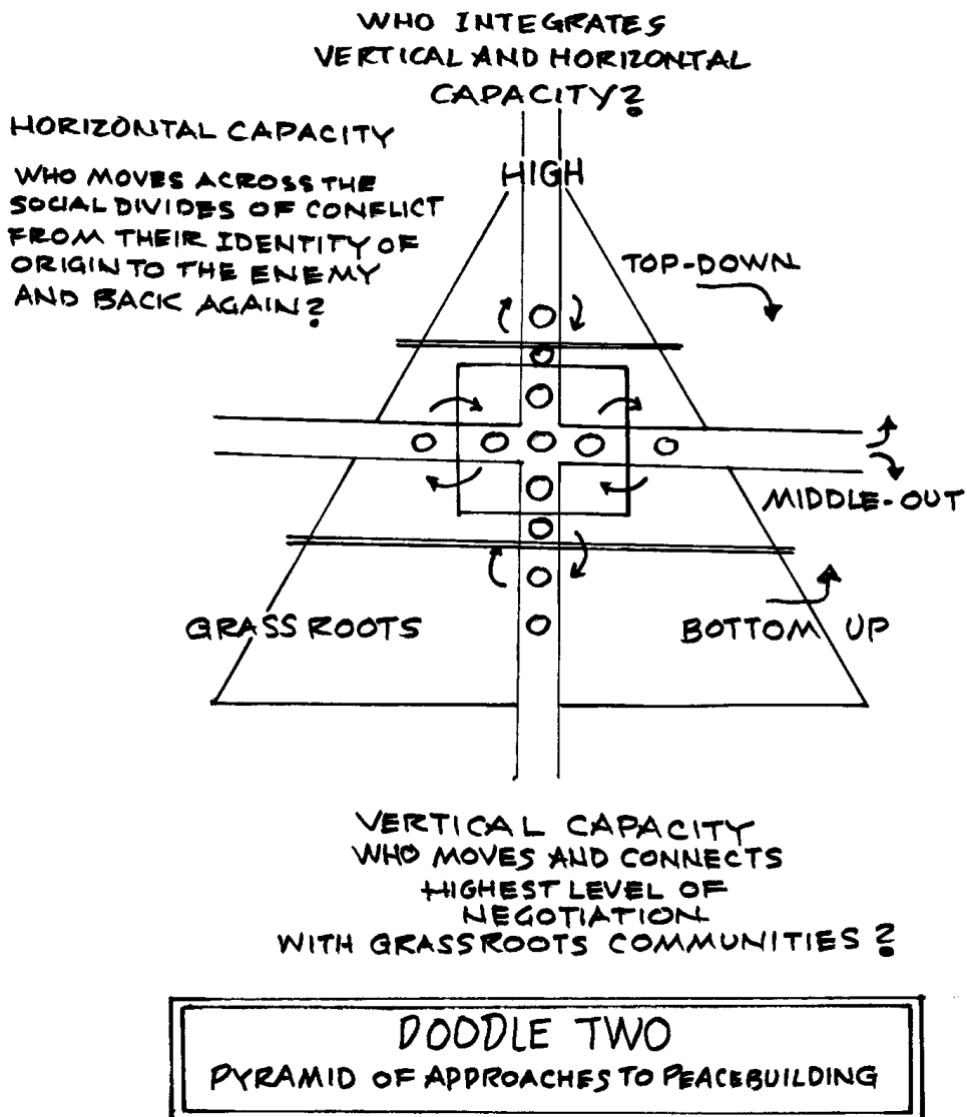
¹⁰⁹ John Paul Lederach, “Civil Society and Reconciliation,” in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, Chester Crocker et al., ed. (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 842.

¹¹⁰ John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 79.

¹¹¹ Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*, as cited in Huma Haider, “Community-based Approaches to Peacebuilding in Conflict-affected and Fragile Contexts,” (Issue Paper, Governance and Social Development Resources Center, November 2009), 4-5.

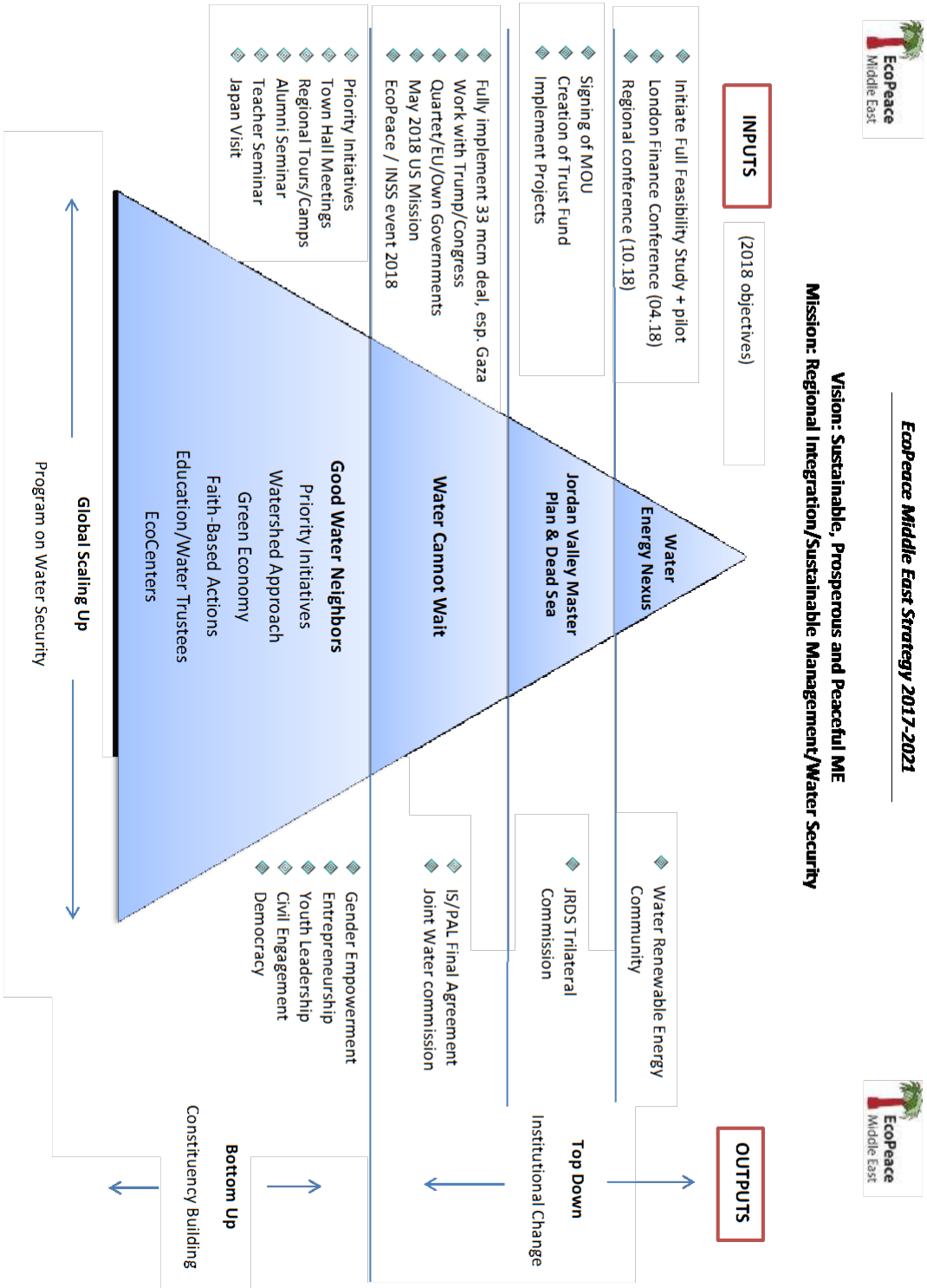
most level are geared towards national and international politicians, government officials, and donors; while its grassroots activities embrace a broad range of members of the Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian societies (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 3: LEDERACH'S PYRAMID OF PEACEBUILDING



Source: John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Used with permission.

FIGURE 4: ECOPEACE’S FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY 2017-2021



Source: “Our Strategy,” *EcoPeace Middle East*, n.d., <http://ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/our-strategy/>. Used with permission.

3.4 Summary of the Main Theoretical Perspectives and Research Questions

The Israel-Palestine water conflict is intertwined with the dynamics of the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The full scope of the water and environmental issues can only be understood by examining them as part of the analytical social cube of historical, religious, demographic, political, economic, and psychocultural interrelated factors that shape its development. While the existence of both water conflicts and water cooperation has empirically been proven, the prophecy of true water wars is unlikely to materialize in the near future. Still, the dichotomous discourse on water interactions has neglected the often-present simultaneity of water conflict and water cooperation. Cooperation theories, in turn, have failed to acknowledge that certain forms of joint environmental management can turn out to be destructive if important conditions for fair and effective cooperation are not present.

Power asymmetries, low levels of trust, and a growing unwillingness to compromise even at low political costs mark the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. In this difficult context, EcoPeace Middle East is trying to find ways to create entry points for intergroup dialogue and cooperation. It is the goal of this thesis to understand how, and how well the organization connects cross-border environmental cooperation with intergroup peacebuilding. The primary research question therefore asks:

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION:

How does EcoPeace Middle East foster environmental peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians?

To explore this complex and multi-faceted process of environmental peacebuilding in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the primary research question is further unpacked through three sub-questions. The first sub-question (SQ1) examines the different motivational bases of Israelis and Palestinians to engage in cross-border cooperation and peacebuilding around water preservation.

FIRST SUB-QUESTION (SQ1):

What motivates people to engage in the work of EcoPeace in the midst of challenging political and social contexts?

The second question (SQ2) addresses the peacebuilding component of EcoPeace's mission and examines the extent to which EcoPeace's cross-border activities have had an effect on the relationships between its Israeli and Palestinian members.

SECOND SUB-QUESTION (SQ2):

To what extent does EcoPeace affect the relationship between its Israeli and Palestinian members?

Finally, sub-question three (SQ3) asks what staff members and beneficiaries of EcoPeace identify as the organization's key challenges and strengths.

THIRD SUB-QUESTION (SQ3):

What are the key challenges and strengths of the organization?

The research questions of this study are guided by three theoretical frameworks. The first framework builds on theories of water conflict and cooperation and develops from them the understanding that conflict and cooperation over shared water resources do not automatically cancel each other out but can occur simultaneously on different levels of society. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the question of water has implications for many other aspects of the wider conflict, as shown by the complex relationship between water and the six forces of ethnoterritorial conflict based on Byrne and Carter's social cubism theory. While cross-border cooperation on the governmental level remains stagnant and ineffective, civil society organizations such as EcoPeace fulfil several important functions to monitor the situation, advocate on behalf of the region's environment and its people, and create rare opportunities for inter- and intra-societal relationship building.

The following chapter outlines the methodology used in this research project. It provides a detail description of the research methods, research instruments, ethical consideration, and limitations of this study.

CHAPTER IV. METHODOLOGY

The field research for this study is based on three qualitative research methods: in-depth, semi-structured interviews with EcoPeace staff members and beneficiaries, participant observation, and critical ethnography. Triangulating these three different methods serves the purpose of enhancing the researcher's validity, credibility, and reliability.¹¹²

4.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation is a qualitative data collection method with which researchers gain insight into a group or organization by observing their activities, behavior, and modes of operation.¹¹³ It provides a rich set of data and a detailed description in the form of 'field notes' of the group's behavior *in situ* through the researcher's active participation in the group under examination.¹¹⁴ As an additional source of data collection, the researcher's observations are compared to material collected through interviews and autoethnographic components of this study that evaluate the congruity and reliability of observations gathered through all three research methods.

Participant observation in this study refers specifically to the information collected as part of an unpaid internship at EcoPeace's Tel Aviv office with frequent visits to the Palestinian office in Bethlehem. (In late 2017 the Palestine office moved from Bethlehem to Ramallah.) The internship at EcoPeace provided an opportunity to form relationships with all members of the Tel Aviv office and with select members of the Palestinian and Jordanian offices. Intern

¹¹² See Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theories and Methods* (Boston: Pearson Allyn & Bacon, 2007).

¹¹³ See Bogdan and Biklen, *Qualitative Research*; Gary Fine, "Participant Observation," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., 17, James Wright, ed. (Orlando: Elsevier, 2015). See also Kristian Fics, *Healing through the Bones. Empowerment and the Process of Exhumations in the Context of Cyprus* (Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2016).

responsibilities included conducting research and developing information material, attending conferences, and preparing and participating in a cross-border youth camp under the umbrella of the Good Water Neighbors project.

4.2 Critical Ethnography

Critical autoethnography is a form of qualitative research that enjoys wide usage in the field of sociology and anthropology. It describes a researcher's immersion into a certain local and social setting, through which he or she collects constructed ethnographic knowledge.¹¹⁵ For this study, autoethnographic knowledge was gained throughout a three-month visit to Israel, Palestine (excluding the Gaza Strip), and Jordan in June-August, 2017.

4.3 Semi-Structured Interviews with Staff Members and Beneficiaries

Eleven individual semi-structured interviews and one focus group with two participants were conducted with EcoPeace staff members. Five beneficiaries were interviewed as part of a joint focus group, in addition to another individual interview with a beneficiary. Table 4 provides the gender and national identity of the research participants. Interviews were approximately thirty minutes long and were based on six guiding questions (see Appendix I and II). Guiding questions asked about respondents' role in the organization; what they deemed the most rewarding and challenging part of their involvement with EcoPeace; the challenges they have faced while working in/with the organization; and how their engagement has influenced their relationship with Israelis/Palestinians.

¹¹⁴ Fine, "Participant Observation," 530.

¹¹⁵ See Antonius Robben and Jeffrey Sluka, "Ethnography," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., 8, James Wright, ed. (Orlando: Elsevier, 2015); Daniel Druckman, *Doing Research: Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005).

The sampling for interviews was purposive. Key informants were identified and recruited over the course of the internship at EcoPeace, or upon recommendation from other EcoPeace staff members. The organization employs three directors (each representing one office), several dozen field/project workers, administrative staff, as well as hundreds of volunteers. The names used for staff members in this thesis are actual names. The names used for beneficiaries are pseudonyms.

The Israeli staff interviews included the director of EcoPeace's Tel Aviv office, Gidon Bromberg, three community coordinators in the Good Water Neighbors project, and one person responsible for EcoPeace's Faith-Based Initiative and the Jordan River Valley and Dead Sea. Both Israeli beneficiaries were alumni in EcoPeace's Youth Water Trustees program. Due to comprehensive staff and structural changes at the Palestinian office during the time of research it was not possible to interview the Palestinian co-director of EcoPeace. Three staff members interviewed were involved in the Good Water Neighbors project, along with a former Good Water Neighbors coordinator. Interviews with Jordanians included a conversation with the director of Sharhabil Bin Hassneh EcoPark, who also worked as a community coordinator for the GWN project, and two interns. Five of the beneficiaries (three Israelis, one of which was Israeli Palestinian) and two Jordanians) were members of EcoPeace's youth program.

Additional interviews that were part of the original research plan were not obtained due to security-related incidents. Three anticipated interviews with Palestinian staff members and beneficiaries had to be cancelled due to the local security situation during the July 2017 Al-Aqsa crisis. Plans for an interview with an EcoPeace staff member in Bethlehem had to be abandoned because of violent clashes between Palestinian protestors and Israeli soldiers, while two other interviews with a Palestinian staff member and a beneficiary from Hebron had to be canceled in

light of an attack on an Israeli army vehicle shortly before the interview was scheduled to take place.

TABLE 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

| | ISRAELI | PALESTINIAN | JORDANIAN | TOTAL |
|----------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------|
| STAFF MEMBERS | 5 | 3 | 3 | 11 |
| <i>MALE</i> | 2 | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>FEMALE</i> | 3 | 2 | 2 | |
| BENEFICIARIES | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| <i>MALE</i> | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>FEMALE</i> | 2 | | 1 | |
| OTHER | | 1 | | 1 |
| <i>MALE</i> | - | 1 | - | |
| <i>FEMALE</i> | - | - | - | |
| TOTAL | 8 | 5 | 5 | 18 |

4.4 Data Collection and Handling

The Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba approved this study. Prior to individual interviews and focus groups, interviewees received a consent form that included information about the overall purpose of the study, as well as the risks, benefits, and rights of participants. Participants were free to omit questions, alter their statements, or withdraw from the

study at any point until submission of the thesis to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba. All interviewees consented to having their conversations audio-recorded. Transcripts were sent to those participants that provided their contact information, and the participants allotted time for the revision of interview transcripts. Participants were also free to remain anonymous and have any personal markers of identification removed from the transcript.

4.5 Data Analysis

The interview data was analyzed using qualitative ground theory. Grounded theory is an inductive research approach used to systematically collect and analyze data to form generated hypotheses and theories of human behavior in specific social contexts.¹¹⁶ The premise of grounded theory is that the researcher does not assume an underlying hypothesis that needs to be confirmed or rejected on the basis of the collected data and findings. Rather, theories or hypotheses are derived from the data that has been collected within a research study. To do so, grounded theory mandates the researcher to look at people's experiences, their problems, and their ways of solving those problems. In other words, grounded theory begins with observing people, and through observing their actions and experiences the research begins to identify themes and patterns that emerge inductively from the data and that can subsequently be conflated into generalized categories or theories.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Hilary Engward, "Understanding grounded theory," *Nursing Standard* 28, no. 7 (2013): 37.

¹¹⁷ Allen Rubin and Earl Babbie, *Research methods for social work* (Belmont: Thomson Brooks/Cole, 2008), 418. See also Engward, "Understanding grounded theory."

4.6 Orientation of the Researcher

By nature, social scientists are “products of their environments and therefore bring their assumptions and personal standpoints to the research enterprise.”¹¹⁸ In sensitive contexts that require the researcher’s judgement on abstract concepts such as justice and morality, the researcher’s ability to remain unbiased may be constricted by his or her personal ethical beliefs, political stance, or social identity. Ultimately, conducting research is less about striving for neutrality, but about maintaining a fair-minded and honest perspective. This can only be achieved through constant self-awareness, reflectivity, openness for alternative interpretations of data, and acceptance of personal errors.¹¹⁹

As a German citizen, I have been influenced by my country’s official political position on the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the perceptions of the Middle East that have been delivered to me by the German media. Through my studies in Canada, as well as my analysis of the international media coverage of the 2014 Gaza War, I have come to understand the different perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While in North America, I observed the media to be largely sympathetic of the Israeli perspective. Much of the European media, on the other hand, tends to be more critical towards Israel and more supportive of the Palestinian viewpoint.

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian water conflict, much of the existing literature focuses on the humanitarian aspects of the conflict (particularly in the Gaza Strip), as well as the weaker position of the Palestinian Authority vis-à-vis the Israeli authorities. I have tried to counterbalance this circumstance by attending a seminar on the Israel-Palestine conflict held by an Israeli professor and consultant of EcoPeace Middle East, which has given me a unique opportunity to better understand the water conflict from an Israeli perspective.

¹¹⁸ Russel Ogden, “Bias,” in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, Lisa M. Given’s ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012), 61.

4.7 English as a Second Language

As a trilateral organization that employs both Arabic and Hebrew speakers, EcoPeace has adopted English as its standard working language to be used for correspondence, publications, and internet materials. Hence, English was the primary language used between the researcher and study participants. To be able to accommodate participants who were not fluent in English, the researcher was prepared to hire independent interpreters of Arabic-English or Hebrew-English. However, with one exception, all beneficiaries were comfortable and competent to converse in English. One beneficiary opted to speak in Arabic with consecutive translations into English by a fellow bi-lingual participant of the focus group.

4.8 Limitations of Study

Critical ethnography creates a snapshot of a specific period of time, as seen through the lens of a researcher. Every researcher enters his or her study with a pre-existing frame of reference for abstract concepts such as justice, equality, and peace (see also section 4.5) In this study, triangulation of different research methods sought to reinforce the validity and reliability of data. Instead of constricting the collection of data to ephemeral encounters with interview participants, I gained a snapshot of the work and ethos of EcoPeace Middle East and life in the Levant. Nonetheless, all of my observations, be they stories gathered through an interview or personal experiences formed outside of my work with EcoPeace have been interpreted and evaluated according to my personal understanding of the conflict and social constructs. Paired with the limited number of participants, the findings and conclusions that are presented in this study should not be understood as a representation of the Israeli and Palestinian people in general or the entire membership of EcoPeace Middle East. In Amos Oz's words:

¹¹⁹ Ogden, "Bias," 62; Harvey, *Critical Social Research*, 29-30; O'Leary, *The Essential Guide*, 58.

Today I am more convinced than ever that no collection of conversations and impressions can possibly represent the spirit and atmosphere of a period of time or of an entire country [...] Every place is an entire world and every man is a world in himself, and I reached only a few places and a few people, and even then I was able to see and to hear only a little of so much.¹²⁰

This thesis focuses primarily on the cooperative and peacebuilding activities between Israelis and Palestinians. Given the time and resources available for this project, interactions with Jordanian EcoPeace staff and beneficiaries were limited to a visit to the SHE Park for the EcoPeace cross-border Alumni camp.

The previous chapters provided the contextual, theoretical, and methodological framework for this study. The next chapter gives a detailed account of this study's findings based on data collected through interviews, participant observation, and personal observations.

¹²⁰ Amos Oz, *In the land of Israel*. Translated by Maurie Goldberger-Bartura (Orlando: Harcourt, 1983), Author's note to the Original Edition.

CHAPTER V. FINDINGS

This thesis poses the question of how EcoPeace Middle East fosters environmental peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians, and what have been the results to date. The findings are organized under the following topics:

- ✿ Descriptions of current political, legal, and military dynamics related to water and sanitation
- ✿ Motivations of EcoPeace staff members and beneficiaries
- ✿ Economic, energy, and tourism incentives
- ✿ EcoPeace's educational activities
- ✿ Roadblocks to cooperation: normalization and settlements

Ethnographic and interview data are integrated into each section. In addition, three more detailed case studies of transboundary or intergroup cooperation are presented.

5.1 Three Areas, One Wall, and Parallel Laws

Qalandia, Palestine. With a sudden jolt our bus starts moving, rolls one or two meters forward, then comes to a halt again. We have been stuck in stop-and-go traffic for over forty minutes, and the view out of my window is disheartening. To my left, I see cars and buses lined up in single file to enter the checkpoint. To my right, spray-painted across three cement blocks is a giant mural of Yassir Arafat in his familiar olive-green uniform and black and white keffiyeh, his dark brown eyes staring into the void with a sceptical, almost sad look. I stare at this and a dozen graffiti while we creep along the wall towards Qalandia checkpoint, one of the largest military

checkpoints between the West Bank and Jerusalem. Almost 25,000 people cross through here every day, most of them travelling back and forth between Ramallah and Jerusalem.

When we finally get to the checkpoint terminal, an Israeli soldier signals us to pull over to the left. Although I am familiar with the drill by now, I still feel apprehensive at the sight of these soldiers, many of whom are a few years younger than me, their black MGs strapped over their shoulders. After our IDs and permits have been checked, we are asked to exit the Palestinian bus, walk to the other side of the checkpoint, and get onto an Israeli bus to continue our journey to Jerusalem. Once out of the terminal, the clogged-up roads leading to the checkpoint are replaced with a smooth and almost empty highway. The high cement wall, strewn with writing and graffiti on the Palestinian side now stands bare and grey in Israel.

For more than fifteen years, Israel has been building its globally controversial barrier around the West Bank. Once fully constructed, it will stretch over seven hundred kilometers – double the length of the Green Line – of which 15 percent will run along the actual course of the Green Line, while the remaining 85 percent cuts into West Bank territory, sometimes as deep as a dozen kilometers. High-tech fences with motion sensors, trenches, and military patrol roads make up most of the barrier, while 25-foot-high cement walls are used to envelop Palestinian towns and cities.

The terminology surrounding the barrier is as disputed as everything else in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ask an Israeli and she will likely say that it is a security fence, built as a necessary response to the increased violence and terror attacks ensuing the second intifada. Ask a Palestinian and she will call it the Wall of Apartheid, an instrument used by the Israelis to restrict the movement and grab more land from the Palestinians. Whatever its name and purpose, the barrier was making me sit on a stuffy bus for fifty minutes to cross it. My journey of fifteen

kilometers from downtown Ramallah to Hebrew University, Jerusalem has taken nearly two and a half hours. I have taken four busses, crossed three areas under different jurisdictions, and spent more than an hour waiting at a checkpoint.

5.1.1 Geographical Barriers

Even more than the barrier, it was the Oslo Accords that shaped the political landscape of the West Bank. The decisions adopted in 1995 as a five-year interim solution remain in place more than twenty years later. The Palestinian state that was anticipated to give full control to the Palestinians was never realized. Instead, the West Bank continues to be fragmented along three categories, each subject to varying degrees of Palestinian and/or Israeli sovereignty, effectively making it a patchwork blanket of different political and legal zones. Area A comprises roughly 18 percent of the West Bank, incorporating eight major Palestinian population centres, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jericho, Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Qalqilya, and most of Hebron. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has full control over all civil and security matters in Area A communities, while entry for Israeli citizens is prohibited by Israeli military warrant. Area B, making up 22 percent of the West Bank is under joint Israeli-Palestinian control, with the PA administering civil affairs and the Israeli Civil Administration (CA) all security matters. About 400 Palestinian villages and much of their farm and grazing land are located in this area. The remaining 60 percent is designated as Area C, in which the Israeli CA retains full civil and security control. The exact number of residents in Area C is disputed, but a rough estimate puts their number at 150,000 Palestinians, and 400,000 Israeli settlers (see Figure 5).

Beyond being a game-changer for the political administration of the West Bank and a future sovereign Palestinian state, the designation of different legal jurisdictions has also had a

decisive impact on the allocation and accessibility of the West Bank's precious surface and groundwater resources. Approximately 94 percent of the Jordan River Valley and the Dead Sea area have been designated as closed military zones, nature reserves, or Israeli settlements. As a result, the Palestinians cannot make use of either the Jordan River's water resources, or the Dead Sea's minerals. Moreover, with the construction of the Separation Barrier, dozens of groundwater wells, springs, and 9,884 acres of farmland¹²¹ have been isolated in the Seam Zone (the area between the Green Line and the Separation Barrier) and have become inaccessible to the Palestinians in the West Bank.

Between Israel and Palestine there are fifteen cross-border streams, twelve of which flow westward into the Mediterranean Sea, while the other three go east towards the Dead Sea or the Jordan River (see Figure 6).¹²² With the exception of a few smaller surface streams, all of Palestine's water resources in the West Bank, including the Mountain Aquifer, are transboundary and are shared with either Israel and/or Jordan. This means that what happens to the water in Baqa Ash Sharqiya, for example, a Palestinian village that lies just along the Green Line, will have a direct effect on the water that flows into the Israeli town of Baqa Al-Gharbiyye, west of the Green Line. Similarly, the effluent that makes its way down from the Israeli settlement of Beitar Illit, one of the largest settlements in the West Bank, into the nearby Palestinian village Wadi Fukin could have a damaging impact on the local farmers' crops and fields.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Oslo II Accord created the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee (JWC) in 1995 in an attempt to jointly administer any water-related activities in the West Bank. The JWC created a framework for joint decision-making and coordination between

¹²¹ United Nations Resolution A/65/365, para. 33.

¹²² Brooks and Trottier, "An Agreement," 33.



A sign indicating the beginning of Area A leading to Bethlehem with an Israeli military outpost on the opposite side of the street.

Source: Personal image.

Israelis and Palestinians to cooperatively supervise and develop the West Bank's water infrastructure. This framework of theoretical equal decision-making (both parties were invested with equal veto rights and allotted the same number of seats on the committee) has proven ineffective and even detrimental in practice because Israel holds a much stronger legal and political position in Area C of the West Bank.

Because of the CA's control over all security and civil matters, it is ultimately up to the Israeli military government to authorize the construction and maintenance of water infrastructure

(including wells, pipes, and water treatment facilities). Consequently, any Palestinian requests for water and sanitation projects located within Area C have to pass through two decision-making mechanisms, the JWC and the CA. Studies on the efficacy of the JWC have criticized this long and cumbersome dual permit procedure, which has regularly resulted in years of delay for much needed treatment facilities in the West Bank.¹²³ Records have shown that even after the JWC approves the construction or maintenance of Palestinian water infrastructure, obtaining the consent from the CA can take up to ten years. Yet, because areas A and B primarily comprise of densely populated Palestinian built-up areas, the most suitable places for the construction of water infrastructure (such as landfills, treatment facilities, wells, or protected areas) lie in Area C and, therefore, require CA approval.

The reasons for the delay are more often the result of political power and bargaining games between the CA and the PA than due to technical or scientific concerns. The most frequent obstacle to the implementation of Palestinian water projects has been Israel's frequent decisions to make its support for a project contingent on the PA's formal approval for connecting Israeli settlements in the West Bank to water and sanitation infrastructure.¹²⁴

One example is a newly built landfill in al-Menya, a Palestinian village located in Area C near Bethlehem. The landfill received funding by the World Bank, the European Union, and USAID, and was constructed to replace 19 unsanitary pirate dump sites that had been used by residents from around Bethlehem and Hebron due to the lack of alternatives.¹²⁵ Although its con-

¹²³ See Selby, "Cooperation, Domination, and Colonisation"; Zeitoun, *Power and Water in the Middle East*; Amnesty International, "Troubled Waters – Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water" (report by Amnesty International Publications, 2009); Kelly Bridges, "Water in the West Bank: A Case Study on Palestinian Water Security," *Penn Sustainability Review* 1, no. 8, Article 8 (May 2016).

¹²⁴ In protest to Israel's settlement policies, the Palestinians ultimately left the JWC in limbo from 2010 until mid-2017. After a seven-year suspension, the committee reconvened under a new mechanism that sought to accelerate the approval and implementation of basic infrastructure projects in the West Bank, such as the maintenance and repair of leaking pipes.

¹²⁵ Zafir Rinat, "For First Time, Israeli State Agency Opposes Segment of West Bank Separation Fence," *Haaretz*, September 13, 2012, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-state-agency-says-no-to-fence-1.5161221>; The World Bank, "Working amid fragility: Delivering results in essential services in Palestine," February 17, 2016.

FIGURE 5: SHARED WATERSHEDS OF ISRAEL, PALESTINE, AND JORDAN



Sketch not to scale

Source: "Partnering Communities, Watersheds," *EcoPeace Middle East*, n.d., <http://ecopeaceme.org/projects/community-involvement/partnering-communities-watersheds/>.
Used with permission.

struction was completed in early 2014, by the end of the year, the landfill was still not operating due to strife between the Israeli military and the Palestinian Authority. The disagreement arose when the Israeli CA demanded that the dumping site also be made available to the nearby Jewish settlement of Gush Etzion. After the Palestinian Authority refused to open the landfill to the settlers, the Israeli military temporarily barred the site and denied the Palestinians access to it. A development report by the World Bank notes:

The operation is being closely monitored due to threats by the Israeli Civil Administration who conditioned the operation of the landfill to allowing settlers waste to be disposed at the new landfill, a condition the Palestinian Authority is rejecting on the basis that it was established to serve the Palestinian population and businesses in 33 communities within the Bethlehem and Hebron governorates. It is worth noting that over the past week, several truck loads of settlement waste (about 30 tons per day) have arrived at the landfill escorted by military units. Despite the objection of the landfill management, waste was disposed of.¹²⁶

In response to such criticisms, the Israeli authorities counter that the inclusion of settlements actually benefits the Palestinians. Many of the Palestinian communities that are located in the vicinity of an Israeli settlement are connected to Israel's water network and thus enjoy much more regular water supply than other Palestinian towns. Kayan, an EcoPeace Community Coordinator, in the area around Bethlehem remembers how the water situation used to be much better while she was still living at her father's house in Wadi Fukin (a small Palestinian village between the Green Line and the Israeli settlement of Beitar Illit). Because the water pipes that connect to Beitar Illit also run through Wadi Fukin, the taps in her house would always supply enough water for the whole family. Now that she lives in Bethlehem, a city located within Area A, the situation has changed. At the time that we spoke, twelve days had passed since the taps in her house were filled with running water. To cover their needs in the meantime, Kayan and many

¹²⁶ The World Bank, "Implementation Status & Results: West Bank and Gaza, GZ-Southern West Bank Solid Waste Management (P105404)" (Public Disclosure Copy, 2014), 2.

other residents have to buy water in plastic bottles from Mekorot, Israel's national water company, for a price much higher than what they would pay for tap water.

For EcoPeace, working in this context of geographical and legal fraction is not an easy task, and much of the time is spent on obtaining permits from various legal authorities. Mira Edelstein, who has been working with EcoPeace at the Tel Aviv office for more than 13 years, is responsible for securing the necessary security permits and visas for EcoPeace's cross-border events. Mira describes this part of her work as an emotional and a "thankless task."

You just see the occupation right in front of you every single day. People can't move across their towns and villages easily. They live ten minutes away from each other, but you have to secure their permits. And then they have to travel an hour and a half and take a different way because of checkpoints. It's not easy to have to deal with that.¹²⁷

Beyond the physical barriers that continue to burden the work of EcoPeace, the organization also has to deal with the differing legal frameworks in Israel and the three areas of the West Bank, which prevents a coherent approach to a regional water policy and requires different solutions in each setting. For Kayan and her family, for example, living in Bethlehem has made her water situation worse. Although the Palestinian Authority receives its water from Israel as agreed to in the Oslo II Accord, it is often required to purchase additional water from Mekorot. This is especially true during the dry summer months since some wells in the West Bank produce less water during the summer, but also because, according to several reports, Israel cuts off water supplies to several Palestinian cities and communities to reserve water resources for the seasonal higher demand of West Bank settlements.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 2, 2017.

¹²⁸ Amira Hass, "Israel Admits Cutting West Bank Water Supply, but Blames Palestinian Authority," *Haaretz*, June 21, 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/palestinians-hit-by-local-drought-after-water-cuts-1.5398787>; Peter Yeung, "Ramadan 2016: Israel 'cuts off water supply to West Bank' during Muslim holy month," *Independent*, June 15, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/ramadan-2016-israel-water-west-bank-cuts-off-a7082826.html>; Palestinian Water Authority, "Cut off water supply to North areas during Ramadan is new evidence on Israel's violation against basic human Palestinian needs,"

On the other hand, being located in Area C under Israeli jurisdiction means being part of a marginalized group without Palestinian legal representation. Surrounded by Israeli settlements, Israeli-only highways, and the Barrier, many Palestinians are no longer able to access vital water and land resources, while others face the appropriation of land and groundwater wells. For this reason, EcoPeace is keen to work with Palestinian communities located in Area C to help them obtain permits for accessing their land and water resources and support them in their daily confrontation with the realities of the conflict on the ground.

5.1.2 Legal Barriers

As part of the Interim Agreement (Oslo II), Israel assumed the responsibility for the management and supervision of environmental and public safety matters within Area C of the West Bank. Since then the Water Unit under the Civil Administration has worked together with Israel's national water company, Mekorot, to maintain and develop water systems in the West Bank, and to connect existing and newly developed Israeli settlements to Israel's national water network.

Historically, regulations for the supply and distribution of water resources among Palestinian residents were a matter of local politics and agreements between villagers. When and how much water would be allotted was based on each family's water needs (typically determined by their farming or business activities) and their property rights to the farmland around the village. With the establishment of the Palestinian Water Authority and the Palestinian Environmental Quality Authority, these forms of local water systems have largely given way to a more centralized water management system (see 5.2.3 Case Study: Stopping the Wall in Battir for an example of a still-practised local water distribution system).

http://www.pwa.ps/userfiles/server/policy/Israel%20cuts%20off%20water%20supply%20to%20%20North%20West%20Bank_v0.pdf; "Water Crisis," B'Tselem, last modified November 11, 2017, <https://www.btselem.org/water>.

Environmental protection in the West Bank is limited. Many of the environmental protection laws enforced by the Ministry of Environmental Protection in Israel do not apply under the CA's governance in the West Bank. Chief scientist and community coordinator at the EcoPeace office in Tel Aviv, Nadav Tal laments that many Israelis are unaware of the differences between the Civil Administration in the West Bank and the Israeli government within Israel's state boundaries¹²⁹.

Like the Israeli CA, the Palestinian Authority has been accused of failing to meet its responsibility of promoting environmental protection and has been responsible for causing alarming environmental hazards in the area. According to the IDF, in June of 2017, the CA had to take action against several construction waste sites and Palestinian charcoal producers located in Area B, in spite of the fact that these areas lie under Palestinian jurisdiction according to Oslo Accords.

The legal vacuum and inadequate enforcement have resulted in the unregulated discharge of sewage, over-extraction of water resources, and garbage disposal at unregulated landfills. According to the Palestinian Authority, many of the issues around insufficient water supply and pollution are a direct result of the Israeli occupation, the limited access and mandate of the PA and PWA, and the environmental impact of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Challenging these accusations, the Israeli Civil Administration argues that the environmental mismanagement of the West Bank stems from the PA's lack of enforcement and punitive measures, and its readiness to prevent the development of efficient water infrastructure by refusing to incorporate Israeli settlements.

The reality probably lies somewhere in the middle. Both the CA and the PA lack effective mechanisms for the enforcement of appropriate environmental standards in the West

¹²⁹ Personal interview with Israel EcoPeace staff member, July 20, 2017.

Bank. As Nadav from the EcoPeace office in Israel explains, “[The CA is] supposed to be in charge of the environmental problems in Area C, but they don’t do it because what can they do? How can you enforce [the Palestinians] not to pollute if [they] don’t have any facilities, and if fining them will not help?” Hence, EcoPeace has to be creative in finding incentives for people to invest in more sustainable practices around water and waste management. Key to this task is to emphasize the direct benefits and self-interests of each party when cooperating with the other, and to underscore that cooperative water management is not a zero-sum game but that joining forces can yield positive results on a much larger scale.

The following case study on joint Israeli-Bedouin environmental activism for the rehabilitation of the Hebron-Bezor-Gaza basin exemplifies how pursuing cooperation for self-interests can ultimately maximize mutual benefits for an entire region. Initially, the campaign centered around Jewish-Bedouin cooperation within Israel proper. Over time, and with the additional support of organizations such as EcoPeace, however, the campaign has expanded to include Jewish Israelis, Bedouin, Israeli Palestinians, and Palestinians.

5.1.3 Case Study #1: Cleaning the Hebron-HaBesor-Gaza Basin

On the northern outskirts of the Negev Desert lies Be’er Sheva, one of Israel’s oldest cities. The city’s name derives from the Hebrew words *be’er*, meaning *well*, and *sheva* or *shvu’a*, meaning either *seven* or *oath*, respectively. According to the Bible, the name and origins of the town go back to a story in Genesis, in which the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac dug a well at the site to settle their disagreements over water and make peace with King Abimelech of Gerar.¹³⁰

As in ancient times, the issue of water, so scarce and precious in the dry and sandy area of the Negev Desert, continues to be an important part of life for the people of Be’er Sheva and

its surrounding area. Just a few kilometers east of what is now the “Capital of the Negev” lie the archeological excavations of the biblical town Tel Be’er Sheva. Named a UNESCO Heritage Site in 2007 and open to the public, visitors can marvel at the remnants of the biblical town and the incredible craftsmanship that led to the creation of an intricate underground water system. At the northern end of the mound a large opening in the ground reveals the entrance to an impressive water shaft descending 40 meters underneath the city level. Five shafts with a total capacity of over 700 cubic meters were built to connect to a winding feeder channel that allowed the shaft to fill with water from the Hebron River and protect the town’s water supply in the event of besiegement.

Today, these shafts are only there to remind locals and tourists of the ingenuity with which past civilizations have safeguarded their citizen’s water supply in times of great peril. Now water drawn from the Hebron River (Wadi¹³¹ Hebron in Arabic) is diverted and distributed to the people in and around Be’er Sheva. During Israel’s rainy winter months, the river replenishes through its natural cyclical flood. Under the heat of the July sun, however, the wadi is almost completely bare and dry, no longer able to cover the plethora of plastic bits, discarded furniture, and household garbage that have piled up on its bank over the past months.

It is hard to believe that this sight of the wadi represents what is already an improvement from ten years ago. One of the locals explains that until the 1990s, the amount of water that flowed through the Wadi Hebron was enough to form entire pools, while bushes and trees grew along its banks. Since then, however, the water of the stream has become contaminated with the sewage from Hebron and other dangerous pollutants along the way, so that today the wadi has

¹³⁰ Gen. 21: 22-34.

¹³¹ A wadi is an ephemeral riverbed through which floodwaters flow in the winter and which becomes dry in the summer. 'Flood harvesting' is the process by which floodwater is collected into storage pools for agricultural use in the summer. Because the Wadi Hebron is contaminated with sewage, it is impossible to harvest floods from the winter, thus doubling the amount of water that is lost in total.

become the ‘Negev’s backyard’, a sewage channel filled with garbage and a disgusting smell. In 2005, after years of campaigning against the Israeli government’s inaction with regard to the widespread pollution and health hazards emanating from the Hebron River, the Israeli High Court of Justice ruled in favor of a legal petition put forward by a group of Jewish and Bedouin Israelis. Residents of Umm Batin initiated the plea. Back then, the village was an unrecognized Bedouin community whose residents faced serious health and environmental hazards caused by the industrial sewage and toxic chemicals. Seeing the village and especially its children, who had to cross the wadi on their daily walk to school, suffer from the pollution, Prial Abu-nadi, one of the village’s nurses decided to call for action. She managed to convince her fellow residents to



Garbage on the banks of Wadi Hebron.

Source: “Rehabilitating Hebron Stream,” *Adam Teva V’Din*, n.d., <http://www.adamteva.org.il/?CategoryID=1244&ArticleID=2074>.

join a petition against the government at the High Court of Justice, asking it to recognize and put an end to the injustice against the people of the region.¹³²

Shlomit Tamari, a professor at Sapir Academic College and a recently appointed EcoPeace Community Coordinator, has been an active member of the campaign for more than a decade. Like the residents of Umm Batin, Shlomit has suffered from the pollution of the Wadi Hebron ever since she moved to the area, so the court's decision was a personal victory for her. Finally, the government's vehement refusal to assume responsibility for the basin's treatment had to give way to a sensible plan for solving the problem. As a downstream riparian of the Hebron River, the Israeli authorities had argued that the pollution was caused on the Palestinian side and was, thus, not Israel's to clean. True, Hebron city is one of the biggest contributors to the basin's pollution, and with no wastewater treatment facilities existing in the West Bank, all of the city's sewage continues to flow into the wadi and over the Green Line into Israel. However, additional untreated wastewater reaches the stream from surrounding Israeli settlements and industries such as stone and marble quarries, adding to the pollution and garbage that is discarded into the basin.¹³³

The success of the petition prompted the construction of the Shoket Wastewater Treatment Plant on the Israeli side of the wall, which became operational in 2008. Although the plant managed to catch some of the sewage that flows across the border into Israel, its capacity is far from sufficient. Large amounts of garbage and toxins continue to inflict damage on the Hebron water basin by contaminating its groundwater and affecting the water supply of surrounding communities – not to speak of the roughly fifty kilometers north of the wall that still

¹³² A video on the socio-environmental effect of the polluted wadi on Umm Batin and on the Bedouin nurse that initiated the campaign can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6nENZZ1IKc>. Available in Hebrew and Arabic only.

¹³³ Zafir Rinat, "West Bank Sewage Inflicting Environmental Damage, Israeli Nature Authority Warns," *Haaretz*, February 21, 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-nature-authority-asks-yaalon-to-act-on-west-bank-sewage-1.5407035>.

receive no treatment whatsoever. So, the people of the region have signed yet another petition, this time with the goal of making the government invest in an upgrade of the facility. How long it will take to obtain a court decision, and whether the new plant will finally be enough to stop the pollution, nobody knows.¹³⁴

The challenge with citizen-led campaigns such as this one is not just the immense time and energy commitment that such campaigns demand from the people. For Shlomit and her co-campaigners, the main challenge is to get people interested, to educate them about the existence and scope of the problem, and to motivate them to do something about it. Over the course of her activist years, Shlomit has often observed that people prefer not to think about what is happening right in front of their eyes. Instead, they like to believe that the nasty smell emanating from the open sewage of the stream actually comes from a cow shed or “horses on a meadow”. She says when she does manage to convince residents that the smell actually comes from insufficiently treated sewage, they begin to realize that the problem needs to be treated at the roots, and not the symptoms.¹³⁵ In practice, this means that sustainable water and sewage solutions are more than semi-effective treatment plants built on one side of the wall, leaving the other half of the river leaking with contaminated sewage. Rather, they are what former Palestinian EcoPeace co-founder calls an “opportunity for communities who jointly suffer to work together and build trust between one another.”¹³⁶

For Shlomit, such an opportunity has been the ability to establish good relations with local Bedouins and Israeli Palestinians from surrounding villages. The group regularly organizes

¹³⁴ See “Rehabilitating Hebron Stream,” Adam Teva V’Din, n.d., <http://www.adamteva.org.il/?CategoryID=1244&ArticleID=2074>.

¹³⁵ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 6, 2017.

¹³⁶ Nader Khatib (former Palestinian EcoPeace director), “PA to get \$45m. wastewater treatment facility in Hebron,” in interview with Jerusalem, *Jerusalem Post*, May 26, 2011, <https://www.jpost.com/Enviro-Tech/PA-to-get-45m-wastewater-treatment-facility-in-Hebron>.

discussion rounds, visits water treatment facilities, and learns about each other's villages and environmental problems. As a professor of environmental education, Shlomit wants to teach her students about ecological literacy. Ecological literacy, in this sense, means to learn not only about the "hard facts" of science, the reasons and consequences of pollution, climate change, or water diversion, but to understand that the environment knows no borders and that this creates a certain level of interdependence between the people of the region. What Shlomit also observes, however, is that when people meet, they start to speak differently, they start to behave differently, and they start to see things from different perspectives. For the Bedouins, for instance, meeting Israelis or Palestinians from other towns is something completely out of the ordinary. Since most Bedouins do not enlist in the army and rarely travel, their spatial understanding of the geographic space tends to be limited. Learning about the scope of their ecological issues is vital when devising comprehensive and sustainable solutions to the problem. People also start to care more about their surroundings, Shlomit explains. When groups come visiting Jewish Israeli or Bedouin towns, people start to clean their streets and sort their garbage, because they want to make it look nice for their guests.

Back in the early 2000s, when Shlomit and others were still campaigning for the construction of the wastewater treatment plant, Umm Batin was an unrecognized Bedouin village at the bank of Wadi Hebron. Shortly before the group won its case in 2005, Umm Batin became a government-recognized Bedouin village. The town has now more than 3,000 residents and was able to build a school that organizes Arab-Israeli exchanges. When asked what role the relationship between the residents of Umm Batin and other local Israelis played in gaining legal recognition for the town, Shlomit explained that these efforts led by local Israelis and Bedouins together helped the government understand that there is a reliable leadership structure in Umm

Batin. Shlomit received this information from one of her friends at the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

In a similar manner, Shomit reported that forming good relationships with local Bedouins have also opened new doors for the Palestinians in the West Bank.

For the Palestinians, it's easier to understand all this stuff when someone speaks in their language. For example, this year, a group from Yata and Dahariya [two Palestinian villages in the West Bank] came to our area and a young water technician of Bedouin origin had guided them to the WWTP. And the Palestinians came to life, because suddenly they understood. They enjoyed listening to him, and when he spoke he asked them: "what about all this water leaking? Why is all the water running out of your pipes? Why don't you care? It is much better when he talks to them about it, rather than me [as an Israeli]."

Shlomit explained that for Israelis, it is especially important to meet Bedouins who are able to speak both fluent Hebrew and Arabic, because they create a bridge between two peoples of different languages, cultures, and perspectives. In a way, these Bedouins are able to connect the different Israeli and Palestinian mindsets and to ease pre-existing fears with which both communities enter such meetings. "Israelis have existential fears, the feeling that the next 'Pogrom' is around the corner," Shlomit explains. "But when you get to know your neighbors, you see that there's no reason to be afraid. This is what I like about EcoPeace. Let's be friends. Let's be neighbors. Let's be good neighbors and study from each other."

With their campaign for the rehabilitation of the Hebron-HaBesor stream, the members of the Bedouin and Jewish communities have shown that they can, in fact, be good neighbors and that their efforts, once joined into one coalition, was able to produce tangible results for all parties. Prial Abu-nadi and other residents of Umm Batin were instrumental in putting pressure on the Israeli government to take action over the wadi's disastrous state. At the same time, Shlomit and her fellow Israeli citizens helped Umm Batin to finally become a recognized Bedouin village. True, the struggle for a clean Hebron river is not yet over. But the communities

around Be'er Sheva are now home to a strong, inter-ethnic group of environmentalists who are willing to fight together against future environmental injustices in the region.

5.2 Motivations for Cooperation

Tel Aviv, Israel. “You tell me, how can the conflict be solved?” he asked in a slightly irritated tone, and I knew that we had long passed the point of a light, cheerful conversation. We were sitting on the balcony of his apartment, enjoying the cool breeze of the night. Somehow, our daily chit-chat between roommates had turned into a hot debate about the Arab-Israeli conflict. “What has to happen for the conflict to be over?” he repeated his question. I took a long time pondering my answer. From our balcony, we had a clear view into the living rooms of the apartment bloc across the street. Most of its windows were hung with Israeli flags, covering its depressing grayish façade in a sea of white and blue.

Finally, I said: “The Palestinians need to have their own state. Also, Hamas must go, as must any other fundamental terrorist groups on either side.” “Okay,” he said, but before he could say more I continued. “And Jerusalem has to be recognized as the Israeli, and East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital. And the Palestinian refugees need to either be allowed to return or be given some form of compensation. And the Palestinians need to be able to build effective government structures and fight corruption...” As my list kept growing longer and longer his look quickly turned from sincere curiosity to a frown. When I finished he stared at me with a mix of incredulity and mockery.

“That’s it? Well then, easy-peasy,” he said sarcastically. “I know it’s a lot,” I said, trying to make it sound less heavy. “But they’re all connected to each other. If you manage to solve one thing you have already built a basis from which to continue.” He fell back into his chair, his head

resting on a pillow. “Look, I left Israel not because I don’t like my country, but because I was sick of the conflict. I know Mexico isn’t perfect, we have a lot of problems there, too. But at least I know that what I’m doing is helping the local population in some way or another. I mean, we are the new generation. We are the ones that are supposed to be making this big change. But what you have just given me is a whole list of conflicts, not just one. I mean, where do I even start? And even if you say that the Palestinians want to make peace too, what good would my actions do against the terror, aggression, and hatred?”

Months later, my roommate’s words are still in my mind. As an international student living in Canada, I couldn’t understand how people could simply detach themselves from a conflict that was happening right in front of their eyes. But after three months in Israel and Palestine, I too began to feel some of that hopelessness creeping up in me when I thought about the seemingly insurmountable task of finding peace in all of this. After decades of conflict, how does one find the strength to make peace? What is it that motivates people to work together within a context of hostility, and against many of those voices that argue that any form of cooperation is an act of normalization, even treason? This section identifies some of the main motivational drivers of Israeli and Palestinian members of EcoPeace and their reasons for choosing to engage with the other side as part of the struggle for environmental protection.

5.2.1 Environmental and Political Stability

Tel Aviv, Israel. The streets are filled with cars, buses, and people on electric bikes in the usual bustle and noise of the morning rush hour in Tel Aviv’s business centre. High-rise buildings, their glass fronts glistening in the rising sun, stand on either side of Menachem Begin Road where the Israeli EcoPeace office is located. Closing the windows barely reduces the noise of

honking cars and banging construction equipment used to build two modern-looking multi-story buildings on the opposite side of the street. A large mosaic of hundreds of little colorful pebbles forming “EcoPeace” hangs in the hallway, next to a squared piece of cotton embroidered with an image of the Earth and EcoPeace’s former name “Friends of the Earth Middle East.”

Back in the early 1990s, just as Rabin and Arafat shook their hands to seal the Oslo Accords, Gidon Bromberg wrote a master’s thesis in which he asked the question: is peace going to be good for the environment? He feared that because environmental sustainability and effective regional (going beyond just Israel and Palestine) cross-border cooperation had not been an integral part of the peace agreement between Israel and the PLO, the region’s unique environmental heritage would soon be lost under ever-sinking water levels, mounting pollution, and environmental degradation. So, Bromberg pitched the idea of a regional environmental organization to Israeli, Egyptian, Palestinian, and Jordanian environmentalists to address those pressing issues.

Although his idea was initially met with raised eyebrows and scepticism about his age and inexperience, Bromberg managed to convince investors and environmentalists to meet and discuss the idea. On the second day of the meeting, EcoPeace Middle East was born. Fast-forward twenty-four years into the future, Bromberg, now one of the organization’s directors, sits in his office in Tel Aviv and explains what he believes is the very crux of the organization: “I think there are two [parts to EcoPeace] and they are described in the name: Eco and Peace. The primary of the two really is “Eco”, in the sense that if there’s a conflict between Eco and Peace, we’ll choose the eco.”

So, if ‘eco’ trumps ‘peace’, what role does peacebuilding play in EcoPeace? Can the environment, in fact, be also good for peace? Bromberg explains that the peacebuilding

component of EcoPeace was initially developed as a complimentary key strategic objective to support what the founders at the time thought was an imminent peace deal. Yet as the hopes of Oslo began to fade, and the peace process collapsed, the ‘peace’ part of EcoPeace suddenly played an increasingly critical role. Amidst a generation of Israelis and Palestinians that grew up almost completely segregated, raising awareness about who and what was on the other side of the border became an integral part of EcoPeace’s work.

As one of the staff members at the Israeli office explained, “today, Israeli schools don’t teach their kids about the different narratives as much as they should. So, we at EcoPeace try to make them see things from a more pluralistic way of understanding the other side.” In fact, although working for the environment remains the primary reason for many beneficiaries to engage in the EcoPeace’s activities, the opportunity to travel between the three countries and meet people from ‘the other side’ has certainly been an aspect of EcoPeace’s work that has attracted many young people from across the region. For many of those who have grown up in the wake of the crumbling peace process and the ensuing physical and psychological separation between the two societies, EcoPeace’s work on cross-border environmental cooperation is regarded as a perfect combination for finding solutions to the environmental problems of the region and getting to know people who they do not usually have the opportunity of meeting with.¹³⁷

Still, Bromberg and his fellow members at the Israeli EcoPeace office see the organization for what it sets out to be: a group of like-minded environmentalists, who work towards regional sustainable resource management. Is peacebuilding a part of this quest? Yes. But it is complementary, a positive side effect, so to speak, as part of a struggle that seems much more palpable than the abstract concept of peace. “Look, I hope we’ll see peace one day,” one of

the younger staff at EcoPeace says to me. “But hey, I don’t know if I’ll see that in my lifetime. I hope for more equal division of resources. I hope for an actual plan that’s being implemented to save these water resources.” She continued, “See, this is my grandfather’s picture from the Yarkon river from 1937. That’s what I want to see – that people actually value what we have here, and I want us to be able to cherish it and respect it. I hope we’ll have a clean Yarkon someday that we’ll be able to swim in. That’s what I hope to see.”¹³⁸

The environmental movement within Israel’s civil society is one of the oldest, most experienced social movements in the young country, with over one hundred environmental non-governmental organizations. And yet, EcoPeace is the only organization that is concurrently run in all three countries by Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian staff and beneficiaries. Many of EcoPeace’s staff members come from backgrounds in environmental science, environmental law, or hydrology, and base their motivation for working with EcoPeace in a long, personal interest in protecting the environment. As an organization that pursues environmental management across physical (and psychological) barriers in a conflict-affected region, EcoPeace also has to deal with the fact that environmental challenges are inevitably intertwined with political issues.

Thanks to its political, economic, and military strength, for a long time Israel had few incentives to change its water policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians and to engage in fair and effective cross-border cooperation with the Palestinian Authority. Because greater control over water was always equated with greater national security, Israel believed that making any compromises or concessions on the water question would be a zero-sum game that resulted in it losing its dominance over water and risking its national security. For this reason, until recently, Israel’s

¹³⁷ Focus groups at SHE Park, July 18, 2017.

¹³⁸ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 9, 2017.

water policy towards the Palestinians involved little diplomacy, but was instead predominantly enforced through the use of military.

More recently, however, a shift in the notion of security has led to the understanding that water is central to achieving both national and human security,¹³⁹ and that the question of water is inevitably connected to issues of political stability, national and regional security, and peace. Slowly, Bromberg states in one of EcoPeace's latest policy papers on water diplomacy, "governments, policymakers and the general public have realized that water insecurity can constitute a real threat to national security interests."¹⁴⁰ However, the message only really started to sink in at the sight of the disastrous humanitarian situation that was unfolding in the Gaza Strip, and when the Israeli public learnt that sewage flowing out of Gaza in 2016 had actually been responsible for a temporary closure of a nearby Israeli desalination plant. A similarly eye-opening incident occurred during the summer of 2017, when two Israeli beaches had to be closed because of untreated sewage that had come all the way from Gaza.¹⁴¹

These crises have demonstrated the need for EcoPeace. As Bromberg explains, the past few years have made it clear that the current system is equally failing the Israeli side because it is leaving Israel extremely vulnerable to pollution and threatening its water and national security. So, it's a real lose-lose situation, he says. Yet as this understanding perforates Israel's political and academic circles, EcoPeace can appeal to the Israeli government and public to renegotiate the water terms with the Palestinians for Israelis' own interests. Israel really has a growing incentive to revise its unilateral approach and instead engage in cross-border regional cooperation. "And that's why we're so excited that these issues are getting much more attention

¹³⁹ Todd Walter, *Introduction to Environmental Peacebuilding* (Peace Fellow, Policy Center for Environment and Peace, 2014).

See also Klare, *Resource Wars*; UN-Water, "What is Water Security?"; Schäfer, *Human and Water*; and I

¹⁴⁰ Eran, Bromberg, and Giordano, *Israeli Water Diplomacy*, 15.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

than ever before,” Bromberg exclaims. “We’ve helped bring that attention and we’ve helped place these issues on the political agenda so powerfully.”¹⁴²

Maybe it is also partly because of this new perception of regional cooperation that the Israeli and Jordanian governments are so enthusiastic about the Red Sea-Dead Sea Conveyance, a US \$900 million megaproject that envisions the construction of a desalination plant on the Red Sea and a pipeline stretching hundreds of kilometres from Aqaba, Jordan all the way to the Lisan area in the Dead Sea. The produced water from the desalination plant would be divided among Israelis, Jordanians, and Palestinians, while the brine that is the by-product of the desalination process will be piped north to replenish the dropping water level of the Dead Sea. The project has received widespread praise and has been lauded as a prime example of what could become a rare moment of multilateral cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbors, including the Palestinians.

Returning to Bromberg’s emphasis on the importance of eco in EcoPeace, he explains, “the Red-Dead canal is a wonderful peace project in the sense that it brings together the three governments and creates cooperation among them. But if it’s based on unsustainable development that we think is going to cause more harm than good, then the eco will trump it.”¹⁴³ As one of the most outspoken opponents of the project, EcoPeace has argued that far too little is known about the long-term consequences for the unique ecological systems of the Red and Dead Sea. A 2012 feasibility study undertaken by the World Bank described the environmental impacts of the projects as “manageable”, even though questions pertaining to the impact of the inflow of large quantities of brine into the Dead Sea remain unanswered. Thus, EcoPeace contends that no cooperation is always better than bad cooperation, especially when the

¹⁴² Personal interview with Gidon Bromberg, July 19, 2017.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

preservation of the environment is at stake. Being economically, environmentally, and politically unsound, the project is at best addressing the symptoms of the environmental problem in the region, instead of focusing on its roots. On the sociopolitical level, the project further fails to address and acknowledge the riparian rights of the Palestinians on the Dead Sea and their fair allocation of shared water resources remain unanswered.¹⁴⁴

In sum, while acknowledging the political problems and advocating for a political solution encompassing a sovereign Palestinian state and fair and equitable water rights for both Israelis and Palestinians, EcoPeace tries to focus its work on the practical and realizable aspects of cross-border environmental cooperation. In fact, many of its Israeli staff members stressed that the success that EcoPeace has had as a trilateral organization is largely because it has tried to “keep politics out of their work on environmental cooperation.”¹⁴⁵

5.2.2 Water Rights

Bethlehem, Palestine. The Palestinian office of EcoPeace is located on the first floor of a multi-story building, a couple of blocks away from the busy streets of Bethlehem, and next to a large patch of grass where a handful of olive trees are standing in the blazing sun. The grassland around them is covered in broken tires, plastic bags, and paper cartons carelessly thrown onto the ground. It seems ironic that the office of an environmental organization is located right around the corner of what appears to be an improvised, unregulated landfill. But the trash-filled streets outside of EcoPeace’s office are hardly an exception in many of the West Bank’s towns and

¹⁴⁴ See EcoPeace Middle East, “An Analysis of the Latest Research Commissioned by EcoPeace / FoEME on the Red Sea to Dead Sea Conduit and its Relevance to the World Bank led Study” (report, May 2007), http://ecopeaceme.org/uploads/publications_public75_1.pdf; “December 1, 2015 – EcoPeace response to the newest updates on the “Red Sea Dead Sea Water Project Phase I,” EcoPeace Middle East Media Releases, last modified December 1, 2015, <http://ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace-in-the-news/media-releases/december-1-2015-ecopeace-response-newest-updates-red-sea-dead-sea-water-project-phase/>.

¹⁴⁵ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 20, 2017.

cities. In fact, they are one of the reasons why a group of Palestinians and dozens of volunteers are working to raise awareness of the importance of environmental protection.

Similar to what one finds in the Israeli office, many of the Palestinian staff members at EcoPeace have a background in environmental studies. The environmental social movement in Palestine, as compared to Israel, has been far smaller in terms of its scale and support by the Palestinian civil society. Concepts such as recycling, water-saving measures, and environmentally friendly products are rarely a part of the daily lives of most Palestinians. Nevertheless, or maybe because of this circumstance, those who work at EcoPeace are determined to spread their knowledge on the impact that human actions have on our environment.

Aside from their interest in environmental awareness, however, there is another key motivation for working at EcoPeace: the struggle to achieve Palestinian water rights. Since many of the problems around water scarcity and pollution on the Palestinian side are inextricably linked to the occupation and the politically weaker position of the Palestinian Authority, achieving official Israeli recognition of their water rights is a big part of their commitment to cross-border environmental cooperation, and key to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian water conflict. “It’s all about rights,” Palestinian EcoPeace community coordinator Noor explained. “If we follow the human rights-based approach to water we can solve it all. The Palestinians have obvious rights that have to be recognized. If the Israelis are denying us those rights, we will not reach any solution to the conflict.”¹⁴⁶

Former EcoPeace staff member Muhammad agreed that acknowledging and defining water rights is fundamental to finding a solution to the water problem. As a scholar of international water law and Palestinian water rights, he explained that assigning the same water

rights to both the Israelis and Palestinians is the first step towards a water agreement. Once each side has accepted that both have equal claim to their shared water resources, they can engage in negotiations over specific quotas for water allocation and to develop new technology to enlarge the water resource pie available to the both of them.¹⁴⁷

Under Article 40 in Annex III of the 1995 Oslo Accord, Israel recognized “Palestinian water rights”, stipulating that the exact nature of those rights would be defined in the final agreement following the end of the five-year Interim period. Israel receives around 80 percent of the Mountain Aquifer’s water resources, while the Palestinians receive the remaining



Graffiti at the Palestinian Refugee Camp Aida, Bethlehem.
Source: Personal image.

¹⁴⁶ Personal interview with Palestinian EcoPeace staff member, July 12, 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Personal interview with Palestinian EcoPeace beneficiary, July 12, 2017.

20 percent from wells or purchase the water from Israel's water company Mekorot. Of those 20 percent, only 14 percent are actually currently accessible to the Palestinians due to technical errors and mismanagement on the Palestinian end, dried up or unproductive old wells, along with bureaucratic obstacles put in place by the JWC and the Israeli Civil Administration.

Article 40 further allocated fixed quantities of water to the Palestinians based on their current and estimated (five-year) future needs. Israel reiterates the fact that it graciously gives even more water to the Palestinians than was originally agreed (about 60 mcm instead as compared to the initial 28mcm per year) but fails to mention that the same water is withdrawn from the Mountain Aquifer underneath the West Bank and then sold to the Palestinians at a high price.¹⁴⁸ With the accord never having been replaced or revised, the recognition of Palestinian water rights has effectively been only symbolic, while Israel vehemently refers to the parameters agreed to by the Palestinian representatives back in 1995.

According to Nadav Tal from the Israeli EcoPeace office, the absence of natural Palestinian water rights paired with Israel's superior position in the water conflict is what makes the water agreement struck between Israelis and Palestinians in the 1990s unreliable and dangerous to the Palestinians. Nadav explained, "even if Israel is giving water to the Palestinians as per the agreement right now, one day it might decide to shut down its supplies. So, it's important for the Palestinians to have the same natural water rights as Israel, so that, in the future, they will not be as dependent on Israel as they are now."¹⁴⁹

For now, Palestinian access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water continues to be restricted through a) out-of-date allocation quantities and parameters set forth in the Oslo agreement in lieu of clearly defined water rights for the

¹⁴⁸ Article 40 "Water and Sewage" of *The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip*, Annex III, Protocol Concerning Civil Affairs, September 28, 1995.

Palestinians;¹⁵⁰ b) contesting Israel's responsibility to provide adequate water resources to the Palestinian people as an occupying power; and c) denying Palestinian access to the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, and an equitable amount of the Mountain Aquifer. EcoPeace knows that gaining Palestinian water rights is a crucial step in establishing fair and sustainable environmental governance. Even though some progress has been made over the past summer to increase the amount of water supplied to the Palestinians by Israel in light of Gaza's abysmal humanitarian condition, the organization laments that such steps are only an ephemeral cure to a much deeper-lying issue.

That is why, simultaneous to its advocacy efforts on the governmental level, EcoPeace works to spread the knowledge about the importance of Palestinian water rights among students and other beneficiaries. Kayan, a Palestinian community coordinator in and around Bethlehem, teaches children at Palestinian schools why it is so important for their people to have their water rights defined in an official agreement with Israel. Yet she also tells them that there are people on the Israeli side, who support the Palestinian struggle for water rights, and who believe, just as the Palestinians do, that Israelis and Palestinians should share their water in a fair and sustainable manner.

Outside of Palestinian classrooms, EcoPeace campaigns for Palestinian water rights through its advocacy and cross-border activities. Yet, obtaining those rights is not a technical matter. It is deeply political. And thus, sometimes, it is impossible for EcoPeace to keep politics out of the environment. Even though Israeli and Palestinian staff members have a different motivational base for engaging in cross-border cooperation, the following case study exemplifies

¹⁴⁹ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 20, 2017.

¹⁵⁰ Earlier in 2017, Israel and the PA agreed on slightly higher allocations in light of the escalating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

how motivations for engaging in cooperation does not have to be identical, but rather complementary.

5.2.3 Case Study #2: Stopping the Wall in Battir

Battir, Palestine. On afternoon in late June, I am in a yellow service taxi heading to the small Palestinian village of Battir, a UNESCO World Heritage Site half a dozen kilometers west of Bethlehem and just east of the Green Line separating Israel from the West Bank. For the 5,000 people who live there, Battir is a place where the past continues to be a vital part of the present. For over four thousand years, the small village has been home to different civilizations, each infusing the village with their ideas and customs, and shaping Battir's unique and picturesque landscape. On top of a steep hill at the western end of Battir lies the site of historic Betar (also spelled Beitar or Bethar). The excavations uncovered by archeologists of Tel Aviv University in 1984 lay bare the site of a second-century Jewish fortress, which was destroyed by the Roman army during the Bar Kokhba revolt. Over the course of time, the contemporary town of Battir was built around the ancient site, known today as Khirbet al-Yahud ("ruin of the Jews").

At the centre of the village lies an ancient Roman bath, its stonewalls filled almost to the brim with blue water. On this hot summer day, half a dozen children are playing in the pool, splashing each other in the face with the cool, refreshing water. Apart from being an ancient remnant of Roman times and a popular hangout place for locals, the pool continues to be a vital source of fresh water for the village farmers. The water comes from Battir's ten surrounding wells and is then passed through an ancient system of rock-hewn irrigation canals towards the hills that envelope the western side of Battir. Large stone terraces locally known as al-jinan ("the paradise") were built on these hills using millions of stones collected from the surrounding area. The origin of the terraces and the unique irrigation system are believed to date back over five

thousand years ago to the Chalcolithic period, yet they are still maintained and utilized to this day.

I came to Battir not only to marvel at the many historic sites and the picturesque landscape. I also ventured out to this small village near the edge of the West Bank to find the source of something I had heard mentioned repeatedly during my interviews with members of EcoPeace. When asked about the most significant success stories of EcoPeace in recent years, stopping the wall in Battir in 2015 had almost unanimously been named the organization's biggest achievement. So, to see for myself what building the wall would have meant to the people and the village of Battir, I came to speak with some members of the village community.

Muhammad, a former EcoPeace Community Coordinator who now works for the German Institute for Cooperation (GIZ) spontaneously welcomes me into his home. His wife brings us a tray with little cups of tea and a plate stocked with dates and pastries, while his two small children zoom in and out of the house. From his balcony, we enjoy a beautiful view of the valley stretching along the western outskirts of Battir. An old railway track built in 1890 under the Ottoman Empire loops around the slope of the valley, marking the de facto division line between Israel and the West Bank. Once, there was a train station where the village children would board the train to go to school in Jerusalem, but after the Six-Day War, the station was removed. Now, the train runs between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as an alternate option for those who prefer a beautiful view of the South Jerusalem hills over speed.

The terraces, the Roman pool, Al Khirbet – Battir has no shortage of historic and cultural wonders. Yet these sites are just one value of Battir, and only half the reason why the village was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014. What is most remarkable about Battir is that the

village is one of very few communities that have been able to preserve their unique local water distribution system. Muhammad explains:

We have eight big clans, or families in Battir. We measure the water level by using a stick, called al-madud, and then each family gets its water on [a particular day]. So, for the past decades, these days have been known as Katush Day or Abdallah Day. Because this system is so unique to our village, there is this saying that everywhere else in the world the week has seven days, only in Battir it has eight days.¹⁵¹

Leaders and their policies in this land have come and gone, yet this communal arrangement for sharing water, believed to have been created over two centuries ago, continues to be an integral and functioning part of the village to this day. Thanks to the reliable and regulated supply of water reaching the surrounding hills and fields, Battir has made a name for itself as the region's "vegetable basket". Strong and healthy olive trees, some of which are centuries old, adorn the hills. Proudly, Muhammad explains that Battir's eggplants are well known as some of the best in all of Palestine.

Yet, in the early 2000s, the village's water system that had been in place for thousands of years was threatening to break apart at last. When Israel and Jordan signed the Rhodes Armistice Agreement in 1949, they agreed that Battir should remain a Palestinian village. Although Israel would have rights over its railway and roads, Battir's residents and especially its farmers would retain access to their land up to and beyond the railroad. In 2002, when the Israeli government published its plans to erect part of the Barrier through the valley along the Jerusalem-Jaffa railway, however, the guarantee for local farmers to freely access their farmland beyond the railroad was suddenly in jeopardy. Building the barrier through Battir would inhibit the ability of local farmers to access their agricultural land on the other side of the valley, would result in a partial destruction of the village's ancient irrigation system, in addition to overall harming the

¹⁵¹ Personal interview with Palestinian EcoPeace beneficiary, July 12, 2017.

beauty and uniqueness of the cultural landscape. Thus, fearing for the cultural and socioeconomic well-being of the village, in 2007, Battir sued the Israeli Defense Ministry for their plans to run the Barrier right through the village.

In a joint effort to defend the village against the Israeli military decision, EcoPeace, along with Battir's residents submitted a petition to the Israeli High Court of Justice containing expert opinions on the impact of the Barrier on the unique environmental composition and cultural heritage of the village, and on the importance of many of the town's historical sites for both Israelis and Palestinians. The High Court accepted EcoPeace's petition and ordered the Defense Ministry to consider building the Barrier along an alternative route. In order to boost their chances for safeguarding the cultural landscapes and unique watering system of Battir, the Palestinian National Authority met with representatives of UNESCO to discuss adding Battir to the World Heritage Sites list.

At the same time, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) published a document outlining the damage the Barrier would do to the area, and further noting "the struggle of our neighbors to name the area a World Heritage Site places us in an embarrassing position, and we should work together with them to protect the landscape."¹⁵² Environmentalists and concerned citizens from both sides began to mobilize in a campaign against the Israeli Defense Ministry's plans in what was a rare moment of combined Israeli-Palestinian forces. On December 10, 2013, EcoPeace staged a concert with the famous Israeli singer Ahinoam Nini in Battir to raise awareness about the struggle against the Separation Barrier. Muhammad, who was part of EcoPeace's organizing committee for the concert, remembers that the motivation of his Palestini-

¹⁵² Zafir Rinat, "For First Time, Israeli State Agency Opposes Segment of West Bank Separation Fence," *Haaretz*, September 13, 2012, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-state-agency-says-no-to-fence-1.5161221>.



Top: The railroad from Ottoman times leading through Battir.
Bottom: Ancient man-made terraces on the slopes of Battir's surrounding hills.

Source: Personal images.

an neighbors to contribute to this concert was low at first. After all, hosting an Israeli singer with support from Israel's people was highly unorthodox, and some even considered it an act of "normalizing" with the enemy. Muhammad had to construct the singer's stage by himself, despite initial local support for the concert. Still, in the end it was worth it, he says. When Nini came to sing in Battir the next day, the whole village and many of Battir's supporters from outside were there to watch, dance, and cheer her on.

In June 2014, Battir was approved as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. EcoPeace's efforts led by many of the organization's Good Water Neighbor communities and other local Palestinian and Israeli activists had made a decisive impact on the decision to award the small Palestinian village such an important title. Finally, after years of campaigning and signing petitions, in 2015, the Israeli Supreme Court rejected the IDF's request to build the Barrier through the village, and Battir's unique cultural landscape and environmental value was saved.

According to Muhammad, there were three factors that greatly helped the people of Battir to defy the IDF's plans for the Barrier. First, there was the Rhodes Agreement, which is a legally binding contract between Israel and Jordan. Second, winning the title of a World Heritage Site manifested Battir's status as a culturally unique place of universal value for both Israelis and Palestinians. And third, it was the support of the Israeli people, who stood alongside Battir's residents to object to the plans of the Israeli military and fight for the cause of Battir, its unique cultural landscape, and the well-being of its people.

Stopping the wall from being built through Battir has undoubtedly been one of the major achievements of EcoPeace in recent years. Even though many Palestinians were sceptical at first at the thought of engaging with the enemy, the success that the campaign brought to the little

Palestinian village exemplified the value and force of combined Israeli-Palestinian efforts for the cause of their people and environment. Beyond advocating for the preservation of Battir's unique landscape, overriding the plans for the barrier further safeguarded, and even boosted, the village's economic well-being. The following chapter discusses EcoPeace's ideas to enhance economic, energy, and tourism outcomes as a by-product of greater cooperation between Israel, Jordan, and Palestine.

5.3 Economic, Energy, and Tourism Incentives

5.3.1 The Water-Energy-Nexus (WEN)

Eilat, Israel. Four years of drought have passed seemingly unnoticed. If it wasn't for the warnings from hydrologists, climate change experts, and representatives of Israel's Water Authority, few people would probably have noticed how, one year after another, the region has been waiting for some rain, to no avail. Yet even under the hot summer sun, the small and barely visible green water pipes continue to lazily release one drop after another onto the flowerbeds that decorate the streets. Here, in Israel's southernmost city and at the southern end of the Negev Desert, nothing seems to suggest that the country has been hit by the longest-ever sequence of arid years in its history. Eilat's hot weather and low humidity continue to attract thousands of Israeli and international tourists that come to enjoy the city's long beaches, beautiful coral reefs, and luxurious resorts.

Now, more than ever, Israel must thank its engineers and technicians who have helped catapult the country into the era of innovative water technology. Largely because of its immense investments in seawater desalination, Israel has been able to cushion much of the drought's impact. While still a pipe dream for many other countries, mainly because of the huge costs

involved with it, Israel has developed some of the most effective and cost-efficient desalination facilities in the world. Still, with two thirds of its water supply now coming from desalinated water, the country is likely to encounter increasing water demands as part of its growing population. Notwithstanding possible innovations that could eventually make the desalination of seawater less costly than it is now, Israel still has to find ways to cover the plants' immense energy requirements.

Enter Jordan. With its vast desert and arid climate, the country carries a higher solar potential than its neighbor to the west. Fields equipped with solar panels could easily produce enough energy to take care of Jordan's own electricity needs while enabling the country to sell any excess to Israel's electricity-hungry desalination plants. As part of a cross-border, cross-sector agreement, Israel could then provide Jordan, the fourth most water scarce country in the world, with additional water as payment for its electricity provisions and relieve the Kingdom of some of its chronic water worries. EcoPeace's proposal for harvesting exactly those two assets—Israel's technical know-how and high-technology, and Jordan's space and solar potential— is articulated through its Water-Energy-Nexus (WEN) in which the organization, once again, highlights the benefits of cross-border cooperation and the interdependence of policy fields. In a vision that looks similar to the interconnectedness and interdependence between the countries of the European Union, EcoPeace describes its idea as the “backbone to a more peaceful and sustainable Levant.”¹⁵³

Whereas incentives for cross-border cooperation in the water and energy sectors are the most obvious and probable between Israel and Jordan, EcoPeace argues that Israel should also take an active interest in advancing solutions to the water and sanitation crisis in Palestine. Because water and pollution know no borders, Israel is inevitably tasked with treating the

millions of cubic meters of sewage that is reaching across the Green Line. By 2020, the country is expected to spend at least one billion dollars on sewage and wastewater treatment, with several hundreds of millions needed to clean the water in the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, Israel's strategy of unilaterally treating the symptoms rather than the causes might be effective for now but it will eventually fail to sustainably remedy the regional water and sanitation issues.

5.3.2 Economic and tourism opportunities

Bethlehem, Palestine. Standing on the side of the street opposite from the Bethlehem EcoPeace office is a large white sign, the likes of which one often encounters when traveling across Palestine. Although half of the letters are no longer legible, the yellow stars on blue and the faint colors of several other national flags indicate that this sign was erected to pay tribute to a variety of European donors that helped fund a development project on this spot. Because of Palestine's weak economy, the construction of treatment plants, landfills, and other water infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is coordinated and financed by a variety of third-party donor agencies, including the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German banking group KfW, the EU, USAID, and the World Bank. The construction of such water infrastructure is pivotal if Palestine is to reduce the amount of untreated sewage that flows through cross-border streams and into Israel.

While the Palestinians who were interviewed for this thesis said that obtaining water rights was their highest priority, their second most important motivation was economic betterment. From a holistic perspective, those two motivations –the quest for water rights and for

¹⁵³ "Water & Energy Nexus," EcoPeace Middle East, n.d., <http://ecopeaceme.org/projects/water-energy/>.

¹⁵⁴ OECD, "Water," in *OECD Environmental Reviews: Israel 2011* (OECD, 2011), 120.

economic development— are closely related. Having their water rights recognized, especially their status as a riparian to the Jordan River, would enable the Palestinians to also harvest some of the fruits of the booming tourism industry along the River and the Dead Sea that have been generating a lot of revenue for Israel and Jordan. If the Palestinians were granted access to the Jordan River Valley, the exploitation of its resources (including water, minerals, salts, stone, and land) is estimated to yield additional USD two billion per year, or roughly 23 percent of the 2011 Palestinian GDP.¹⁵⁵

The geographical fragmentation and movement restrictions within and between the Palestinian territories, as well as travel advisories issues by various governments, including Canada that discourage international tourists to visit the Palestinian territories,¹⁵⁶ have a deterrent effect on developing the West Bank's tourism industry. If Palestine is able to cater to the needs of the more than one million international tourists that visit the Jordan River each year, the Palestinian economy would receive a significant boost from its tourism sector. This in turn, would create a real incentive for the government to make economically and ecologically sound investments in the region and its resources to preserve and enhance its attractiveness to tourists.

Yet again, the development of any of those projects is contingent on the recognition of Palestine as a rightful riparian to the Jordan River, and its ability to access the land and water resources of the West Bank. Consequently, frustration about the many missed opportunities and financial benefits that have barred significant economic development is high among many Palestinians. Especially, as one EcoPeace staff members explained it to me, since the ideas for

¹⁵⁵ A 2014 report by the World Bank points out that “the majority of these costs do not have any relationship with security concerns but rather come from the heavy restrictions imposed on the Palestinians in the access to their own natural resources, many of which are exploited by Israel itself, including water, minerals, salts, stones and land. Over USD 4.5 billion per year, a full 56% of GDP, is the cost (in terms of both foregone revenues and higher costs of raw materials) for the Palestinians for not being able to access their own resources.” See The World Bank, “West Bank and Gaza: Area C and the Future of the Palestinian

possible win-win solutions for Palestine and its neighbors already exist, but the political willingness to implement those solutions is missing.¹⁵⁷

Does this mean that there is no room for economic development until Palestine has been granted its water rights? Not at all. The “Green Economy Initiative”, one of EcoPeace’s most successful projects along with Good Water Neighbors has established connections with local men and women from Israel, Palestine, and Jordan to promote “new economic opportunities based on common interests, and to promote cross-border, green, tourism initiatives.”¹⁵⁸ These initiatives have focused on five business areas, including tour guides and operators, adventure tourism, food industry, permaculture, and women’s empowerment groups.

One example is May, a young Palestinian woman from Battir, who has been a volunteer at EcoPeace for four years. Together with her colleague, another EcoPeace volunteer, May works as a local tour guide for the town’s eco-museum. The museum organizes hiking tours and projects to promote and preserve the local community and the unique agricultural terraces that have earned Battir its special World Heritage status. Thanks to Battir’s status as a UNESCO Heritage site, as well as the local tour guides and projects offered by the museum, the small town has been able to attract more and more visitors from within and outside of Palestine. The guest house that stands adjacent to the museum was renovated to boost the village’s tourism trade, and on its main floor, Dar Abu Hassan, the owner, and his sister sell a variety of handmade items from local women. The money that is made by selling those products is given directly to the person who crafted the item.

Economy” (report by Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Department Middle East and North Africa Region, 2014), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16686/AUS29220REPLAC0EVISION0January02014.pdf>.

¹⁵⁶ See for example the official Canadian travel restrictions that urges visitors to avoid all non-essential travels to the West Bank.

¹⁵⁷ Personal interview with Palestinian EcoPeace staff member, July 12, 2017.

¹⁵⁸ “Green Economy Initiatives,” EcoPeace Middle East, last modified February 2015, <http://foeme.org/peace.php?id=143>.

May contends that working with Israelis on joint projects has had a transforming effect for the town and its people. Especially after they successfully stopped the Israeli government from building the wall through their town, the local Palestinian population realized how much they can achieve together with their Israeli supporters. Today, four years into her involvement with EcoPeace, May regularly attends training and workshop sessions on water issues or eco-tourism offered by the organization. The knowledge that she gains is then passed on to local people or tourists that come to visit Battir.

In Battir, there are those who oppose any form of cooperation with Israelis and those that are sceptical of whether it will actually yield positive results. But over the years, May and many others from her town have come to realize that joining forces on issues such as environmental protection or heritage and culture preservation can produce some real benefits to local businesses and farmers. As Mira Edelstein, a coordinator of the Green Economy Initiatives on the Israeli side explained, “those people that were working with us in the Green Economy Project were ready to close their eyes, hold their nose, and work with the other side as long as it brought them a little bit more money. And if that’s an incentive, good, go for it. We need as many ideas as we can get to get people to work together.”¹⁵⁹ Whether its tourism, trade, or the promotion of one of the region’s many religious or cultural heritage sites, it is possible to link cooperation with economic development to achieve tangible results for the people of Palestine, even while the struggle for their water rights continues.

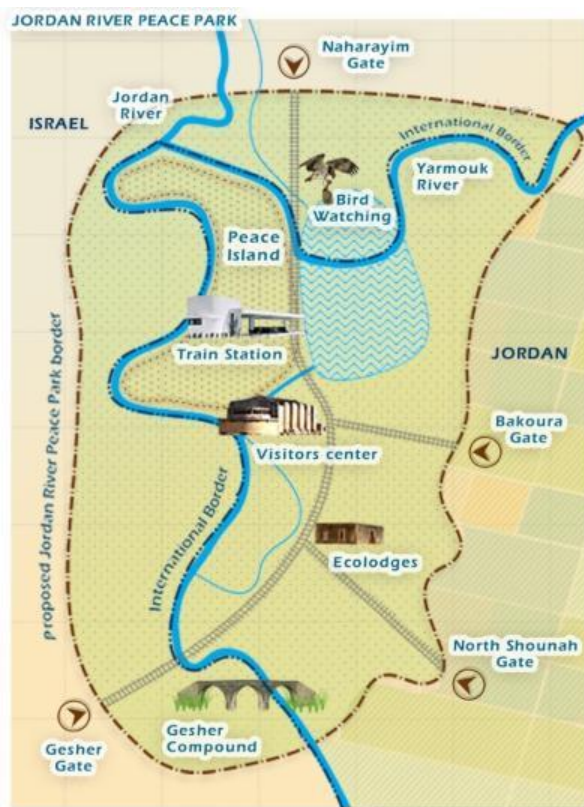
5.3.3 A Dream for a Peace Island

In another example of cross-border cooperation, two mayors from Israel and Jordan signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2007 outlining an idea for a cross-border Peace Park, the first

¹⁵⁹ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 2, 2017.

of its kind in the Middle East. The park, large parts of which are located on a small island between Israel and Jordan where the Jordan River meets the Yarmouk, would provide opportunities for “biodiversity protection, cooperative management, joint research programs, education and collaboration on nature-based tourism.”¹⁶⁰

FIGURE 6: THE JORDAN RIVER PEACE PARK



The proposed Jordan River Peace Park encircling the Peace Island, whose special usage and crossing status was defined as part of the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty in 1994.

Source: “Jordan River Peace Park,” EcoPeace Middle East, n.d., <http://ecopeace.org/projects/lower-jordan-river/jordan-river-peace-park/>. Used with permission.

Although the political situation does not yet permit the creation of such a jointly administered park, EcoPeace continues to advocate for its vision, and, in the meantime, has opted for developing parks on both sides of the river that could potentially be unified at a later stage.

¹⁶⁰ “Jordan River Peace Park,” EcoPeace Middle East n.d., <http://ecopeace.org/projects/lower-jordan-river/jordan-river-peace-park/>.

The unique characteristic about this park is what Mira Edelstein calls its “little cross-border bubble.”¹⁶¹ Because the island is surrounded by water, it enjoys special regulations for tourists who can visit the island (but not cross to the opposite side of the river) without needing a visa.

EcoPeace’s vision of the Jordan River Peace Park truly is a model project of holistic cross-border cooperation. Not only does the park set an example for the rehabilitation of the Jordan River, it would further spur local businesses, become an engine for the local economy and tourism industry, and function as an opportunity for concerted environmental management between Israeli and Jordanian park authorities.

5.4 EcoPeace’s Educational Activities

Tel Aviv, Israel. I found my own little peace island in the middle of Tel Aviv one day. As I was strolling along a narrow pedestrian path I came by an Israeli high school whose fence had been decorated with a dozen water bottles, horizontally fastened with white plastic wires. The bottles were filled with soil, a few stones and pebbles, and some wooden bits here and there. In some of them I could see the faintest sign of a green flower head sprouting upward from its bed of soil. Sitting down on a bench opposite of the fence I enjoyed the peace and calm that arose from this place. The thick Jacaranda trees were forming an arch over the pathway, drowning out the noise from the streets, their purple flower pedals covering the ground around me.

Most poignant of all, however, was the little garden that had been built by these students with nothing more than what most would consider waste and dirt picked up from the ground. The sheer simplicity of this project, built in the middle of Israel’s capital of innovation and cutting-edge technology gave a whole new meaning to the phrase “necessity is the mother of invention”.

¹⁶¹ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 2, 2017.

Without realizing it, I was looking at the work of Israeli students who had participated in a workshop held by EcoPeace a couple of week earlier. The small-scale drip-irrigation project was part of a daylong seminar on low-impact environmental practices and sustainability.

5.4.1 School-based Activities

Through its bottom-up/grassroots approach, EcoPeace regularly works with local schools and community groups to offer extra-curricular courses about environmental sustainability and cross-border cooperation, and educate teachers and students about the collective responsibility to care for their shared natural resources. EcoPeace aims to establish this knowledge as an integral part of the curriculum in each of the countries' education systems. Engaging youth in environmental activities is a strategy to build a generation of educated and environmentally aware citizens. Local teachers and students who have been trained by EcoPeace proceed to transmit their knowledge to parents, friends, or other community members. Once a large enough base of people interested in environmental and cross-border activities has been established, communities can appeal to their local mayor or other municipal representative to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (similar to the one signed by the mayors of the Israeli and Jordanian communities around the Peace Island, see 5.3.3).

In Palestine and Jordan, where the campaign for environmental protection is much less mobilized than in Israel, environmental issues are absent from school curricula, but badly needed. Through EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbors Project and the work of its community coordinators, EcoPeace staff visit schools and community centres to teach young Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians about their environment and their shared responsibilities as members of trans-boundary water basins. According to EcoPeace co-founder Gidon Bromberg, the next step will

be to advocate for the inclusion of the Good Water Neighbor's Project into the Ministry of Education or the Independent Education System of Israel.¹⁶²

Even without the GWN being recognized as a part of the formal education system, EcoPeace's involvement with young students from each of the three societies serves an additional function because it empowers young Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians to challenge their view of the "other" and to believe in a future in which peace, cooperation, and environmental security is possible. For Kayan, one of the Palestinian community coordinators, empowering young Palestinian students to learn about the environment and to meet their neighbors is what she enjoys most about her work with EcoPeace. Growing up to see many of her fellow Palestinians lose their hope for peace and statehood in the demise of the Oslo peace process, Kayan is thankful for the opportunity to restore some of the faith and power that has been lost with many young Palestinians. She and most others in the organization believe that the only way to deconstruct the walls of ignorance, distrust, and binary thinking is through knowledge and a strong vision for a healthy and peaceful Levant.¹⁶³

On the other side of the Green Line, Nadav, like Kayan, comes from a scientific background of hydrology. Of all his positions at EcoPeace – water officer, coordinator for the WEN project, and community coordinator in the Good Water Neighbors program – Nadav enjoys the educational part of his job most, as it allows him to pass on his knowledge around water and sanitation to a young generation of Israeli students. Even though he is a scientist at heart, Nadav makes sure that his students understand the socio-political aspects of the water conflict, and that the whole question about resource distribution is not just a technical matter, but rather it is intrinsically connected to concepts of fairness, sustainability, and mutual trust.

¹⁶² Personal interview with Gidon Bromberg, July 19, 2017.

¹⁶³ Personal interview with Palestinian EcoPeace staff member, July 12, 2017.

To illustrate the complexity of any transboundary water basin, Nadav engages his students in one of EcoPeace's games called "Whose water is it anyway?" After dividing the students into several groups, each representing a political entity set in a context of distinct environmental, climatic, and socioeconomic conditions, the students are asked to think of a strategy for supplying their citizens with clean and sufficient water. A random selection of advantages and challenges are used to represent the asymmetrical power relations and levels of inequality among riparians. As each group tries to secure as much of the "water pie" as possible, while having to deal with the consequences of pollution and water abstraction from the other groups, the game's message becomes clear: being a part of a shared water basin means to assume responsibility for the mutual benefit of all of its users.¹⁶⁴

Through games such as these EcoPeace seeks to convey the message that cooperation with the 'other' is both possible, and, in fact, desirable. Rather than being a sign of weakness, it is a chance to enforce real change for the environment of the Levant and its inhabitants. In the presence of on-going conflict and separation, these games are one way of challenging the binary thinking (us versus them; they win-we lose) with which many young Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians have grown up. What is more, they enable students to better grasp complex concepts such as water rights, or the question of who is responsible for treating environmental pollution and hazards.

EcoPeace has vehemently defended its credo that cross-border environmental cooperation should be pursued outside of the framework of any political orientation of "left" and "right", and instead be viewed as the best alternative for keeping the region's environmental security and sustainability. Keeping the political and often contentious social aspects of the water conflict to a

¹⁶⁴ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 20, 2017; Amy Lipman Avizhar and Sami Backleh, "Resource Guide for Environmental Educators: Good Water Neighbors" (Handbook by EcoPeace Middle East, 2013), 44.

minimum is not always an easy task, and yet it is necessary in order for the organization to focus on its ultimate goal of raising a young generation of Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians that understands the complexity of cross-border environmental systems and the consequential responsibility to cooperate over shared resources.¹⁶⁵

Sixteen years after the inception of the Good Water Neighbors Project, EcoPeace coordinates a number of projects with youth and adults under the umbrella of the GWN. Through its educational activities in schools and community groups, the organization has recruited several hundreds of young volunteers, so-called Youth Water Trustees, from all three countries across the region. These Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian teens can continue their involvement with EcoPeace even after they graduate from high school as EcoPeace Water Alumni. Many of the EcoPeace alumni make use of the program's unique opportunities to attend conferences, both at home and abroad, and to participate in EcoPeace's annual cross-border camps, which, for logistical reasons, are most often held at the Sharhabil bin Hassneh EcoPark in Jordan.

For many in the Water Alumni, the opportunity to meet with members of "the other side" represents a rare chance to get to know their neighbor, whose identity is often shrouded by stereotypes, ignorance, and heresy. As religious and cultural differences – of which there are plenty within and among each of the three communities – are assuming an increasingly critical and sensitive role within the Israeli-Arab conflict, offering young Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians a safe and respectful environment for inter-cultural exchanges is one of EcoPeace's most crucial peacebuilding component.

¹⁶⁵ Personal conversation with EcoPeace Israel staff member, July 20, 2017.

5.4.2 Faith-based Activities

Apart from its presence in Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian schools, EcoPeace has also set out to transform the concept of religion and culture from catalyst for conflict into a tool for relationship and trust building. The land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea that is holy to the three Abrahamic religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. References to the spiritual significance of the Jordan River can be found in the Bible, described as “The Garden of the Lord”¹⁶⁶ and as “The Entry into the Promised Land”,¹⁶⁷ as well as in the Quran as part of the land that “we have blessed for the nations.”¹⁶⁸ Yet, even though the river bears such historic and spiritual importance to the people around it, its contemporary condition speaks to a culture of years-long neglect and degradation.

Hence, EcoPeace reaches out to communities of all three Abrahamic religions to advocate for the rehabilitation of the Jordan River, based on each of the group’s religious and cultural interests to preserve the water of the valley for spiritual purposes. In a booklet called “Come Together at the River”, EcoPeace highlights the Jordan River’s spiritual importance as a place where some of the “most momentous events in the history of man’s relationship with God” have taken place. To address the degradation of the valley and promote its vision of a healthy river, the organization has also launched the Jordan River Covenant, a document addressed to faith-based leadership, national leaders, and members of the public to endorse their support for the rehabilitation of the Lower Jordan River.¹⁶⁹

For Mira Edelstein, coordinator of EcoPeace’s Faith-Based Program, this means that the spiritual significance of the river can be used as a platform for highlighting the parallels, rather

¹⁶⁶ Isa. 51:3.

¹⁶⁷ Josh. 1-24.

¹⁶⁸ Surah Al-Anbya, 21:71.

¹⁶⁹ See “Covenant for the Jordan River,” EcoPeace Middle East, n.d., http://ecopeaceme.org/uploads/13832213651~%5ES%5E~JR_Covenant.pdf.

than the differences, of those living in the region. Because religion plays such an important part in the conflict (Jewish orthodox groups are growing in size; the Israeli government is increasingly dependent on coalitions with religious parties; radical Islamic movements across the region spur religious fanaticism and anti-Semitism, and American evangelicals funnel support to Israel), EcoPeace has developed a program in which the Levant's rich variety of cultures and religions can bring people together to preserve the unique cultural landscape of the Holy Land, rather than being a burden or an obstacle to peace and reconciliation.

EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbors program includes a wide range of educational activities with local students, alumni, adults and politicians. Through these activities, EcoPeace creates opportunities for intergroup meetings, culminating in several days-long cross-border camps at one of the region's EcoParks. The following case study recounts a three-days long cross-border camp with Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian alumni from the Youth Water Trustee program.

5.4.3 Case Study #3: EcoPark Alumni Camp

Sharhabil Bin Hassneh EcoPark, Jordan. Monday, July 17, 2017. Our bus rumbles along a small and bumpy road, away from the rush-hour traffic of Tel Aviv and onto Route 6 northward towards the Sea of Galilee. After two hours, we arrive in Ma'oz Haim, the last Israeli town before the Jordanian border. The palm trees on either side of the road block any view of the Jordan River, which is at its widest just south of the Sea of Galilee. Even if the river was in full sight, nothing about the plain, windowless buildings and the high mesh wire fences would suggest that we are about to leave Israel and enter Jordan via the Sheikh Hussein Bridge, which connects the eastern with the western bank of the Jordan River.

The Israeli border agents scan our luggage, check our passports, collect the 150 Shekel departure tax, and then scan our luggage again. They deem us free to leave the country. Together we wait for the shuttle to take us the short distance to the Jordanian terminal (where the scanning and searching procedure begins all over again). For most of these Israeli teens, it is the first time they are crossing the border into Jordan. Some of them have come from Tel Aviv, others from a small town north of Tel Aviv that is predominantly home to Israeli Palestinians, and others from a small town in the north of Israel, close to Lake Tiberias. To get everyone acquainted and pass the time while we wait to continue with our journey, Amy, one of the leaders of the regional camp, engages everyone in a couple of ice-breaking games.

Once more on the bus, we pass through the big white arch that reads المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية on the right, and “The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan” on the left. Driving through the Jordan River Valley, the thermometer reaches seething thirty-six degrees, with the July sun high in the sky. Shortly after noon, we arrive at Sharhabil Bin Hassneh EcoPark, or SHE Park. Six alumni, three interns, and three coordinators from the Jordanian office have already arrived and taken quarter in some of the seventeen “ecolodges” that the park offers to accommodate its guests. At the park entrance a sand-coloured house displays the familiar EcoPeace symbol of a palm tree with two green hands as its leaves.

As we venture into the back of the park toward our cabin, we walk along a winding stone path. Here and there we need to brush away a low-hanging branch from over two hundred trees that were planted in a joint effort between EcoPeace and its students seven years ago. As Amy and I open the door into our cabin, a wonderful gust of cool air from inside hits our faces. With a sigh of relief, I see a slick, white air-conditioner hanging from the wall, and a modern shower at the back of the cabin. I try not to think about how badly I want to stand under its cool and

refreshing water right now. But the rules of the camp were made clear to everyone right from the beginning: The A/C shuts off after fifteen minutes during the day, Wi-Fi is available to everyone in the main house only, and unnecessary showers are discouraged. After all, Jordan is the fourth most water scarce country in the world, and the SHE Park is certainly no exception to that.

Before long, all thirty-four people who have assembled from Israel, Jordan, and Palestine make their way to one of the main houses, where they receive a hearty welcome from EcoPeace coordinators and EcoPark supervisors. The air is filled with both excitement and a little bit of apprehension. All of the girls from Palestine and Jordan are huddled together with their friends on one side of the room, while their male peers sit together across from them. The Israelis, although mixed among boys and girls, also stick together as they listen to what Amy and the other coordinators have to say. Every few seconds, Ahmad¹⁷⁰, the camp translator, jumps in to translate from Hebrew to Arabic, and vice versa.

After a while, and with the help of some ice breakers, the group becomes more relaxed and comfortable around one another. Several alumni describe projects in water basins that are part of EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbors project, and two Israeli-Arab girls proudly present a short film about their environmental activities. Then the group watches a film that was made about the Bedouin nurse who was one of the initiators for the fight against pollution in the Hebron-Besor-Gaza basin.

At seven, dinner is served at the camp square. The tables are crowded with pots filled with chicken, rice and lentils, cooked vegetables, bread, yoghurt, and salad. Everyone fills their plates and goes to sit with their friends. The odd person can be seen chatting with someone from one of the two other countries. Two Arab-Israelis have started taken their seats next two a group of Jordanian girls and are now talking to them in fast Arabic.

Tuesday, July 18, 2017

The clock strikes eight in the morning when the air at SHE Park is filled with the smell of freshly brewed coffee and warm bread. The first few people have already lined up at the food table laden with a proud variety of traditional Arab breakfast items to pile their plates with hummus, fuul, and labneh. “Sabah al-khair,” one of the Israeli boys greets four Jordanians that are sitting around the table, as he joins them for breakfast. “Sabah an-nur,” they respond, and add “kaif halak?” How are you? Then, while they eat their bread sprinkled with zatar and dipped in olive oil, they engage in a Hebrew-Arabic lesson, during which they learn some of the most important phrases from each other’s languages and laugh about similar or odd-sounding words.

After breakfast, the group reconvenes in the main house with a workshop on water challenges in the Middle East. Abed, the EcoPark manager and EcoPeace CC at the Jordanian office, talks about droughts, pollution, a rising population, and barriers to water access, while Ahmed diligently translates everything into Hebrew. After a short presentation, everyone is assigned to “expert groups”, each with a different topic to explore: Demographic changes and women empowerment, climate change and ecological systems, conflict resolution, as well as local economy and green jobs.

Three Palestinian, two Israeli-Arab, and one of the Jordanian girls join the discussion group on women empowerment and demographics. Sitting on the floor of the main house, their legs crossed, they listen intently as Noor, the Palestinian CC, talks in Arabic about the link between a steadily growing population and the need to satisfy the resulting water demand. Everyone in the group shares their own stories about how the regional water problems impact their lives. One of the Palestinian girls explains how, last summer, as the taps in their house had been without water for weeks, her family had to cancel their summer vacation plans because they

¹⁷⁰ All names of beneficiaries at the SHE Youth Camp were changed.

spent all of their savings on bottled water from Mekorot. This stirred a big discussion among the girls, and before long, they bantered over whose kitchen taps had run dry the longest in the past (the winning record was thirty-nine days).

Outside the main house, just past the small square where men and women prepare rice and vegetables for lunch, another group sits at a picnic table underneath a big tree, whose leaves and branches offer a bit of shade from the burning sun. Adam, EcoPeace's CC for Israel's most northern transboundary water basin, leads a discussion on the Regional Jordan Valley Masterplan and the rehabilitation of the Jordan River, while one of the Jordanian interns translates into Arabic for one of her friends. "So, what can we, as EcoPeace Water Trustees do to spread the message about the need for rehabilitating the Jordan Valley?" He asks and looks around the group for answers. "I think one thing's that's important," one of the girls, a medical student and long-time Youth Water Trustee at EcoPeace says, "is to make people see that you don't have to be a scientist, or someone who is working in the environment to be active in the Good Water Neighbors project. A lot of people ask me why I, as a medicine student, work for the environment. What they don't understand is that, when our water is dirty or when we don't have water at all, it affects all of us, and all parts of our society."¹⁷¹

The day continues with discussions, games, and presentations about prevalent environmental issues in the region before every group returns to the camp square for lunch. The afternoon is reserved for social and fun activities. Once all the plates and pots have been cleared from the tables, three of the park coordinators set up work stations where the teens cover their hands in wet clay and water to make pottery, paint dishes and vases with bright colours, or learn how to make their own wicker baskets.

¹⁷¹ Personal conversations with EcoPeace Alumni at Jordan SHE Park, July 17, 2017.

In the late afternoon hours, the group embarks on a hike through the rolling hills surrounding SHE Park, faithfully accompanied by a security officer. Together, we march upwards through fields of yellow grass and sand speckled with the odd shrubs and trees. After half an hour, we reach the top of a hill. From here we have an unobstructed view into the valley, its hills shining resplendently in the evening sun. Down at the bottom lies Sharhabeel Dam, or Ziqlab Dam, the first to be built in Jordan back in 1964. We pause to listen to Adam talk about the significance of the dam, and the positive as well as negative implications that arise from this big human-made lake. By now, the sun is sinking below a far hill like a glowing golden halo. Colours of blue, gold, and red melt seamlessly across the sky, and become so intense that everyone eventually abandons their view of the lake and looks west at the sunset. A worthy canvas for a Facebook or Instagram picture, the teens bring out their cell phones to take a plethora of selfies and group pictures in front of the beautiful scenery. Pictures of Israelis with Palestinians, Palestinians pictured with Jordanians, and Jordanians with Israelis, smiling, throwing peace signs, and posing sassily in front of the cameras and the picturesque Jordan Valley.

Once back at SHE Park, dinner is served at the camp square. The teens discuss which snacks to serve and what music to play at the party that is planned for later in the evening. Around eight o'clock, a big boom box is put up on the camp square, blasting a variety of pop songs in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. Meanwhile, two Israelis, four Jordanians, and two Israeli-Arabs, and I sit together in a circle in one of the main houses to talk about their involvement at EcoPeace and their views on cross-border environmental peacebuilding.

“Before I was part of EcoPeace,” Ayan, one of the boys from Jordan says, “I had no friends from Israel and Palestine. Just Jordanians. After my first and second camp, I started to

make friendships, and those friendships have even lasted over two, three years.” His three Jordanian group members concur. Neither of them had known any Israelis, and only two of them had friends from Palestine before they started as a Water Trustee. One of them says, “to be honest, I never imagined becoming friends with an Israeli, and at first, I couldn’t even speak to them, because I was too nervous. After all, everything I knew about Israelis was based on my grandparents’ side of the story, who emigrated from Palestine during the war.”¹⁷²

Her Jordanian girlfriend, Mahra, agrees. “My dad’s uncle was shot by an Israeli,” she says. “So, the only image I had of them was someone who killed my dad’s uncle. And as a kid you hold on to this memory forever, unless you actually meet someone and are able to change your perception. And when I came to these camps, I started to realize that, after all, they’re only humans. They’re just like us. So, maybe their side of the story is just as justified as ours.”

Because the political situation and the relations between Arabs and Israelis in the region are so touchy, many in the group admitted that they felt hesitant to tell others from their community about their involvement with EcoPeace. “When I started at EcoPeace, I didn’t tell anyone.” Aliya recalls. “Only my mother, because she is open-minded. She said to me, “just don’t talk about politics. Don’t talk about the conflict unless they start to talk about it first, and then just answer.” While Mahra’s family was accepting of the fact that she wanted to join EcoPeace and meet people from Israel, she says, she’s not so sure about the Jordanian society as a whole. They’re older, she explains, and a lot more attached to the Palestinian land. Many of them don’t consider themselves Jordanians, even though they have a Jordanian passport and have lived in Jordan for decades.

“Let me tell you a story about what happened to me in university,” Aliya jumps in. “During my second year, I was very active at EcoPeace and started telling my friends about what

¹⁷² Focus group 1 at SHE Park, July 18, 2017.

I was doing, because I wanted them to get involved, too. But they were outraged by the fact that I was talking and meeting with Israelis. They refused to speak to me for over a year because they believed I was colluding with the Israelis. I was shocked. I couldn't believe that people don't understand how important it is to communicate with Israelis." I ask how she dealt with the situation, and whether she has since spoken to those girls. She recalls how she sought help from her community coordinator, who encouraged her to approach her friends with pictures and presentations of what Aliya was doing at EcoPeace to show that what she was doing was important for the environment and in the interest of the Jordanian people. "Do you think they understood your message?" I ask. "Some of them," she says, a look of sadness in her eyes. "But others are still saying that I'm dealing with the enemy. Even though Israel and Jordan have had a peace agreement for over twenty years."¹⁷³

Selena and Jeron, who have been participating in EcoPeace's youth activities in Israel for several years, have had a very different experience when they told their friends and family about EcoPeace. "My family, they think EcoPeace is cool," Selena says and beams at me, her hand fiddling around with one of her tightly knit turquoise dreadlocks. She tells the group about her parents' engagement in environmental protection and intercultural exchange. "But still," she adds, "when I asked them "hey, can I go to Jordan?" they were scared and said that it's really dangerous." At once, Ayan bursts out laughing, a look of incredulity on his face. "It's not dangerous!" he exclaims. "Why would your parents think that Jordan is a dangerous place?" Selena pauses to search for the right words. "Look," she says calmly, "a lot of Israeli families, even though they are considered leftist, they all have the same bad assumption about Arabs. That there's no civility or something. But I'm not ashamed of being part of EcoPeace. I think it's cool."

¹⁷³ Focus group 2 at SHE Park, July 18, 2017.

When asked whether they are still in contact with others from previous camps, all but Ayan and Nasira, who still touch base with other Jordanian camp members over Facebook, report that they have not been able to keep up with people from previous camps. “It’s not because they’re Israelis,” Mahra explains. “They could be Palestinian and it would be the same.” In fact, Mahra and several others at the camp (Jordanians, Israelis, and Palestinians alike) frequently stress that their “ethnic families” are related. For many of them, Jews and Arabs are cousins, long-time neighbors, and children of God. So, it’s not because of their nationality, Mahra argues. It’s just the length of the camp. “How do you make friends in three days? I mean, yes, you get to know them a bit, but you wouldn’t become real friends.” Selena and Jeron, who both attend the Eastern Mediterranean International School, agree. Throughout their time in high school, they have participated in several international camps, and have even had two Palestinian roommates.

If it was up to them, these camps should run a lot longer, a month maybe, or two, so that everyone could really get to know each other and feel safe enough to engage in political or emotional discussions. “When there’s only two or three days to interact, the language barrier is a big deal. And with a translator it’s not as easy to communicate with each other.” She looks over to Zara, a girl from Jordan, who had joined the group even though she does not speak English. Throughout the interview, Ayan and one of the Arab-Israeli girls are translating all of the questions and her answers from Arabic into English and vice versa. “I mean, when Zara speaks Arabic, I wish I could understand her. I feel like it’s not the same even though you guys are translating very well. But you can’t say it the same way as she says it.”¹⁷⁴

For Mahra and Aliya, who are both interns at the Jordanian EcoPeace office, interacting with Israelis at the camp is no problem. “For me it is easy, because almost all Israelis speak

English,” Mahra says. “And if there’s someone who only speaks Hebrew it’s actually interesting, because Hebrew and Arabic have the same roots, so sometimes I can catch a Hebrew word that is really similar to Arabic.” Even though there might be a language barrier for some people, in order to better understand the other side, “we have to express what’s inside us, what we feel, and why we feel that way.”¹⁷⁵

Expressing what’s inside them and why they feel that way is exactly what the participants think needs to be encouraged even more during these camps. “We need to have more political discussion,” Jeron says, and the others nod in agreement. “I mean, I think we can all agree really quickly on doing something to save the environment here. That’s easy. We’re all at this camp because we care about the environment. But what about using the environment as a force for peace?” Selena nods approvingly and adds: “It’s supposed to be about the environment, but it has to be connected to some sort of political issue, because otherwise I feel like we’re a little bit in a denial.”¹⁷⁶

Yet not everyone is so eager and ready to talk politics. Although Aliya generally agrees that it is important to be open to speak about topics other than the environment, she also says that it took her a long time before she was even comfortable enough to talk to Israelis in general. “I encouraged myself that we are here for peace and we’re just talking about the environment. I was so scared of anyone mentioning politics, and thank God, each time we didn’t talk about it. We didn’t discuss politics, just mentioned head [main] points like the diversion of water.”¹⁷⁷

Aliya and some others in the group noted that making initial contact with Israelis, Palestinians, or Jordanians is already a lot to ask from people that have never even had the

¹⁷⁴ Focus group 1 at SHE Park, July 18, 2017.

¹⁷⁵ Focus group 2 at SHE Park, July 18, 2017.

¹⁷⁶ Focus group 1 at SHE Park, July 18, 2017.

¹⁷⁷ Focus group 2 at SHE Park, July 18, 2017.

chance to meet someone from “the other side.” Learning about each other’s cultures and traditions is a stepping-stone towards inter-cultural understanding and building deeper relationships. It takes trust, personal strength, and maturity to talk about controversial and often emotional topics in a productive way. If these things are missing, the discourse could threaten to turn into hateful rhetoric, and could eventually end up damaging the relations among the group members.

After more than two hours of talking, we leave the main house to join the others in their celebrations. A few of the girls have started to use the camp square as a dance floor, while a mixed group of teens is playing a card game at one of the tables. In one corner, a handful of boys and girls sit around one of the Arab-Israeli girls, who draws beautiful henna motifs on her camp-mates’ hands, necks, and feet. It is a typical teenage party, loud and long, and all signs of hesitation or ethnic separation have long gone. The small groups of Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians, that had arrived almost two days earlier, have transformed into small Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian groups freely dancing, laughing, and chatting together.

Wednesday, July 19, 2017

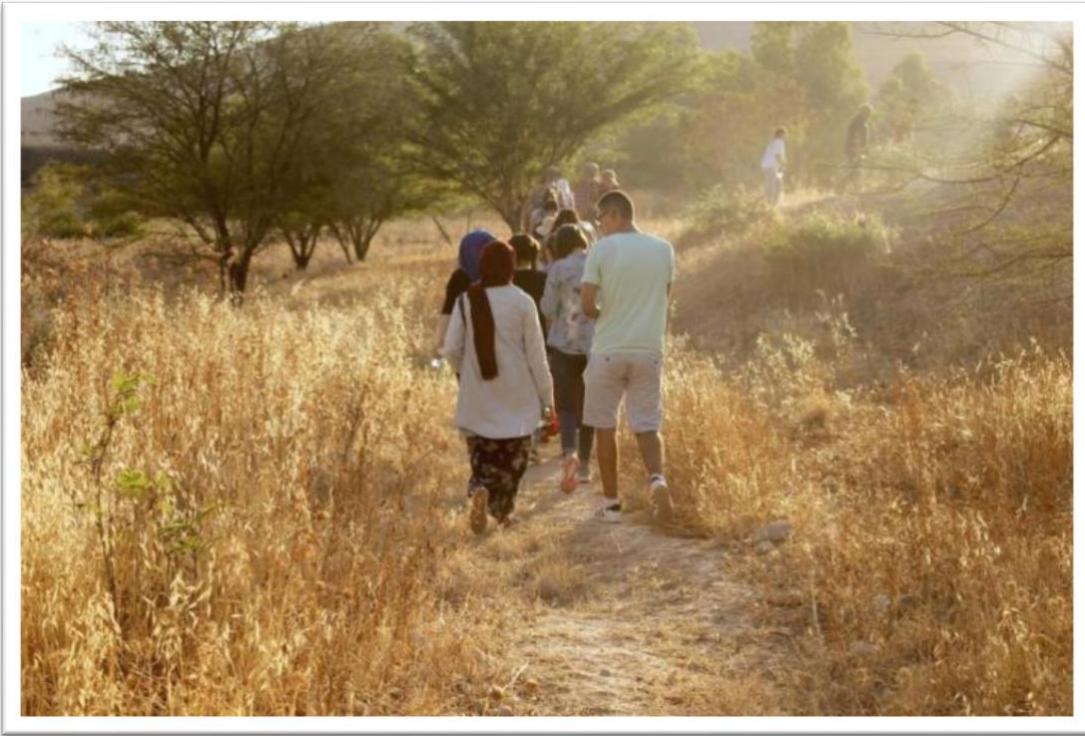
The morning is slow on the last day at SHE Park. Clearly, last night’s celebrations have taken their toll on some of the teens, who languorously shuffle their feet toward the camp square. Nonetheless, even on the last day of the camp, the teens are in for a productive morning. At 9:00 am, everyone is back in their expert groups, working to implement what they had learned the previous two days, and drawing flow charts and pictures on big pieces of paper to present to their fellow camp members. Two hours later, all twenty-three alumni, the interns, and coordinators meet in the main house for a feedback and evaluation round. Everyone looks at the poster full of

little post-it notes with scribbled expectations, hopes, and wishes for the camp that were stuck on there by each of the group members two days earlier. Many of the teens laud the coordinators' efforts to organize fun activities and teach them about the regional environmental problems. They are grateful for having had the opportunity to meet other teens across the region who are working with EcoPeace as Youth Water Trustees.

Afterwards, everybody gathers in the big square outside to receive their participation certificate, now wearing green and blue EcoPeace t-shirts. To everyone's surprise, Munqeth Mehyar, EcoPeace's Jordanian director, has arrived at SHE Park. Standing in front of the group, the Jordanian flag waving in the light breeze behind him, he expresses his gratitude and admiration for their environmental engagement with EcoPeace and their will to be part of a group of Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians, who seek peace and understanding in the region. With their certificates in their hands and a big group picture taken, everyone is eagerly approaching the long tables to grab a last Jordanian-style lunch at SHE Park. Loud chatter and laughter fills the square, as everyone talks about the last two days, writes down names and phone numbers for Facebook, and promises to meet up again some time, maybe at the next EcoPeace Alumni camp.

Once the small buses are stuffed to the roof with backpacks and suitcases, each group is ready to make its way back home. Most of the Jordanians will have only a short drive back to Amman, Jordan's capital. The Palestinians, on the other hand, face the prospect of waiting several hours at Allenby Bridge to cross back into the West Bank. And our bus, cramped with the ten Israeli alumni, Ahmad, Adam, Amy, and I will head back to the Sheikh Hussein Bridge, this time to drive through the arch that says ברוכים הבאים לישראל, Welcome to Israel. We ride through the Jordan Valley and its dry, desert-like hills that are waiting for the summer to end,

and for the first raindrops of the winter season to fall on their thirsty ground. This place needs water, I think. And it needs peace. Really, it needs EcoPeace.



Top: The teens find some time for talk as they walk together around SHE Park.
Bottom: Everybody is holding up their certificates of completion at the end of the camp.

Source: Personal images.

5.5 Roadblocks to Cooperation

5.5.1 *Anti-normalization, Anti-Cooperation*

No, I don't want to normalize with you
I don't want to hug, have coffee, talk it out, break bread, sit around the campfire, eat s'mores and
gush about how we're all the same
I don't want to share the stage, co-write a poem, submit to your anthology
Talk about how art, instead of justice, can forge a better path
I don't want to indulge your amnesia about a glorious past
Have a therapy session, on two sides with equal grievances
The only thing barren is your moral capacity
Blooming a settler-colonial state with an appropriative culture
I will not fight for your privilege, nor will I seek to normalize it
Your dialogue group, it's a breeding ground for injustice.¹⁷⁸

It was a historic moment in the course of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That brief, yet firm handshake between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat on the south lawn of the White House. Those Israelis and Palestinians who were old enough to grasp the meaning of what was happening on that day in 1993 remember the buoyant atmosphere that swept across the region and the waves of optimism for an end to the decades-long conflict. There would be peace and security for Israel, and a hopeful Palestinian people would realize a sovereign state finally within five years. What they probably also remember is the mounting number of terror attacks by Palestinian and Israeli extremists that fundamentally opposed the parameters of the Oslo deal, culminating in the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Over the next ten years, suicide bombings on buses, at Israeli checkpoints, or in popular public places claimed hundreds of lives on both sides.

Twenty-five years later, many of those that were once full of hope and excitement have returned to a life of uncertainty in the midst of a conflict that seems to be unending. Their faces turn angry, filled with scoff and disdain at the mention of the promises that had been made to

¹⁷⁸ Excerpt taken from Remi Kanazi, *Normalize this* (video accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaGNfKabwfQ>).

them by the international community and their leaders. Rabin and Arafat later received a Nobel Peace Prize for their diplomatic efforts. A prize for peace that was never made. What came instead? A 700km long wall, three Gaza wars, and a life that seems farther from peace than it had been a quarter of a century ago.

The signing of the Oslo accords prompted a wave of people-to-people activities across the Israeli and Palestinian societies, supported by a broad spectrum of eager third-party donors including the United States, the European Union, and the World Bank. Some were creative activities, such as theatre or comedy or groups, doing what Remi Kanazi mockingly described as “sharing the stage, co-writing poems, and talking about art.” Such activities aimed to give Israelis and Palestinians time and space to share their stories beyond the rigidity of political discourse and to create an affective bond between members of both societies, with which to foster a culture of peaceful coexistence, reconciliation, and forward thinking instead of resentment. Other cooperative initiatives were cognitively oriented, bringing together Israeli and Palestinian professionals to engage in dialogue either specifically about, or tangential to, the peace discourse. EcoPeace is one of the organizations born during that time. The group was among those that saw the existence of shared environmental issues as an opportunity to procure problem-oriented cooperation in combination with peacebuilding activities.

Some of these organizations are still around and active today. Others have succumbed to the hardships of working in a conflict-affected place, suffering from the geographical divisions that have increasingly divided the land since the 2000s and the psychological barriers that have grown out of anti-cooperation movements from governments and fellow citizens, or diminished funding. As the five-year mark for the end of the Interim Agreement came and went, the initially high Palestinian expectations for the establishment of a state and the peaceful resolution of the

conflict rapidly diminished into renewed mistrust and hostility towards Israel, culminating in the second intifada and a wave of suicide bombings in Israel. Voices calling for the active boycott of joint activities with Israelis grew significantly louder in the aftermath of Israel's Operation "Defensive Shield" in 2002.

The year 2005 then saw the founding of the Palestinian-led movement Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign to boycott Israel worldwide. Inspired by the South-African anti-apartheid movement, BDS waged an active campaign against the support of, and cooperation with, Israel in various forms (economic, cultural, academic, etc.).¹⁷⁹ Although the PA released an official statement denouncing BDS's call for a widespread boycott of Israel (a sensible move considering there are 120,000 Palestinians who work in Israeli jobs and many Palestinian businesses that rely on selling Israeli products¹⁸⁰) President Mahmoud Abbas did endorse the boycott of any goods stemming from Israeli settlements in the West Bank.¹⁸¹

Yet, for the 170 Palestinian civil society organizations that support the movement, simply boycotting Israeli products is nowhere near enough. At its first national conference in 2007, the group laid the groundwork for what has become known as the anti-normalization movement. According to its credo, to "normalize" is to participate in "any project or initiative or activity, local or international, specifically designed for gathering (either directly or indirectly) Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis, whether individuals or institutions; that does not explicitly aim to expose and resist the occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression

¹⁷⁹ Charles Tripp, *The Power and the People: Paths of Resistance in the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, February 2013), 125.

¹⁸⁰ Miriam Berger, "Shopping with the enemy: why West Bank Palestinians can't avoid Israeli goods," *Newsweek*, August 1, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/why-hard-west-bank-palestinians-boycott-israeli-goods-539953>; Andreas Hackl, "Occupied labour: The treadmill of Palestinian work in Israel," *IRIN News*, August 02, 2017, <https://www.irinnews.org/investigations/2017/08/02/occupied-labour-treadmill-palestinian-work-israel>.

¹⁸¹ Yoel Goldman, "Abbas: Don't boycott Israel," *Times of Israel*, December 13, 2013, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/abbas-we-do-not-support-the-boycott-of-israel/>.

against the Palestinian people.”¹⁸² Although proponents of BDS have repeatedly claimed that this definition excludes joint groups whose existence is dedicated towards actively working against Israel’s “colonial oppression,”¹⁸³ there are few Israeli-Palestinian cooperative groups that the movement considers acceptable to the Palestinian cause. Anti-cooperation camps within Palestinian society have often targeted even organizations whose Israeli counterparts have advocated on behalf of the Palestinian people.

EcoPeace is not immune to these dynamics. EcoPeace has always pursued its projects and activities within a framework of a future sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel. Indeed, its commitment to the two-state solution and to changing the status quo has often made the organization a thorn in the side of the Israeli government and many right-wing academics. The director of the EcoPeace office in Tel Aviv, Gidon Bromberg, has often been criticized for the position that he and his organization hold. A major setback for EcoPeace and for Bromberg personally occurred when the global environmental organization Friends of the Earth, under whose umbrella EcoPeace had temporarily belonged, turned against EcoPeace. According to Bromberg, the BDS movement within Friends of the Earth had become so powerful that the organization wanted EcoPeace to leave and even regarded them as an enemy. For Bromberg, and many of those that had been working at EcoPeace for a long time and who remember the two organizations being tremendously supportive of each other, this experience was extremely painful and frustrating.¹⁸⁴

Yet it is not just the Israeli office that has had to grapple with fainting support and accusations from anti-cooperation lobbies. Many on the Palestinian and Jordanian side, who have

¹⁸² Mohammed Dajani, “Why Palestinians Should Support ‘Normalization’ with Israel,” *Fikra Forum* (The Washington Institute, September 13, 2016), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/why-palestinians-should-support-normalization-with-israel>.

¹⁸³ Haidar Eid, “BDS and Normalization: A Palestinian perspective,” *Mondoweiss*, July 20, 2016, <http://mondoweiss.net/2016/07/normalization-palestinian-perspective/>.

sought to convey EcoPeace's message to their fellow academics and politicians, have had their voices stifled before they could even begin talking about the merits of cross-border cooperation. A few years ago, at a conference on the Jordan River in Amman, several representatives of EcoPeace were reprimanded for calling Israel a 'good neighbor' in the title of one of the organization's most successful cross-border initiatives¹⁸⁵.

While many Israelis EcoPeace staff are used to verbal face-offs with anti-cooperation lobbies of each side, some of their Palestinian and Jordanian colleagues have had to deal with greater resistance. Like many on the Palestinian and Jordanian side, Kayan, a community coordinator for the Bethlehem region, counts the anti-normalization lobbies as one of the biggest challenges of her work. As someone who is committed to EcoPeace's efforts to educate young people from all three societies about their shared environmental responsibility, she is frustrated by the many obstacles that have been put in her way by those that oppose any form of cooperation with Israel. Because the Palestinian Ministry of Education has put a halt to most cooperative initiatives involving Israelis, Kayan has great difficulties taking Palestinian students to EcoPeace's cross-border camps in Jordan. Similarly, because of these tight regulations by the Palestinian Ministry of Education, when EcoPeace organized a class exchange between Israeli and Palestinian students in the West Bank, the only way that Israeli students were allowed to come was because all of them were Palestinian Israelis and/or Muslims. Their teacher, a Jewish Israeli, was not allowed to participate in the day's meeting.

Many of the people that Kayan talks to about her work see her as a normalizer, a traitor, who collaborates with the enemy to manifest the status quo. Even though she assures them that

¹⁸⁴ Personal interview with Gidon Bromberg, July 19, 2017.

¹⁸⁵ Mohammad Ben Hussein, "Activists slam conference for including Israelis," *Lebanese Campaign for The Boycott of Zionism*, n.d., <https://boycottzionism.wordpress.com/2010/05/04/activists-slam-conference-for-including-israelis/>.

EcoPeace advocates on behalf of the Palestinians to achieve equal water rights and that the organization does not cooperate or even engage with Israeli settlers in the West Bank (see section 5.5.2), many of the parents are hesitant to let their children partake in EcoPeace's (cross-border) activities. As a former staff member on the Palestinian side, Muhammad knows what it's like to listen to these insults and accusations of other Palestinians. He says that although he still believes in the virtue of his work, the pain of being called a traitor to his nation cast a dark shadow over his years at EcoPeace. Despite that, he understands the frustration and anger of his fellow Palestinians. He too often felt angry and frustrated while on his job, saying "it's hard when you commit everything to preserving our shared waters and our environment, but at the same time you see houses being demolished, you see soldiers and military everywhere, and you cannot move around freely in your own land."¹⁸⁶

Noor, who used to coordinate the Palestinian communities in the Good Water Neighbors project, understands the frustration of Kayan and Muhammad all too well. She says it is the political situation and the long history of the conflict that are making people sceptical of cooperating with "the enemy". Their apprehension stems from the ostensive futility of past agreements and cooperative efforts between Israelis and Palestinians. The Joint Water Committee, as just one example, was built on the premise of mutual cooperation with Israelis, yet it has done little to improve the situation of the Palestinians. More than twenty years after the Oslo accords, many Palestinians have lost faith in anything that is promised to them on a piece of paper. They want to see tangible results that will strengthen the capacity of the Palestinian people and ease the lives of those living under the occupation.

One of the EcoPeace projects aimed to tackle the wastewater problem of the Zomer-Alexander Stream that flows through the Palestinian municipalities of Nablus and Tulkarem,

¹⁸⁶ Personal interview with Palestinian EcoPeace beneficiary, July 12, 2017.

before it crosses the Green Line into the Emek Hefer Regional Council. Every October during the olive harvest, the untreated waste from the olive mill is diverted directly into the river, polluting the stream and the groundwater. The wastewater that is coming from the olive mill is so contaminated that even an intensive wastewater treatment plant on the Israeli side cannot effectively treat it. EcoPeace made an effort to find alternative solutions to the problem. To prevent the effluent from reaching the river in the first place, the Israeli regional council offered to pay and install several large containers into which the Palestinian farmers could channel their wastewater. The Israelis would then come and pump out the water to transport it to Israel for treatment.

The proposal seemed to be a win-win solution: the Palestinians would be able to discharge their waste without facing additional costs, while the Israelis would no longer suffer from the pollution of the Alexander stream. And yet, despite EcoPeace's efforts and assurances from community coordinators on both sides, a solution is still up in the air. The problem is not a technical one. Rather, it is a symptom of a decades-long conflict as one generation after the other have constantly added to thick layers of distrust and contempt. The Palestinian farmers have raised suspicions about Israel's motives, fearing that their neighbors might actually use the olive oil waste for their own profit (by selling the treated wastewater to Israeli farmers for irrigation purposes). It is a suspicion deeply embedded within the mindset of anti-normalization, feeding on the fear of helping the enemy and being accused of treason.

Such problems cannot be eradicated simply by developing a more powerful wastewater treatment plant. Nor can those fears be dispelled by vehemently refusing to engage in contact with each other. They have to be faced on a people-to-people basis, enabling interpersonal dialogue and building trust among people of both sides. Trust-building processes take a long

time. Any attempt to build a healthy relationship with someone who has traditionally been perceived as the enemy must constantly compete against any pre-existing or newly arising sources of fear, anger, and mistrust.

5.5.2 Israeli Settlements

On my first weekend in Israel, I was invited to participate in an off-road tour through the Judean Desert. Our sturdy, dust-covered Jeep had a big Israeli flag mounted at the back, which fluttered wildly in the wind as we headed east on Israel's highways towards the Dead Sea, before we continued off road. For eight hours, we drove through the Judean Desert steppe, climbed its steep gravel dunes, and maneuvered through daunting ravines. The vastness of this place made me feel like we were the only ones far and wide. As we ventured deeper into its labyrinth, however, some of the desert's magic clashed with reality. Swaths of garbage covered the ground, disintegrating plastic bags, remnants of containers and tires, cans, and dozens of other unidentifiable bits and pieces. The presence of so much waste baffled me as we were in a place that was virtually uninhabited save for a handful of small Bedouin communities.

The full magnitude of pollution became even more obvious when we arrived at Mar Saba, an ancient Christian Orthodox Monastery located in the biblical Kidron Valley about halfway between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. Clinging to one side of the rough stone cliff, Mar Saba's intricate stone structure offers those who stand on the other side of the valley a truly impressive vista. That is, until visitors look down to the bottom of the valley where they see a wadi¹⁸⁷ covered in a colourful assortment of smelly garbage. My companions told me this was the work of the Bedouins, who set up their camps and then leave behind their waste as they move

¹⁸⁷ A riverbed that is dry most of the year but may flood during rainy winter months.

on through the desert. Actually, as I later learned, it is the work of twelve million cubic meters of untreated wastewater that flow from Jerusalem into the Kidron Valley each year.¹⁸⁸

The sun had almost vanished behind the sandy hills when a high, metal fence interrupted the openness of the desert abruptly. To our right, tan-coloured houses with red roofs and solar panels appeared. On our left were big billboards on which advertisements were written in Arabic. Behind them I saw the characteristic flat-roofed buildings of a Palestinian village. Instead of turning left towards a bright red sign that read “This Roads Leads To Palestinian Village. The Entrance For Israeli Citizens Is Dangerous,” we turned right and past a sign for “Ma’ale Adumim”. An Israeli guard greeted us at a small gate draped in Israeli flags. He cast a quick look at our license plate and into the window of our car, and then waved us through the gate.

We drove into a modern-looking town, along smooth roads and traffic circles planted with colourful flowers. Past schools, restaurants, a library, and several doctors’ offices. Suddenly it hit me. We were in an Israeli settlement, a place that I, my government, and most other nations in the world consider an illegal infringement on Palestinian land rights. What is more, I had crossed the Green Line and had driven through the West Bank all day long, and not once had I been asked to show any form of ID. Our cars were able to pass freely through towns and military checkpoints because their yellow license plates had proven sufficient as identification. I had driven through the West Bank, past Bedouin communities, and along Palestinian pedestrians lining up before checkpoints in a car that was sporting a giant Israeli flag on its rear end.

The more I thought about this, the more I felt uncomfortable. I wanted to leave, but I could not say anything to my companions, to whom being in this town seemed as normal as being back in Tel Aviv. I asked myself, why did it take me all day to understand where we were

¹⁸⁸ Ari Rabinovitch, “Reign of sewage in biblical valley may be coming to an end,” *Reuters*, August 7, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-environment/reign-of-sewage-in-biblical-valley-may-be-coming-to-an-end->

and what we were doing? Was I not observant enough? Had my excitement about this place clouded my judgement? I eventually realized that I had not noticed because there had simply not been much to notice in the first place. On the Israeli-only highway, all the cars bore Israeli license plates, the only checkpoint we encountered looked no different from a toll point on a highway, and no one asked for my ID.

In fact, the first and only settlement that I had ever seen looked nothing like the portable buildings and trailers that one often sees in the media. Since its beginnings in 1975, Ma'ale Adumim has grown to become the fourth largest settlement in the West Bank, providing a home for more than 35,000 Israelis. With its smooth roads, shopping malls and bus stations, Ma'ale Adumim looked like any other Israeli city. The whole day it had been easy and natural to travel through the West Bank, not much different than traveling within Israel, really. And over the next three months, as I traveled through the West Bank using Arab buses instead of Israeli cars and waiting in long line-ups to checkpoints rather than being waved through with a smile, I would often think back to this day and understand what a difference the color of a license plate can make in this part of the world. My casual Saturday excursion had immersed me in the intersecting currents of geography, politics, and environmental degradation.

Over 400,000 Israeli settlers (excluding East Jerusalem) now live in close to two hundred settlements across the West Bank. Many of them enjoy exclusive Israeli-only infrastructure, cheap Palestinian labour, and military protection.¹⁸⁹ The continuing development of Israeli settlements across the West Bank remains one of the most hotly debated aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a key driver of the BDS movement. Not only is the establishment of

idUSKBN1AN0S1.

¹⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Occupation, Inc. How Settlement Businesses Contribute to Israel's Violations of Palestinian Rights" (report, 2016), https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/israel0116_web.pdf; B'Tselem, "Route 443 – The West Bank road for Israelis only" (report, 01 January, 2011), https://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/road_443; Amos Harel,

settlements viewed as an illegal appropriation of Palestinian land by the international community, but so is the construction of hundreds of kilometers of Israeli-only highways, checkpoints, military outposts, and the designation land for Jewish agricultural or industrial purposes. Mishor Adumim, for instance, is an industrial park of roughly 1,667 square kilometers, located on the outskirts of Ma'ale Adumim and home to over 300 factories and businesses.¹⁹⁰

Viewed from an economic and ecological point of view, the spreading presence of Israelis in the West Bank bears far-reaching consequences for the Palestinians. The more territory becomes appropriated for Israeli purposes, the less arable land, grazing areas, and water resources are available to the Palestinians. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) identified 56 springs that are now either under the full control of Israeli settlers with no access provided to their Palestinian users, fenced off or isolated in closed military zones, or to which access has been prevented by the means of intimidation or acts of violence by settlers vis-à-vis the Palestinians.¹⁹¹

In addition to issues of water access and supply, Palestinians face problems of illegal waste-dumping and untreated sewage coming from settlements across the West Bank. Only 81 out of 121 Israeli settlements are connected to waste treatment facilities, of which the majority are ill-equipped to handle the amount of sewage that is produced in the settlements.^{192,193}

“Settlements Do Not Serve Israel’s Security Needs, Say Former Generals,” *Haaretz*, June 5, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israeli-ex-generals-settlements-do-not-serve-security-needs-1.5480013>.

¹⁹⁰ “Mishor Adumim Industrial Park,” Ministry of Economy and Industry, n.d., <http://economy.gov.il/English/Industry/DevelopmentZoneIndustryPromotion/ZoneIndustryInfo/Pages/MishorAdumim.aspx>.

¹⁹¹ See Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, “How Dispossession Happens” (Special Focus, March 2012).

¹⁹² The majority of the 81 settlements are connected to waste water facilities which are dysfunctional, defective and/or do not meet the standards required in Israel. See B’Tselem, “Foul Play: Neglect of Wastewater Treatment in the West Bank” (report, June 2009), https://www.btselem.org/download/200906_foul_play_eng.pdf.

¹⁹³ Information taken from a joint study conducted by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority Environment Unit, the Water and Streams Department in the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the environmental-protection staff officer in the Civil Administration. See B’Tselem, “Foul Play,” 7.

Consequently, just shy of twenty million cubic meters of wastewater flow from Israeli settlements into the West Bank,¹⁹⁴ of which one-third is entirely or inadequately treated.

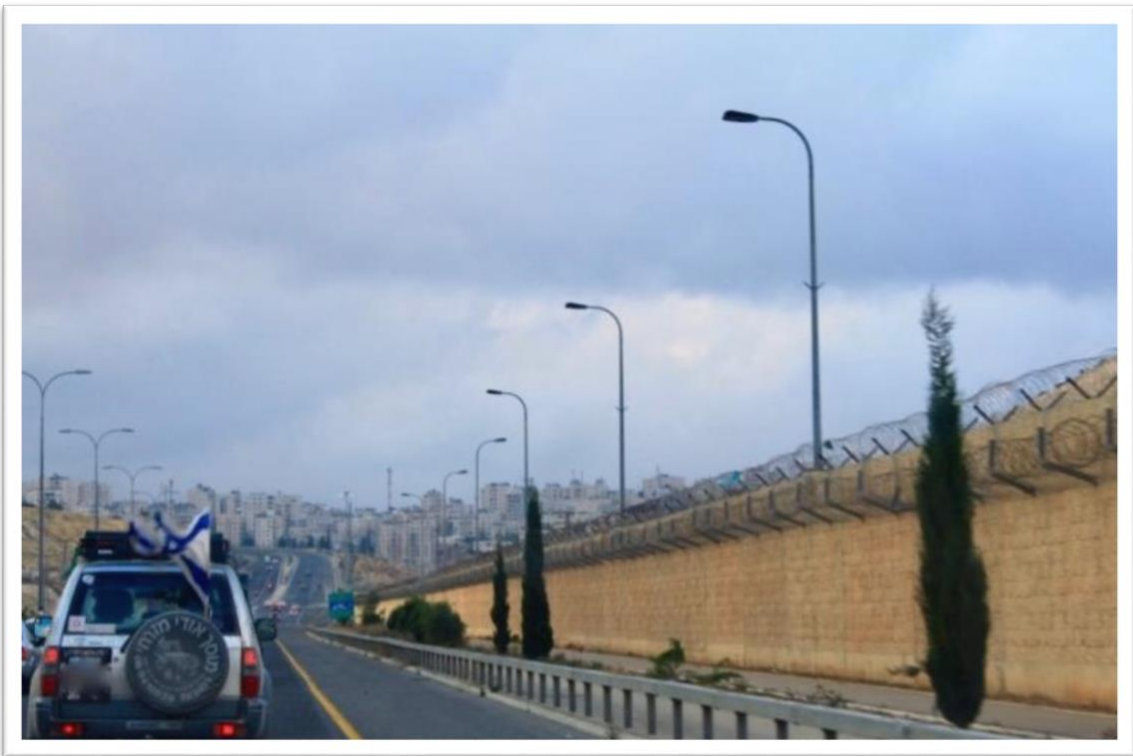
Although Kayan's family enjoy better water supply in Wadi Fukin because the same pipes that run through their village also go to Beitar Illit (see section 5.1.1), since 2005, the village frequently has struggled with untreated wastewater coming from the nearby settlement, polluting the wadi and surrounding agricultural fields of Palestinian farmers.¹⁹⁵ Even though Beitar Illit's sewage is now being pumped into a wastewater treatment plant, Kayan regularly hears reports from Palestinian farmers about raw sewage still spilling into the Valley's fields, making their land unusable for the season. Before we sat down for an interview, Kayan had taken pictures and videos documenting the large quantities of sewage to pressure the municipality to install better mechanisms for treating Beitar Illit's sewage and wastewater.

In addition to liquid waste, almost 80 percent of the solid waste that is generated in settlements and industrial parks within the West Bank is taken to unofficial dumping sites across the West Bank. Due to the lower environmental standards and laxer enforcement under the Civil Administration the West Bank has become the destination for large amounts of e-waste that is hauled from Israel to West Bank settlements and then disposed of at non-sanitary landfills.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem found at least fifteen Israeli waste treatment facilities within the West Bank, of which six handle hazardous waste that would normally require increased supervision due to the danger it poses. The organization further found

¹⁹⁴ Jaclynn Ashly, "Drowning in the waste of Israeli settlers," *Al Jazeera*, September 18, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/09/drowning-waste-israeli-settlers-170916120027885.html>.

¹⁹⁵ "Tsur Hadassah," EcoPeace Middle East, March 2010, [http://ecopeaceme.org/uploads/Brochure_TH_English\(1\).pdf](http://ecopeaceme.org/uploads/Brochure_TH_English(1).pdf).

¹⁹⁶ Jad Isaac and Jane Hilal, "Palestinian Landscape and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 68, no. 4 (August 2011): 426; Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ) in cooperation with the Sunflower Association for Human and Environmental Protection, "The impacts of electronic waste disposal on the environment and public health in the occupied Palestinian territory: a case study from Idhna," (Hebron Government, 2012), 4-5.



Top: Garbage covering the ground of the Judean Desert.
Bottom: We are driving through the West Bank on a divided highway.

Source: Personal images.

that most of the waste that is being treated in these facilities is produced in Israel and then transported over the Green Line into the West Bank, where regulatory standards are less rigorous than within Israel proper.¹⁹⁷

EcoPeace and Israeli settlements

How does EcoPeace as a joint non-government organization representing the interests of Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians approach the sensitive issue of Jewish settlements in the West Bank? In a proposal developed by Brooks and Trottier for the joint management of shared water resources between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, EcoPeace issued the following statement with regard to the status of Israeli settlements:

Because the FoEME [Friends of the Earth Middle East, now EcoPeace Middle East] Proposal is intended to precede, not follow, a Final Status Agreement, Israeli settlements create a special problem with respect to standing. There is no obvious way of dealing with them: on the one hand, they exist and in some cases include many people; on the other, they are not recognized as legal under most interpretations of international law. Resolution of this issue will have to wait for a Final Status Agreement on borders.¹⁹⁸

In accordance with this statement, EcoPeace decided to exclude all Israeli settlements, including their facilities (i.e. schools, organizations, etc.) and residents (i.e. elders, non-Jews, children, etc.) from all of its activities. Although all three heads of the organization made this policy decision, the categorical exclusion of more than 400,000 Israelis based on their residence in the West Bank is not supported unequivocally by all of its members. “I understand that in order to have a Palestinian partner we cannot work with the settlements,” one staff member from the Israeli office said.

¹⁹⁷ See B’Tselem, “Made in Israel.”

¹⁹⁸ Brooks and Trottier, “An Agreement,” 89.

Still, he added, the term “settler” is often agglomerated to include many distinct groups of Israelis that have moved across the Green Line for a variety of reasons. For him and another EcoPeace staff member, the term settler refers to Israelis that move to the West Bank out of ideological conviction. Those that chose to relocate there for any other reasons (for example because of the significantly lower living costs as opposed to those in Israel proper, or as part of government-subsidized settlement programs), are what they call “the usual settlers”.¹⁹⁹ “Most settlers are not there [out of] ideology, many are left-wing. But it’s been fifty years since the occupation started and a lot of settlers were already born there. If you tell them to go live in another place, they will do it.”²⁰⁰ In fact, a 2013 study found that about one in three settlers residing outside of a settlement bloc in the West Bank would consider relocating into Israeli territory if awarded financial compensation by the government.²⁰¹ So, in the eyes of these staff members, because some Israelis do not fall into the category of the ‘normal settler’ and would be willing to relocate under certain conditions, EcoPeace could engage in environmental activities with them without dismissing its commitment to the two-state solution.

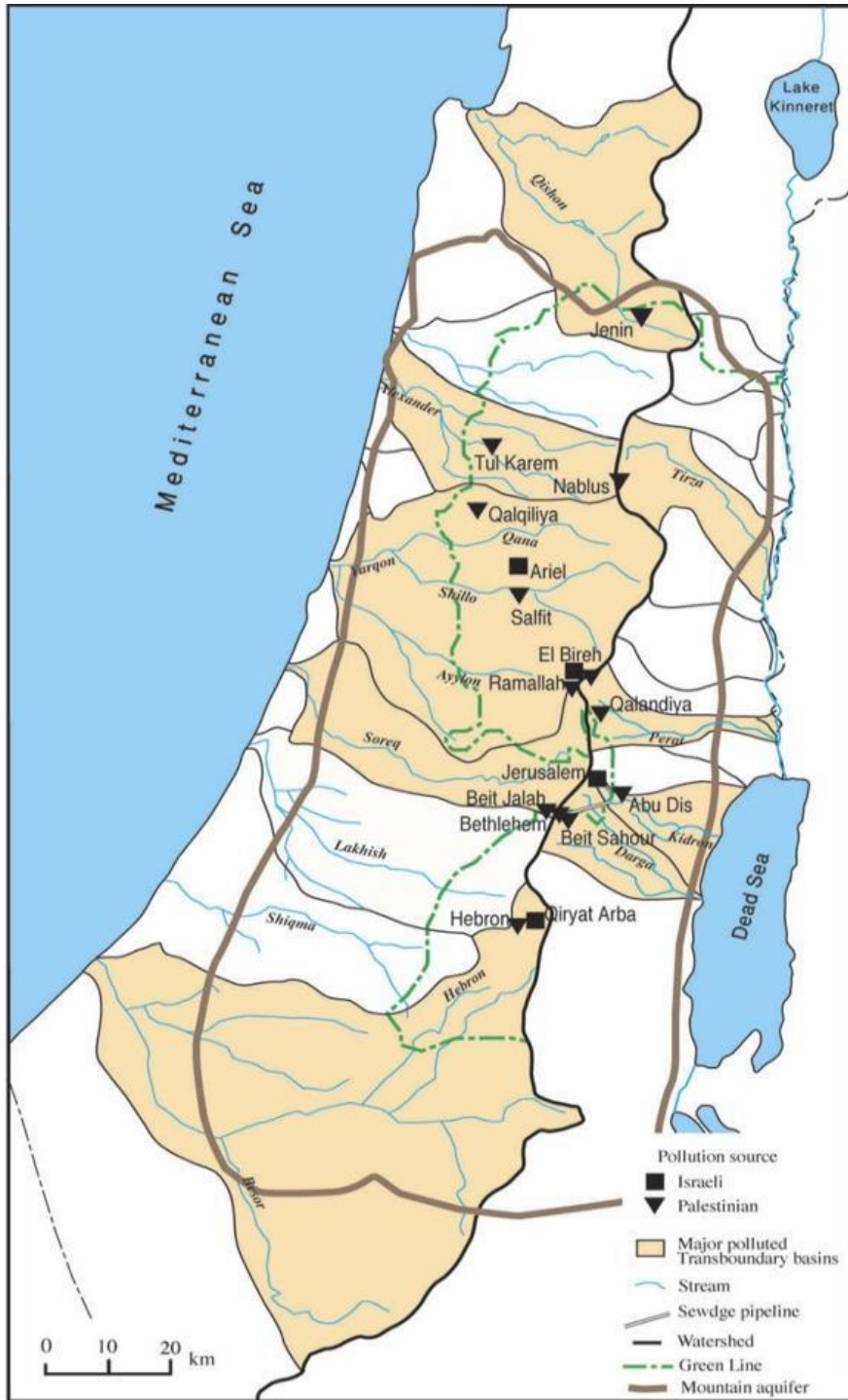
Another group that is not part of the “usual” settlers are members of Israeli kibbutzim (a collective community founded on the principles of practical socialism). Approximately every fourth Israeli settler in the West Bank lives in a kibbutz, some of which were founded prior to the Six-Day War. “Many of the settlements around the Dead Sea are kibbutzim,” he explained. “And they are left-wing, they are not ideology settlers. Most settlers, they are like me. They are part of us.” Because they have traditionally been based around agriculture, many of these kibbutzim have a vested interest in the development of sustainable agricultural and industrial practices.

¹⁹⁹ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 6, 2017.

²⁰⁰ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 20, 2017.

²⁰¹ Macro Center for Political Economics and Blue White Future, “30% of West Bank settlers Would Evacuate Voluntarily Before an Agreement in Exchange for Compensation New Survey Finds” (Conference Call Briefing, March 2013), <http://bluewhitefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/PressRelease-voluntary-evacuation-final.pdf>.

FIGURE 7: SOURCES OF POLLUTION IN THE WEST BANK



Source: Itay Fischhendler, David Katz, and Eran Feitelson, "Identifying synergies and trade-offs in the sustainability-security nexus: the case of the Israeli-Palestinian wastewater treatment regime," *Hydrological Sciences Journal Special Section: Hydrology and Peace in the Middle East* (2016), 4. Used with permission.

In fact, there has been an overall trend of growing awareness about the unsustainable environmental practices in the West Bank among Israeli settlers, which could become a starting point for cooperation based on shared interests for the protection of the region's environment and heritage.²⁰²

EcoPeace's decision to exclude Israeli settlers from EcoPeace activities is most consequential for its community coordinators and teachers at Israeli schools. Children living in Israeli settlements are not allowed to participate in any of EcoPeace's cross-border events or camps. This poses a challenge for the organization's CCs. Admitting EcoPeace excludes students based on their residence in an Israeli settlement would raise a lot of eyebrows among the school's staff and parents and could possibly jeopardize the organization's ability to teach at Israeli schools. Nadav, one of the Israeli CCs for the Alexander-Zomer basin and teacher for EcoPeace at an Israeli school explains:

I had a very nice girl that I'm teaching. She studies in my school, but her parents live in Ariel, which is a settlement. And she wanted to come to a camp and I didn't know what to do because I cannot tell her the truth. I cannot tell her "you are not invited because you live in Ariel." That is not acceptable, because if the school hears about it, they will no longer let me teach there. It is a very, very big problem.²⁰³

This rule of exclusion creates an uncomfortable situation when CCs have to face their students, many of whom are not aware of the controversy around their status as settlers in the West Bank. As a teacher for environmental education at Sapir College, Shlomit remembers the first time that she told her students about taking them on a trip to Jordan for a cross-border youth camp with EcoPeace. Wanting to be honest with them, she admitted that she couldn't take any

²⁰² An example of an Israeli settler who is also an environmentalist is Rabbi Judelman from the Israeli settlement of Tekoa. Judelman is co-founder of the Israeli-Palestinian organization Roots, which works with Israelis and Palestinians on a movement focusing on intergroup understanding, non-violence, and transformation. In the past, Judelman has been open about his skepticism towards the two-state solution and has proposed, in lieu of two sovereign Israeli and Palestinian states, an Israeli-Palestinian federation, in which Israelis can live freely in the West Bank and Palestinians in what is now Israel proper.

²⁰³ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 20, 2017.

students that are coming from settlements. “And that was a mistake, a real mistake, because they didn’t understand, they didn’t even know what they are considered to be settlers.”

A similar incident occurred in another class, this time with one of Shlomit’s close friend’s son. The family lives in a nearby settlement, just a few miles away from the wall that is separating the West Bank from Israel. Because the wall cuts deep into Palestinian territory in this section, the settlement in which the family lives actually lies west of the wall, effectively including it into Israeli territory. When asked what her friend thinks about her son not being able to join the other students in their cross-border events Shlomit says she thinks they are offended. “They came to this settlement to look for somewhere cheap to live. The wall actually includes them, so they consider themselves to be part of Israel.”

For this reason, many residents of Israeli West Bank communities do not consider themselves typical settlers, in spite of the fact that their communities are located in the West Bank²⁰⁴. Today, fifty years after the beginning of the occupation, many settlements are now homes to a whole new generation of young Israelis, whose parents once made the decision (for whatever reason) to move across the Green Line. Within their bubble of “Israelis-only roads”, military surveillance, and Palestinian roadblocks, many of them do not understand the significance of their presence on a land on which the Palestinians hope to build a sovereign Palestinian state. But maybe, some EcoPeace members argue, that creates even more reason to include them.

I think it’s important to convince people for our cause, and especially settlers, because they don’t know our work and if they want to know about it we can try and change his mind. This is, I think, more important than bringing people that already agree with us. So, this is one of EcoPeace’s challenges, but I have to accept it.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ See Mira Sucharov, “The truth about Israel’s settlers: They’re not all that committed,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 25, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/the-truth-about-israels-settlers-theyre-not-all-that-committed/article23768796/>.

For Nadav and some of his fellow members at EcoPeace the question of Israeli settlements creates a balancing act between wanting to support the Palestinians in their aspirations for a sovereign state and defiance against illegal Israeli settlements and aiming for an inclusive approach targeting the broadest possible audience of Israel's society, especially its children. Yet EcoPeace's Palestinian and several Israeli staff members expressed that the rationale for moving to the West Bank is secondary to the fact that Israeli settlers are still illegally expropriating Palestinian land all the while benefiting from lower living costs, full participation in Israel's civic and political life, and military protection. Whether they are economic, religious, or ecologically-driven settlers, with their decision to move across the West Bank these Israelis circumscribe Palestinian self-determination and diminish the chances for a two-state solution.

What does this mean for EcoPeace? Right now, launching negotiations or activities with members of Israeli settlements – adults and youth – would be considered by many in and outside of EcoPeace's as an indirect way of accepting and recognizing the legality of Israel's expansion policy, and would likely fan the flames of anti-normalization and anti-cooperation lobbyists (see 5.5.1). Still, while the settlements continue to grow so does their waste. For EcoPeace this creates a bind between not wanting to normalize the settlements but, at the same time, not being able to effectively address certain environmental problems that they create.

This study's findings on Israeli-Palestinian environmental cooperation are based on personal observations of the Israeli-Palestinian (water) conflict and EcoPeace's work, as well as interviews with staff members and beneficiaries of the organization. Research showed that the division of the West Bank into three areas causes geographical and legal fragmentation that impedes any efforts to build coherent and sustainable water infrastructure. The political conflict

²⁰⁵ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 20, 2017.

over the inclusion of Israeli settlements in Palestinian water facilities creates an additional barrier to effective water management, as do the low and laxly enforced environmental regulations in the West Bank and the resulting uncontrolled and dangerous pollution, overextraction, and exploitation of natural resources. Another key finding of this study identified the on-going struggle for the recognition of Palestinian water rights by Israel as one of the major concerns for members of the organization, especially in the Palestinian office.

While both Israel and Palestine experience growing opposition to cross-border cooperation, the Boycott, Sanctions and Divestment movements in particular is harmful to the vision of effective and sensible regional environmental management. In this difficult context, EcoPeace works with a unique dual focus on environmental and peacebuilding topics paired with a dual-approach of top-down advocacy and bottom-up capacity building. At the same time, the organization creates incentives for cooperation based on a broad spectrum of interests, such as tangible economic benefits, the acquisition of environmental and technical know-how through its educational programs, or the participation in inter-faith dialogue and inter-cultural events. Through these activities, EcoPeace not only invests in the empowerment of a new generation of local leaders, but further creates otherwise rare opportunities for members of all three societies to engage in dialogue, build trust, and establish cross-border relationships.

The following chapter further discusses the organization's dual focus/dual-strategy approach, the importance of the legal debate around water rights, the function and efficacy of in-group and intergroup socialization, and the challenge of Israeli settlements.

CHAPTER VI. DISCUSSION

This thesis examines how EcoPeace Middle East pursues regional environmental cooperation and peacebuilding in a context where efforts for cross-border cooperation are often obstructed by high levels of mistrust, animosity, and periods of open violence. In the absence of an appropriate mechanism for managing shared resources, the environment and its people have been the victims of unilateral, unsustainable practices and political power games. Under these difficult circumstances, it has been EcoPeace's mission to unite Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians in promoting cooperative efforts to protect the unique shared environmental heritage of the Levantine region.

The very fact that EcoPeace still exists is a success in itself. Although many civil society organizations were founded in the hopeful spirits of the Oslo process, EcoPeace is among the few that have managed to continue operate, even as societal expectations for a peaceful end to the conflict have steadily diminished. Faced with external and internal challenges, the organization has achieved successes such as rerouting the separation barrier away from Battir, the development of the first NGO Jordan River Valley Masterplan, and contributing to the latest water arrangement between Israel and the Palestinians in the summer of 2017. What is it about EcoPeace that makes it so resilient and effective, even under such difficult circumstances?

6.1 The genius of environmental peacebuilding

One of EcoPeace's chief assets in advancing regional environmental management is the organization's dual focus on environmental and peacebuilding activities paired with a dual strategy of top-down advocacy and bottom-up capacity building. Amidst the many political, legal, and psychocultural challenges that have caused the peace process to falter, many

peacebuilding organizations find it increasingly difficult to make a significant difference on the ground. Pairing the concept of peacebuilding with the practical approach of environmental protection, however, allows EcoPeace to retain its momentum even when the prospect of peace is elusive. By diversifying the entry points for cooperation, EcoPeace is able to reach a broader target audience than if it was only focusing on peacebuilding. In so doing, the water issue is seen as part of a ‘social cube’, connected and interdependent with multiple sectors of society (such as economic development or women empowerment) as well as other forces of the conflict (including religious and psychocultural factors).

Complementary to this dual focus on peacebuilding and environmental protection is EcoPeace’s dual strategy of top-down advocacy and bottom-up community building. Working on both levels of society allows the organization to maintain constant activity even under unfavorable political or social circumstances. In times in which the political leadership is less inclined to cooperate with EcoPeace, the organization’s work does not come to a standstill because it is able to maintain open lines of communication among members of the Good Water Neighbors Project on the grassroots level. At the same time, EcoPeace can point to the successes that it has been able to procure through its role as a mediator and advocate for the interests of the Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian people.

The inherent challenge of this “dual focus-dual strategy” tactic is to ensure balanced investment in all of its core components – ecological, peace, advocacy, and community building. Its leadership, who represent the organization vis-à-vis politicians, donors, and international agencies, largely carries out EcoPeace’s advocacy function. While this is a key facet of EcoPeace’s work, the task at hand is not to lose sight of the activities that are transpiring on the ground, for those are the activities that procure the most sustainable results in terms of

peacebuilding and relationship building. Those are also the activities that hold the potential to generate societal attitude change toward the necessity and possibility of working and living together peacefully in a healthy environment.

Over the past twenty-four years of EcoPeace's existence, the organization has seen many political leaders come and go. Some have been more willing to work with EcoPeace and to take the environmental issues of the region seriously, while others have merely shrugged them off. The fact that cooperation on the highest level of government is contingent on the respective political agenda of those in power makes EcoPeace's influence on the grassroots level ever more crucial. As one EcoPeace staff member said, "the leadership is bound to change, but the people on the ground will stay. So, it is up to them to sustain the change that has been achieved on the top most level."²⁰⁶ It is all about balancing the organization's resources, he said, and ensuring that both approaches, advocacy and community building, continue to complement each other, without one coming second to the other.

6.2 Motivations for Cooperation

Conversations with EcoPeace staff members and beneficiaries from all three communities have amply shown that personal interest in protecting the environment and heritage of the Levant region is the shared reason for EcoPeace staff and beneficiaries to join the organization. Unique environmental features such as the Dead Sea or the Jordan River, many of which carry cultural or religious significance to the people of the region, have to be tackled with rapid and sustainable solutions before they succumb to over-extraction and pollution. Members of both offices further stressed the importance of educating Israelis and Palestinians about the impacts of unsustainable socioenvironmental practices, including the pollution, overextraction, and maldistribution of

freshwater resources. For the Palestinian (and Jordanian) society especially, promulgating environmental awareness and activism and creating a generation of young, educated leaders is key in developing sustainable practices and policies.

Notwithstanding the shared motivations, some differences in emphasis emerged in the research. People working in the Israeli office emphasized the importance and advantages of recent technological transformations in the water sector that has helped Israel overcome issues of water scarcity. Israel's technological know-how and its ability to produce a surplus of water can become a basis for thought experiments such as Water-Energy-Nexus (see 5.3.1). More than simply creating economic incentives, Israel has an interest in ensuring environmental security in the region from a national security perspective. Water insecurity, existing as inhumane water and sanitation standards in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, can trigger social tensions and can evolve into a security threat to Israel. Long-term, the systemic lack of (clean) water and the economic incapacitation involved with it can lead to social unrest among the Palestinian population. In the volatile context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, widespread uprisings can further destabilize the region and have security implications for Israel on the domestic level as well as for the stability of the wider Middle East.

6.3 The Right to Water

The issue of Palestinian water rights was not anticipated as a substantive component of EcoPeace's work or as a subject of major concern for this study. In the findings, however, the importance of water rights emerged as a key motivation for Palestinians to engage in cross-border cooperation with Israelis. Therefore, the topic of water as a right merits further discussion.

²⁰⁶ Personal interview with Israeli EcoPeace staff member, July 20, 2017.

For the Palestinians, the question of water rights is not only one of technicality or law, but instead bears substantial consequences for the Palestinian water sector and beyond. The support that they receive from the other two offices – especially from the Israeli office – is seen as invaluable to the campaign and to convincing other Palestinians of EcoPeace’s commitment to obtain Palestinian water rights to all of the West Bank’s resources. Article 40 of the 1995 Oslo II Agreement recognized Palestinian water rights in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but deferred their exact quantification until final-status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In the continuing absence of clearly defined water rights, Israel has declared approximately three-quarters of the River Valley as closed military zones or nature reserves, thereby denying the Palestinians access and use of their riparian rights to the Jordan River and the Dead Sea.

If the Palestinians were able to access and use all of the water resources within the West Bank, their water supply would amount to significantly more than the agreed 118 MCM/y (of which currently only 87 MCM are abstracted).²⁰⁷ This alone would significantly reduce problems of water scarcity and reduce the presently necessary water purchases from Israel. The current access restrictions to the Jordan River Valley and the Dead Sea also have a sizeable bearing on the Palestinian economy. Access to the Jordan River Valley would not only provide more water for the Palestinians but it would further allow them to exploit the Valley’s natural resources, including minerals, stones, salts, and land. The full use of these resources would produce a significant boost for the Palestinian economy, not to mention create new jobs and infrastructure

²⁰⁷ Exact numbers on how much additional water would be available range from approximately 800-1,100 MCM per year. See, for example, Marwan Haddad, “Palestinian Water Rights: Past, Present and Future,” in *Water: Values and Rights*, Clemens Messerschmid, Lara El-Jazari, Imad Khatib, and Ayman Al-Haj Daoud, eds. (Ramallah: Palestine Academy Press, 2009); and The Palestinian Ministry of National Economy and the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ), “The economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the occupied Palestinian territory,” (bulletin, 2011), http://www.lacs.ps/documentsShow.aspx?ATT_ID=4568, 13.

in the West Bank.²⁰⁸ In 2012 alone, the Israeli cosmetics company, Ahava earned over US\$150 million by selling skin care products made with mud and minerals from the Dead Sea.

Under international human rights law, the definition of the right to water and sanitation was initially derived from the right to an adequate standard of living. It was implicitly stated in several human rights treaties as the right of every human being to “sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use,”²⁰⁹ until, in 2010, the UN General Assembly (RES. 64/292) recognized access to clean water and sanitation as a human right and as “essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.”²¹⁰

Recognizing water as a universal legal entitlement rather than as a commodity or a product of charity was the result of decades of debate and controversy.²¹¹ More than 40 countries, among them Australia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom abstained from the vote to define water as a human right. As Catherine Brölmann, professor of international law at the University of Amsterdam explains, because “water and waterways have for centuries been viewed as part of sovereign territory,”²¹² even water-rich countries such as Canada are reluctant to recognize water as a basic human right out of fear of becoming entrapped in legal (and moral) debates that could threaten its water sovereignty and entice other countries to make claims to its freshwater reserves. Moreover, especially as water becomes an increasingly

²⁰⁸ See World Bank, “West Bank and Gaza.”

²⁰⁹ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR), General Comment No. 15 UN Doc. E/C.12/2002/11 (2002). The right to water is also mentioned in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

²¹⁰ United Nations Resolution A/RES/64/292 from July 28, 2010.

²¹¹ See Sharmila L. Murthy, “The Human Right(s) to Water and Sanitation: History, Meaning, and the Controversy Over Privatization,” *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 31, no. 1 (2013).

²¹² Catherine Brölmann cited in De Villiers, *Back to the Well*, 77.

scarce and valuable resource, many of those that have plenty of it eye it as a resource that could potentially yield high profits at some point.²¹³

In light of this lengthy and difficult process, some scholars have questioned the essentiality of defining water as a human right. In his latest book *Back to the Well: Rethinking the Future of Water*, Marq de Villiers (2015) argued, “If we can avoid the most deeply irrelevant ideological quarrels to which the water world is so prone ([...] quarrels over whether water should be defined as a human right), a wide range of techniques will take us very close to solution.” He quickly added, “Except in spots, of course. Some places are harder. We will need to examine those.”²¹⁴

Israel and Palestine form one of those harder spots. Since Palestine is not recognized as an independent and sovereign state by Israel, the Israeli government maintains the view that the Palestinians’ claim to water and riparian rights is not supported under the purview of international water law.²¹⁵ Assuming one is to accept this argument, there is still another legal framework that applies in the context of Palestine. International humanitarian law provides a legal framework for the protection of persons living under occupation, such as Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza.²¹⁶ The Fourth Geneva Convention specifies certain administrative rights and obligations of the occupying power, and further prohibits the use of water resources located in the occupied territories for anything other than military need, as well as from attacking, destroying, removing, or rendering useless,

²¹³ Cristy Clark, “Why didn’t Australia support the human right to water?” *ABC News*, September 28, 2010, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-08-02/35644>.

²¹⁴ De Villiers, *Back to the Well*, 10.

²¹⁵ Juliette Niehuss, “The Legal Implications of the Israeli-Palestinian Water Crisis,” *Sustainable Development Law and Policy*, 5, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 16.

²¹⁶ In 2007, the UN Special Rapporteur reiterated that even though Israel officially withdrew its forces from the Gaza Strip in 2005, it remains an occupying power with respect to Gaza’s borders, airspace, territorial waters, population registry, tax revenues, and governmental functions. See United Nations General Assembly, “Situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967,” August 17, 2017,

<https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/07FC0614021668418525736B005C8A82>.

Objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as [...] drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.²¹⁷

Hence, even amidst controversial debates of whether or not water should be recognized as a basic human right, the legal framework of international humanitarian law prescribes Israel as the occupier to ensure and safeguard the Palestinians' ability to realize their right to water."²¹⁸ In response to the continuing violations of Palestinian water rights, on December 23, 2015, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution (Res. 70/225) calling for Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources in the territories under Israeli occupation, and for Israel to stop exploiting, damaging, or depleting Palestinian natural resources.²¹⁹

With legal provisions for the safeguarding of natural water rights inscribed in international humanitarian law, the question then is, how much influence does international law have on the national policies of Israel on the ground? Israel is a signatory to many of the human rights treaties in which access to sufficient and safe water as well as sanitation is defined as a basic human right. Nonetheless, the Israeli government claims that "the human rights conventions it has ratified do not apply outside of Israel's sovereign territory, and therefore are

²¹⁷ Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August, 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977.

²¹⁸ Article 11(1) of ICESCR. See also Amnesty International and Wash United, "Recognition of the human rights to water and sanitation by UN Member States at the international level: An overview of resolutions and declarations that recognise the human rights to water and sanitation" (report, 2015), http://www.wash-united.org/files/wash-united/resources/States%27%20recognition_HRWS_WEB_2015.pdf.

²¹⁹ See United Nations General Assembly, "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources," February 23, 2016, <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/AA8C84089A8AFD5C85257F6A005A4C6B>. The resolution was passed by 164 votes to 5, with Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, and the United States opposing.

See also Ma'an, "UN adopts resolution on Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources," *Ma'an News Agency*, December 24, 2015, <http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=769475>.

not part of Israel's responsibilities in the West Bank,"²²⁰ – a claim that was rejected by the UN Commission responsible for the implementation of these conventions²²¹ and by the International Court of Justice.²²² Even Israel's own Supreme Court defied the government's argument that the West Bank is *disputed*, not occupied, territory, and that Israel therefore bears no responsibility in providing water resources to the Palestinians.²²³

In the Israeli discourse, the issue of Palestinian water rights is largely seen as a debate between what Israeli scholar Haim Gvirtzman calls "ideology versus practice." Instead of unnecessarily dwelling on theoretical, legal, or ideological questions of how to share existing water resources in the future, Israel argues that the discussion should focus instead on existing regional frameworks (i.e., the Oslo II Accords and its 1995 Water Agreement) on whose basis both parties should develop "practical plans to efficiently overcome water shortages on both sides."²²⁴ Such practical plans include the creation of additional water sources, which was an envisioned goal of the Water Agreement. The Israeli government has repeatedly argued that Israel alone has taken the necessary steps to enlarge the 'water pie' by means of desalinating, treating and repurposing water. The Palestinians, meanwhile, have not been able to create such additional water reserves. Consequently, a 2009 report by the Israeli Water Authority concluded that, "The Palestinians are clearly endeavoring to arrive at solutions that will be primarily at the

²²⁰ The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, "The Right to Water in the Occupied Territories" (report, February 2016), <https://www.acri.org.il/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Right-to-water-in-the-OPT-Legal-Background.pdf>, 3.

²²¹ Orna Ben-Naftali and Yuval Shany, "Living in Denial: The Application of Human Rights in the Occupied Territories," *Israel Law Review* 37, no. 1 (2003-2004): 17-118, as cited in The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, *The Right to Water*, 3.

²²² In the ICJ's advisory opinion regarding the Separation Fence. See: Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, 43 I.L.M. 1009, paragraphs 108-111.

²²³ Gamal Abouali, "Natural Resources Under Occupation: The Status of Palestinian Water Under International Law," *Pace International Law Review* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 463.

²²⁴ Haim Gvirtzman, "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: An Israeli Perspective," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 94 (January 2012): 2.

expense of Israel, which is suffering from severe water scarcity and is making intensive efforts to bring about efficient and responsible utilization of its scarce natural resources.”²²⁵

Intended to be revised after the end of the five-year interim period, the quotas defined in Article 40 of the 1995 Water Agreement were based on the estimated (future) needs of the Palestinians in the West Bank. More than twenty years after Oslo, EcoPeace points out that changes in demographics and the environment, as well as technological advances in the water and sanitation sector have rendered these quotas obsolete and far from appropriate to meet the current water needs of the Palestinians. Since the 1990s, the Palestinian population has nearly doubled (estimated to be 2.74 million by 2017), as has the number of Israeli settlers (around 600,000 by 2017).²²⁶ The latter are said to use up to six times more water than the amount used by the entire Palestinian population in the West Bank.²²⁷ Even starker differences are reported in the agricultural sector, where Israeli settlers have up to 18 times more water at their disposal than West Bank Palestinians.²²⁸

Shelving the definition of Palestinian water rights until the elusive ‘final status’ negotiations is what Niehuss (2005) calls a “delay tactic” with which Israel manifests its sole control over the region’s water resources and safeguards its unproportionable high abstractions for its own use. In the meantime, the Palestinians depend on Israel to provide them with water resources and permits for the construction of water and sanitation infrastructure. Keeping the status quo is not in fulfillment with the Palestinians’ human rights, much less a guarantee for a

²²⁵ State of Israel and Water Authority, “The Issue of Water between Israel and the Palestinians” (report, March 2009), 28, http://www.water.gov.il/Hebrew/about-reshut-hamaim/The-Authority/FilesWatermanagement/Israel_and_the_Palestinians.pdf.

²²⁶ Oxfam, “20 Facts: 20 Years Since the Oslo Accords” (n.d.), <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/oxfam-oslo-20-factsheet.pdf>. See also “Statistics on Settlements and Settler Population,” B’Tselem, last modified on May 11, 2017, <https://www.btselem.org/settlements/statistics>.

²²⁷ Al-Haq and EWASH, “Israel’s violations.”

²²⁸ Al-Haq, *Settling Area C: The Jordan Valley Exposed* (report, 2018), 36, <http://www.alhaq.org/publications/SettlingAreaCTheJordanValleyExposed.pdf>. See also “Draining away, the water and sanitation crisis in the Jordan Valley – Ma’an Development Centre,” Jordan Valley Solidarity, last modified September 8, 2010, <http://jordanvalleysolidarity.org/reports/draining-away-water-sanitation-crisis/>.

continuous supply of water resources, as was amply shown by the additional water cuts during the summer months.

Defining Palestinian water rights will not provide a panacea for the region's water problems. Other steps are needed such as creating new water sources, upgrading infrastructure, and strengthening a culture of environmental awareness are needed to make an actual, sustainable, impact. However, it is a first step for ensuring that the Palestinians retain a claim to all of the West Bank's resources – during the summer, during renewed open conflict, and as a basis for future water negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Meanwhile, the human right of access to safe and sufficient drinking water is more than a 'deeply irrelevant ideological quarrel'. As Richard Jolly from the UNDP noted, "It grounds the priority on the bedrock of social and economic rights, it emphasizes the obligations of states parties to ensure access, and it identifies the obligations of states parties to provide support internationally as well as nationally."²²⁹ In a context of peaceful and cooperative bilateral relations, agreements on water cooperation may forgo an exact definition of water rights; in an environment of profound mistrust, political instability, and power asymmetry – or what Marq de Villiers would call a harder spot – because such agreements offer insurance for the safeguarding of basic human rights and provide a frame of reference for future negotiations.

6.4 In-group Socialization

Through its advocacy and grassroots activities, EcoPeace strengthens what Paffenholz calls intergroup social cohesion and in-group socialization. While intergroup cohesion is an essential part of EcoPeace's approach to environment peacebuilding, in-group socialization serves as a

²²⁹ Richard Jolly, "Water and human rights: challenges for the twenty-first century" (address at the conference of the Belgian Royal Academy of Overseas Science, Brussels, March 23, 1998).

means to accentuate and strengthen the common interest in environmental cooperation even amidst diversity of opinion. On the governmental level, EcoPeace appeals to the collective national interest of all three countries to engage in cross-border cooperation for the sake of national security and regional stability, better environmental standards, and mutual economic benefits (a mini type of EEC). At the grassroots level, the organization calls on the individual self-interest of people to procure tangible benefits for themselves, their community, and for the environment.

Bearing in mind that the observations in this study represent merely a ‘snapshot’ of time and society, it is nonetheless interesting to note the emergence of two distinct patterns from in-depth conversations with Israelis and Palestinians outside of EcoPeace. The first pattern attests to a general reluctance among Israelis to address conflict, as compared to a general eagerness among Palestinians to talk about the conflict. While the former prefers to focus on the remarkable technological and socioeconomic progress that Israel has made over the past seventy years, members of the Palestinian society often welcome the opportunity to talk about recent violent clashes and the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in general.

The second pattern is a tendency in both Israeli and Palestinian societies to shy away from accepting any form of responsibility for the present (water) situation. Within the Israeli discourse, statements about issues of water and sanitation were almost always made in reference to bad environmental practices of Palestinians and Bedouins, and the lack of enforcement and corruption of the Palestinian Authority. No mention was made about the role of the occupation or the limited enforcement capacity of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. On the Palestinian side, problems of water scarcity and sanitation were almost exclusively attributed to the occupation and Israel’s control over water resources and infrastructure, while little was said

about their own environmental ill-practices such as the widespread cases of litter pollution in Palestinian towns and fields.

On the one hand, glossing over the fact that Israel's dominant political, legal, and military position plays a key role in the environmental issues of the region is not helpful if realistic and implementable solutions are to be developed. On the other hand, ascribing all fault to the Israeli occupation while denying one's own responsibility prevents room for Palestinian agency and the necessary attitude change towards the environment that is needed among the Palestinian people. The task for EcoPeace with respect to its in-group socialization then is to proliferate the understanding that both sides carry responsibility for the present environmental situation while each can take the first steps towards making a change.

These observations stand in marked contrast to the attitudes reflected in conversations with staff members and beneficiaries of EcoPeace. Israeli staff members as well as most beneficiaries identified the occupation as a big reason for the development of the environmental crises, and as a key obstacle to possible solutions. At the same time, they stressed the need for change in the Palestinian society vis-à-vis sustainable practices and enforcement mechanisms. Palestinian staff members (including the respondent who is a former staff member) acknowledged a lack of political leadership and capacity as well as the growing problem of corruption within the Palestinian Authority. Even though great emphasis was laid on the role of the Israeli occupation, Palestinian EcoPeace staff and beneficiaries acknowledged their responsibility to strengthen their society's awareness and commitment to environmental protection. This aspect of the conversation is different from what Ide and Fröhlich found in their 2015 study on EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbors Project in which they report that statements

about issues of corruption, lack of responsibility and agency, and failing leadership were exclusively made by Israeli members and beneficiaries of EcoPeace.²³⁰

6.5 Intergroup social cohesion

The work that EcoPeace does on the local level in schools, youth clubs, and community groups is a stepping-stone for its regional events and activities. Since the construction of the Barrier and strict enforcement of security permits, Israelis and Palestinians (and Jordanians with a Palestinian background) have been living in near-segregation. Under these challenging circumstances, many cross-border organizations have stopped organizing cross-border activities because they were unable to obtain the necessary permits and visas. EcoPeace also faces these challenges and is forced to hold most of its activities and camps in Jordan, which is accessible more easily for both Israelis and Palestinians. Still, the organization is adamantly maintaining lines of communication and providing otherwise rare opportunities for members of all three communities to meet.

By engaging Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians in concrete cooperative projects on a variety of environmental issues that are based on the three pillars of sustainability (namely economic, ecological, and socio-cultural sustainability), EcoPeace creates what Lederach calls a common understanding of all three communities to move “toward a desired and shared vision of increased interdependence.”²³¹ Mayors that sign Memorandums of Understanding, like the Mayors on the Israel-Jordan Peace Island, send signals to their communities and beyond that

²³⁰ Ide and Fröhlich, “Socio-environmental.”

²³¹ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 84.

they are willing to cooperate and that peaceful existence between the neighbors of the region is possible.²³²

The organization's projects, whether they are connected to economic incentives, religious affiliations, women's empowerment, education, or are purely based on ecology, stimulate a process of cooperative negotiation and shared environmental management. The ultimate goal of these activities is to deconstruct the "confrontational, contradictory and mutually exclusive identities and situation assessments"²³³ that are at the forefront of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and instead create empathy and understanding for each other's perspective. In so doing, Israeli Palestinians and Bedouins play a key role in bridging the different languages, cultures, and mindsets to reduce lines of division and mistrust.

Similar to what Ide and Fröhlich (2015) found when examining in-group and out-group divisions among Israeli and Palestinian members of the GWN, beneficiaries and staff members clearly distinguished between the Palestinian and Israeli people and the Palestinian Authority and Israeli government respectively. While Palestinians expressed unfavorable attitudes towards Israeli settlers and the Israeli government, they emphasized their sympathy with the rest of the Israeli population. Interestingly, members of all three communities frequently referred to each other's shared heritage as sons of Abraham, as "cousins", as neighbors, and as children of God.²³⁴

EcoPeace beneficiaries emphasized the value of the Good Water Neighbors project as a way to enhance the understanding of the region's environmental problems what Dabelko calls "green thinking", and a rare opportunity for people of all three communities to meet. The cross-

²³² See also Dabelko, "Environmental Peacebuilding," 288.

²³³ Ide and Fröhlich, "Socio-environmental," 668.

²³⁴ This finding is similar to Ide and Fröhlich's study, in which Israelis and Palestinians describe each other collectively as "son[s] of the earth". Ide and Fröhlich, "Socio-environmental," 667.

border camp at SHE Park in particular is a unique way to bring together young people from different languages, national identities, and cultures, who would otherwise be unlikely to meet. Beneficiaries generally agreed that the most important aspect of these meetings is the chance to see the other as a human being, rather than as part of a statistic, and to override stereotypical thinking.

For members of the Palestinian society, these encounters lead to the realization that there are Israelis that are willing to advocate for the Palestinian cause (Palestinian water rights and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state) and who consider the Palestinians equally worthy of human dignity and the right to self-determination. For the Israelis, humanizing the other means to acknowledge that there are Palestinians (and Jordanians) that are committed to nonviolence, environmental protection, and education in cooperation with the Israelis. Moreover, in contrast to the popular belief and fear among many Israeli parents, these teens were able to experience a Jordan that is not an insecure travel destination and a particularly dangerous place for Jews. Instead, they were able to enjoy what for many was their first visit to an Arab country and feel safe and comfortable in the presence of other Arab youth and in the warm atmosphere of SHE Park.

Despite these immediate successes in the relationship among all three communities, most beneficiaries concede that these encounters are not likely going to develop long-term relationships. In fact, the divisive language and social barriers that had split the group in the beginning of the camp only started to crumble halfway through the second day. It was social activities such as the group walk around SHE Park and the party at the end of day two that ultimately broke the lines of ethnic and linguistic division. The focus group carried out as part of this study served as an interesting example of how participants from all three communities were

able to freely and safely share their experiences and insights with each other. Although the conversation initially focused on the purely environmental aspects of their engagement with EcoPeace, they soon started to talk more about their personal stories, or their society's perception of the 'other', and their hopes and fears for the future of the (water) conflict. The realization that many Israeli parents are hesitant about sending their children to Jordan because they consider it to be an unsafe place exposed how deep the divisions among all three communities reach, and why even the most basic aspects of life, such as the necessity for water, create such seemingly insurmountable problems. And yet, by the time a level of comfort and trust had allowed these teens to open up and enjoy their newly built relationships, it was almost time to split up again and go back home.

As a result, many beneficiaries expressed the wish for longer encounters with the other two groups and a deeper immersion into the subject matter, including the possibility of connecting the various environmental issues of the region with the political context of the conflict. At the same time, two of the Israeli alumni reasoned that in-depth discussions about the political components of the water conflict require a pre-established foundation of knowledge on the region's environmental issues, as well as a certain level of maturity and trust. Designing cross-border activities that are able to offer youths more opportunities and the necessary level of trust, knowledge, and maturity to lead a discourse on the political linkages of the regional environmental problems would allow them to better grasp the complexity of the (water) conflict. Only then can they truly form an understanding of how to steer away from a culture of mistrust and apprehension, and devise strategies that are feasible in a context of military occupation, legal and geographical fragmentation, and political and social tension.

The following question therefore emerges: within the framework of EcoPeace's cross-border camps, what could the organization do sustain and build upon these newly found intergroup relationships? One possibility would be to move towards a two- (or more) stage process for cross-border camps in which Youth Water Trustees gradually establish meaningful cross-border relationships with other EcoPeace beneficiaries. Such relationships require multiple chances of exposure to the other community, and therefore demand a certain degree of commitment from EcoPeace's participants. The first stage of this process reflects what is already taking place at EcoPeace cross-border camps, during which Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian youth convene at one of EcoPeace's EcoParks to establish initial contact and build a foundation of knowledge about present socio-environmental issues in the region.

Instead of leaving these newly formed relationships hanging in the air, however, these same Youth Water Trustees/alumni could be invited back at a later point to complete the second stage of the cross-border camp. Their pre-existing acquaintance with each other has broken the ice and created a certain level of trust and familiarity, on which the second cross-border camp could be built. Under the mediation of the EcoPeace community coordinators, the second camp could then be able to create a safe space for youth to open up and venture out into the terrain of the politically and socially more controversial aspects of the water conflict.

Parallel to this two-stage camp approach, EcoPeace could utilize technological equipment as a complimentary tool for sustaining cross-border relationships. By making use of virtual social media platforms such as Skype or Facebook, EcoPeace can easily uphold cross-border contact among Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian youth without having to secure security permits, allocating time and resources, and accommodating for safety concerns. For example, class-based activities or discussions with local youth and adults could be shared with other members of the

GWN community via live stream. Additionally, Facebook groups could be created to connect participants of past and future cross-border camps. By upholding these connections, even if only in virtual forms, the organization would empower youth from all three communities to become involved in each other's projects, learn about the context-specific challenges, and find inspiration from each other's successes. Maintaining contact among youth beyond the experience of EcoPeace's cross-border camps is essential to build sustainable interest and engagement in cross-border environmental peacebuilding.

As was mentioned before, engaging EcoPeace beneficiaries (youths and adults) in these multiple-stage processes requires a higher commitment on the part of both EcoPeace and its participants. A more long-term partnership with EcoPeace, however, could possibly remedy what some staff members lament as the exploitation of EcoPeace's activities for the benefit of a great "travel experience." At the same time, a long-term partnership would also provide a framework of stability and continuity, with which EcoPeace manifests relationships among like-minded environmentalists even in uncertain times. After all, as Dabelko explained, "it's obvious that newly built harmonious relationships are still contingent on political events despite cooperation and trust-building. Therefore, the communities are in the need of an ongoing support, an institutional structure, as long as the conflict is there, otherwise the conflict will overpower them."²³⁵ EcoPeace has a chance to create new and easily implementable channels of communication, in which cooperation and friendships among Israeli, Palestinians, and Jordanians become the norm, rather than the exception. In doing so, the organization is not normalizing the conflict. It is normalizing contact.

²³⁵ Dabelko, "Environmental Peacebuilding," 294.

6.6 Challenges: Israeli Settlements

EcoPeace's policy on the exclusion of Israeli settlements from its activities is rooted in the organization's commitment to a two-state solution and to avoid "normalizing" settlements or other aspects of the occupation. All of EcoPeace's staff showed unanimous support for the realization of an internationally recognized Palestinian state and further agreed on the illegality of Israeli settlements within Palestine as well as their political, ecological, and economic implications for the Palestinians and the broader conflict.

At the same time, several EcoPeace members also raised questions and concerns about the organization's policy, especially with regard to the exclusion of children from Israeli settlements. Three main arguments were raised to explain why EcoPeace should work with settlements:

- Many settlers are willing to relocate to Israel proper if given financial compensation and therefore do not stand in the way of an eventual two-state solution.
- A general lack of awareness about the status and implications of settlements, especially among children, demands that organizations such as EcoPeace work to educate the Israeli public directly by working with them.
- Growing environmental consciousness among settlers could serve as a potential basis for cooperation in order to prevent further environmental damage to the West Bank and the Palestinian population.

Staff members who supported the idea of working with (a select group of) Israeli settlements particularly stressed EcoPeace's responsibility to work with those that do not fall within

EcoPeace's usual target group, i.e., Israeli citizens that are positioned on the left end of Israel's political spectrum and that are in favor of cooperation with Palestinians and a two-state solution.

Nonetheless, it is important to reflect on the fact that working with Israeli settlers is almost guaranteed to elicit additional criticism and backlash from the Palestinian public and members of the anti-cooperation and anti-normalization movement, who already understand EcoPeace's work as an attempt to normalize Israel's status as an occupying power. If the organization was to cooperate with Israeli settlers, it would provide critics and opponents a valid excuse to denounce EcoPeace as an organization that works to normalize the occupation and that disowns its credo of a two-state solution and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

This commitment to the two-state solution is an integral part of EcoPeace's identity as a tri-lateral organization. Throughout all of its existence, EcoPeace has been devoted to honoring the rights of self-determination of the Palestinian and Jewish people alongside each other as part of a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict. In view of the progressing settlement expansion, however, the realization of the two-state solution becomes an increasingly distant prospect. At the same time, the growing number of settlers and the lax regulations of the Israeli CA accrue to ever-greater amounts of sewage and toxic waste that is already harming the region's environment and its people. Even though there is an upward trend among Israeli settlers to recognize and take measures against environmental harm, the organization's categorical exclusion of settlers leaves no room for negotiations with those whose environmental interests are aligned with EcoPeace.

Israeli settlements have become a major force in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and key in determining its outcome. Because of their importance to the solution of the political conflict, and also to the environmental and humanitarian well-being of the region, not dealing with Israeli settlements will become increasingly difficult for EcoPeace. In the end, this raises the question:

is there a way that EcoPeace can tap into the settlers' self-interest in environmental protection without normalizing and legitimizing Israeli settlements? Could it possibly transform the settlement issue from being a force of division and hatred into a platform for accentuating Israeli and Palestinian parallels, just like it did with the question of religion? It is not within the scope of this thesis to answer to these questions. It is clear, however, that the unrelenting expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land and the systematic attempts to normalize this reality among the Israeli public create tremendous pressure on EcoPeace to re-evaluate its policy on Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Moreover, by opening a debate on the settlement question EcoPeace would create an opportunity for its members to discuss and exchange their views on the issue.

6.7 Summary

EcoPeace is a unique example of how cross-border water cooperation can exist even in a context of conflict, widespread mistrust, and legal chaos. The organization shows that de-linking the water issue from the rest of the final-status issues can be a fruitful step towards protecting the environment and ensuring that the land between the river and the sea continues to be a place with a truly unique historic, spiritual, and environmental heritage. At the same time, this thesis has also shown that the issue of water is inseparable from questions of human rights and social justice, economic development, cultural heritage, intergroup understanding, and other controversial parts of the conflict, such as the settlement expansion.

EcoPeace's dual focus on environmental protection and peacebuilding has been key to the organization's resilience even in times in which peace seemed more distant than ever. At the same time, its dual strategy of advocacy (exerting pressure on policy-makers and researching

new strategies for sustainable development) and community capacity-building (empowering local communities and creating a new generation of leaders) ensures constant activity on both levels of society. Moreover, connecting the issue of water to a variety of other policy fields (economics, education, religion) has helped to create incentives and tangible results and has established lines of communication through which to build trust and relationships among the people of the region.

While the organization has achieved many successes throughout its twenty-four years of working on environmental peacebuilding in the Levant, it also needs to cope with a number of external challenges. Among them are the difficult legal, political, and geographical circumstances in which EcoPeace needs to operate, the power asymmetry and absence of appropriate water legislation in the region, and the growing influence of BDS on the Palestinian, and the anti-cooperation lobby on the Israeli side. On the internal level, this study found EcoPeace's settlement policy to be an issue that may lead to further discussion among its members, as well as the question of how cross-border activities can be designed to further manifest intergroup relationships, and whether youth activities should encompass more in-depth discussions on the political aspects of the water conflict.

6.8 Future Research

In the relatively young field of peacebuilding, environmental peacebuilding is an even younger area of activity that nonetheless is becoming increasingly recognized as a viable approach to stimulating cooperation and trust building even among adversarial communities. Long-term research and experience are necessary to review the results of processes of cooperative environmental management in regions of protracted conflict. Of particular interest is how

motivation and engagement in cross-border activities can be sustained even under immense political and social pressure, or in times of open conflict. Furthermore, in order to attest whether such peacebuilding activities actually lead to the establishment of what Carius calls a “common regional identity”, a long-term study of cross-border environmental cooperation in the Levant will be necessary.

This thesis explored EcoPeace’s approaches to cross-border environmental cooperation in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian water conflict and its strategies for intergroup relationship building. With the focus on Israeli-Palestinian relationships, this thesis offered only a glimpse on the importance of Jordan as part of EcoPeace’s trilateral structure. Because of the special role that Jordanian staff members and beneficiaries play as mediators and facilitators between Israelis and Palestinian, this aspect of EcoPeace’s work should further be investigated in future studies. Possible other studies could undertake more in-depth investigations of beneficiaries with a larger scope of interviews, as well as a longitudinal follow-up on EcoPeace’s alumni to see whether they have pursued their activities with the organization. A study monitoring the longer-term developments and outcomes of the case studies presented in this thesis could further examine EcoPeace’s advocacy work and its influence on the governmental and international level.

CHAPTER VII. EPILOGUE

I remember it being a Friday in mid-July when it finally hit me. During these hours before the Jamuah prayer and the Shabbat dinner, the streets of Jerusalem's old city were quiet and empty. In this calm, serene atmosphere, one could almost get the sense that peace had finally settled in the land of Israel and Palestine. But this sense was nothing but an illusion. In fact, a mere few hundred steps away, the facade of peacefulness was being crushed under the weight of anger and frustration that had boiled up during the past couple of weeks. Israel's decision to place metal detectors at the entrance to the Temple Mount following the attack on two Israeli security guards had engulfed the region in waves of outrage. Their fury, always bubbling just beneath the surface, had burst out in the form of mass protests, calls for a third intifada, and gruesome acts of violence. Nothing in those three weeks had resembled the previous two months of my internship. So much had changed. And finally, unexpectedly, the full force of the conflict hit me, and I understood what it was like to live in the midst of it.

Overall, the summer had been astonishingly quiet – atypically quiet, everyone had told me. So many times, I had caught myself being completely oblivious to the fact that I was, after all, in a context of conflict, military occupation, terror attacks, and deep-felt animosity. Tel Aviv's liberal and metropolitan flair, its white sandy beaches, and western shopping centers were just too exciting and beautiful to think about that just one hour's drive south, people in Gaza were sitting in the dark, their electricity cut to a mere four hours a day. But what was it to me? I was enjoying the sun setting over the calm waves of the Mediterranean, watching people sip their cocktails, playing Matkot, not worrying about anything more than what to eat for lunch tomorrow. They don't call Tel Aviv Israel's bubble for no reason.

And then came Jerusalem and with it the conflict. Full frontal. More visible than in Bethlehem or Ramallah, even more so than within the settlements-speckled rest of the West Bank. The short but intense flare-up during the Temple Mount crisis had illustrated how volatile and explosive this region is. The streets that I had walked along so many times, the shops I had visited, the bus that I had taken – all of a sudden it was all different. Because of the increased security measures, mass protests, and violent clashes, I was forced to make even more ludicrously long detours than usual. I waited for buses, waited to have my papers checked, waited for an end to the crisis. Nothing in those three weeks was anything like the previous two months. It felt like I had only just moved to the Middle East. That is, the real Middle East. That of which we speak and hear in the media.

I am glad that I was there at exactly that time. If anything, the contrast that I witnessed enabled me to understand how easy it is to live a normal life and forget about the conflict if you live in one place, and how hard it is to escape the conflict and think of nothing but the conflict if you live in another place. Whichever way it was, I felt enormous appreciation and respect for those people that acknowledge the existence of these two realities. Those that devote their lives to finding ways to work and live together, and those that endure the hardships, the uncertainty, and the pain of growing up in the midst of conflict and hate. After three months, I returned to my comfortable, peaceful home. They chose to stay.

Whether it is the will to procure political change, protect the environment, or to build connections on the ground, working together for peace in this unpeaceful land is anything but easy. It means to accommodate a myriad of different day-to-day realities, constant political and social instability and unpredictability, and a wall of hostility and mistrust. For me, to see the endurance and conviction of people to create change for a better life was beyond incredible. I

was fascinated by this land – swept away by its beauty, its astoundingly rich history and its diverse culture – and in spite of all the fighting and the hate, I saw its great potential to one day become a place in which people of all religions, cultures, languages, and skin colors can live in peace. Yet until that day comes, these people need to make sure that the land in which they live, the land that they so desperately try to protect and claim for themselves, will still be a liveable place for future generations. To do that, they need to clean up after themselves, communicate, and work together.

The people that I met as part of my internship and my work with EcoPeace give me hope and inspiration. Cross-border environmental cooperation is not without challenges, and the organization is not without fault. But it does something, and that is what counts. It empowers youth and adults to take matters into their own hands; it aspires to change the lives of all people, no matter on which side of the Green Line they live; and it follows its path with a clear vision of peace, fairness, and sustainability. With this in mind I leave Ben-Gurion Airport at the end of July. Sad and almost reluctant to go home again, I know that I will come back sooner rather than later to this beautiful, exciting, crazy land. As I step out of my plane five hours later, I hear a deafening bang. For one moment, I think of gunfire, or the explosion of a grenade. Then, my foot sinks into a deep puddle and I feel rain dropping onto my face. Now, I had definitely left the Middle East.

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IX. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix I – Interview Guiding Questions for EcoPeace Staff Members

- How long have you worked for EcoPeace, and in what role(s)?
- What are the most important aspects of EcoPeace’s work and why?
- How would you define ‘fair and sustainable cooperation’ between Israelis and Palestinians?
- What has EcoPeace done to try to create incentives for Israelis and Palestinians to participate in the Good Water Neighbors project?
- What have been some of the major successes of the Good Water Neighbors project?
- What have been some of the challenges of the project?
- What ways have you found to respond to those challenges?
- Do you see any evidence that EcoPeace affects the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, and their understanding of each other’s perspective?
- Have there been any unintended effects, or anything that has made their relationship worse?
- What would you say are the impacts of EcoPeace and its influence on the political level?
- What do you regard as most personally rewarding of your work at EcoPeace?
- What would you say is the hardest or most frustrating part of your work?
- What are your best hopes and wishes for the future?
- What are your biggest fears and worries?

10.2 Appendix II – Interview Guiding Questions for EcoPeace Beneficiaries

- How and when did you get involved in EcoPeace’s Good Water Neighbors Project?
- What do you do in the project?
- What should cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians look like?
- What successes or benefits have you experienced throughout your involvement in the Good Water Neighbors Project?
- What challenges have you come across?
- Have you been able to overcome those challenges?
- How has your involvement in the project influenced your relationship with your own peer community?
- Has your participation in the Good Water Neighbors Project led you to meet more members of the Israeli/Palestinian community?
- How has it impacted your relationship with the Israel/Palestinian community?
- How, if at all, do you think the Good Water Neighbors Project can have any larger impact in your community and your region?
- What has been personally most rewarding throughout your involvement in the Good Water Neighbors Project?
- What has been the hardest or most frustrating part of your involvement?
- What are your best hopes and wishes for the future?
- What are your biggest worries or fears?

10.3 Appendix III – Consent Form EcoPeace Staff Members

Consent to Participate in Research

EcoPeace Staff Member

Good Water Neighbours? A Study of EcoPeace in Israel and the West Bank

Principal Investigator: Inga Schierholz

Email: schierhi@myumanitoba.ca

Phone: [REDACTED]

Research Supervisor: Dean Peachey

Email: d.peachey@uwinnipeg.ca

Email of the Human Ethics Coordinator: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Introduction and Purpose

I am a master's student of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba in Canada. I am currently doing a research project on EcoPeace coordinated cross-border water cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. For that, I would like to learn about the experiences, opinions, hopes, and fears of EcoPeace staff members that are involved in EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbours project.

Procedure

If you agree to participate, I will ask a number of open-ended questions that will give you the opportunity to talk about your experiences with EcoPeace's work, your opinion on EcoPeace's strengths and weaknesses, as well as your ideas for the future. The interview is expected to last for approximately one and a half hours.

To be able to document your answers as precisely as possible, I would like to audio record the interview if you approve. You may choose not to be recorded to this prior to, or during the interview, in which case I will take notes instead.

Confidentiality

You have the right to be anonymous if you choose to do so. If you choose to remain anonymous, I will not write down any names, nor any other identifying characteristics. No one will have access to the audio recordings or the notes except for me and my thesis advisor. Your answers will be safely stored on a password-protected jump drive and cloud server, and will be deleted from my personal computer. Two years after the publication of the thesis, approximately December 2019, all data will be deleted and destroyed.

Risks and Benefits

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Some of the questions will ask for your personal experiences and hopes and fears. You are free to answer those questions in as much detail as they feel comfortable, or to skip the question altogether. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to withdraw from the study, in which case your information will not be used for the research.

You are entitled to alter your statement at any point during or after the interview. Unless you specifically ask to be identified by name, I will not disclose your name or any other identifying characteristics (such as age, gender, ethnicity) in my research. I will refer to you as “one EcoPeace staff member”.

You do not have to fear for any negative consequences in case you choose not to participate in, or withdraw from, the study. No one will be informed about your decision. Although participation will not have any direct benefits for you, it will provide you with the opportunity to share your knowledge of the work of EcoPeace the overall water situation in the region.

Feedback and Debriefing

At the end of the interview you will have the chance to ask questions, make further comments, or voice any concerns. You may contact me via the information provided at the top of this form if you have any questions, comments, or concerns later. You will be given the option to schedule a follow-up meeting during which we can go over your interview statements to correct any inaccuracies, or identify anything that you feel might compromise your anonymity. You can also ask for a summary of my thesis after it has been approved by my University (approximately February 2018) either by email or mail.

Dissemination

This research project will be made publicly available on the University of Manitoba theses database (URL: <https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca>). The research may also form the basis for publication in journals or presentations at conferences.

If you choose to participate, the interview will take place at the location and time that is most convenient for you.

If you choose not to participate in this research project, I thank you for your time and consideration.

CONSENT

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba, Canada. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or telephone +1204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

1. If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below.

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| Participant's Signature | Date |

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| Researcher's Signature | Date |

2. Identifying information – Please check one box:

I wish to remain anonymous in the research and any reports resulting from this research.

OR

I agree to have my name or other identifying information included in the research reports.

3. I agree to have our conversation documented via audio recording.

Yes

No

10.4 Appendix IV – Consent Form EcoPeace Beneficiaries

Consent to Participate in Research

EcoPeace Beneficiaries

Good Water Neighbours? A Study of EcoPeace in Israel and the West Bank

Principal Investigator: Inga Schierholz

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Email: d.peachey@uwinnipeg.ca

Email of the Human Ethics Coordinator: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Introduction and Purpose

My name is Inga Schierholz. I am doing an internship at EcoPeace, and I am a master's student of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba in Canada. I am currently doing a research project on EcoPeace coordinated cross-border water cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. The basic question for my research is: How does EcoPeace Middle East pursue cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, and what have been the results to date?

To address this question, I will use three methodologies: 1) interviews with a subset of beneficiaries of the Good Water Neighbours Project, 2) interviews with a subset of EcoPeace staff, and 3) observation of the general activities and strategies of EcoPeace.

Procedure

For the latter point, I will observe organizational activities and strategies during my work shifts as an intern or at EcoPeace-related events. Any private interactions with EcoPeace staff members outside of work-related environments will not be part of my research observations.

The purpose of this form is to advise you of the nature of my research activity, and to invite your participation in the research. If you agree to participate in the observational aspect of my study, I may take notes of activities or conversations where you are involved. If you choose not to

participate, then I will not include any notes on your activities or conversations in my research report. If you choose to participate you may also choose whether you wish to be identified by name in the research report, or if you prefer to be anonymous.

Confidentiality

No one will have access to my field notes other than me and my thesis advisor. Those field notes will be safely stored on a password-protected jump drive and cloud server, and will be deleted from my personal computer. Two years after the publication of the thesis, approximately December 2019, all data will be deleted and destroyed.

Risks and Benefits

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Some of the questions will ask for your personal experiences and hopes and fears. You are free to answer those questions in as much detail as they feel comfortable, or to skip the question altogether. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to withdraw from the study, in which case your information will not be used for the research.

If at any point you feel emotional disturbances of any kind, I encourage you to contact a counselling service to help you deal with any form of psychological issues. The following list provides you with several counselling services available in Israel and the West Bank.

Counselling services in Israel:

Andrew Fröhlich, PhD (Jerusalem)

Phone: 058-7821914

Alyson Aviv, PhD, ABPdN (Ra'anana)

Phone: 052-892-7771

For more counselling services in Israel please visit <http://gethelpisrael.com/therapist/>

Counselling services in the West Bank:

Palestinian Counselling Center Azzun office

Phone: +97292902462

East Jerusalem office

Phone: 054-8859038

Nablus office

Phone: +97292335946

Elisheva Hoffman, PhD (Tel Aviv)

Phone: 058-5637230

Leora Schefres, PhD (Haifa)

Phone: 052-9569248

Jerusalem office

Phone: 054-8859038

Ramallah office

Phone: +97222989788

You are entitled to alter your statement at any point during or after the interview. Unless you specifically ask to be identified by name, I will not disclose your name or any other identifying characteristics (such as age, gender, ethnicity) in my research. I will refer to you as “one EcoPeace beneficiary”.

You do not have to fear for any negative consequences in case you choose not to participate in, or withdraw from, the study. No one will be informed about your decision. Although participation will not have any direct benefits for you, it will provide you with the opportunity to share your knowledge of the work of EcoPeace the overall water situation in the region.

Feedback and Debriefing

At the end of the interview you will have the chance to ask questions, make further comments, or voice any concerns. You may contact me via the information provided at the top of this form if you have any questions, comments, or concerns later. You will be given the option to schedule a follow-up meeting during which we can go over your interview statements to correct any inaccuracies, or identify anything that you feel might compromise your anonymity. You can ask for a summary of my thesis after it has been approved by my University (approximately February 2018) either by email or mail.

Dissemination

This research project will be publicly available on the University of Manitoba theses database (URL: <https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca>). The research may also form the basis for publication in journals or presentations at conferences.

If you choose to participate, the interview will take place at the location and time that is most convenient for you.

If you choose not to participate in this research project, I thank you for your time and consideration.

3. I agree to have our conversation documented via audio recording.

Yes

No

10.5 Appendix V – Consent Form EcoPeace Beneficiaries Focus Group

Consent to Participate in Research

Beneficiaries, Focus Groups

Good Water Neighbours? A Study of EcoPeace in Israel and the West Bank

Principal Investigator: Inga Schierholz

Email: schierhi@myumanitoba.ca

Phone: [REDACTED]

Research Supervisor: Dean Peachey

Email: d.peachey@uwinnipeg.ca

Email of the Human Ethics Coordinator: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

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Introduction and Purpose

My name is Inga Schierholz. I am a master's student of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba in Canada. I am currently doing a research project on EcoPeace coordinated cross-border water cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. For that, I would like to learn about the experiences, opinions, hopes, and fears of Israelis and Palestinians that are involved in EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbours project.

Procedure

If you agree to participate, I will ask a number of open-ended questions that will give all of you the opportunity to talk about your experiences with EcoPeace's work, your opinion on EcoPeace's strengths and weaknesses, as well as your ideas for the future. The interview is expected to last for approximately one and a half hours.

To be able to document your answers as precisely as possible, I would like to audio record the interview if you approve. You may choose not to be recorded to this prior to, or during the interview, in which case I will take notes instead.

Confidentiality

You have the right to be anonymous if you chose to do so. If you choose to remain anonymous, I will not write down any names, nor any other identifying characteristics. No one outside of the focus group will have access to the audio recordings or the notes except for me and my thesis advisor. Your answers will be safely stored on a password-protected jump drive and cloud server

and will be deleted from my personal computer. Two years after the publication of the thesis, approximately December 2019, all data will be deleted and destroyed.

Risks and Benefits

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Some of the questions will ask for your personal experiences and hopes and fears. You are free to answer those questions in as much detail as they feel comfortable, or to skip the question altogether. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to withdraw from the study, in which case your information will not be used for the research.

If at any point you feel emotional disturbances of any kind, I encourage you to contact a counselling service to help you deal with any form of psychological issues. The following list provides you with several counselling services available in Israel and the West Bank.

Counselling services in Israel:

Andrew Fröhlich, PhD (Jerusalem)

Phone: 058-7821914

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Phone: 058-5637230

Leora Schefres, PhD (Haifa)

Phone: 052-9569248

Jerusalem office

Phone: 054-8859038

Ramallah office

Phone: +97222989788

You are also entitled to alter your statement at any point during or after the interview. Unless you specifically ask to be identified by name, I will not disclose your name or any other identifying characteristics (such as age, gender, ethnicity) in my research. I will refer to you as “one EcoPeace beneficiary”.

You do not have to fear for any negative consequences in case you choose not to participate in, or withdraw from, the study. No one will be informed about your decision. Although participation will not have any direct benefits for you, it will provide you with the opportunity to share your knowledge of the work of EcoPeace the overall water situation in the region.

Feedback and Debriefing

At the end of the interview you will have the chance to ask questions, make further comments, or voice any concerns. You may contact me via the information provided at the top of this form if you have any questions, comments, or concerns later. You can ask for a summary of my thesis after it has been approved by my University (approximately February 2018) either by email or mail.

Dissemination

This research project will be made publically available on the University of Manitoba theses database (URL: <https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca>). The research may also form the basis for publication in journals or presentations at conferences.

If you choose to participate, please indicate your preferred time and location, so that we can schedule a meeting that is convenient for everyone.

If you choose not to participate in this research project, I thank you for your time and consideration.

CONSENT

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba, Canada. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or telephone +1204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

1. If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

2. Identifying information – Please check one box:

I wish to remain anonymous in the research and any reports resulting from this research.

OR

I agree to have my name or other identifying information included in the research reports.

3. I agree to have our conversation documented via audio recording.

Yes

No