

CROSSING BORDERS THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION

Civil Society and Environmental Peacebuilding in the lower part of the Jordan River, the case of EcoPeace Middle East between 1994 and 2020

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ABSTRACT

This research project examines how the environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) EcoPeace Middle East (EcoPeace) defined its role as a non-state environmental peacebuilder over the Jordan River through the employment of a constructivist framework. More precisely, this thesis offers a new interpretation of environmental peacebuilding over the lower part of the Jordan River by analysing both the evolution of the NGO from 1994 to 2020 and the projects carried out by the non-state actor in this conflictual region of the Middle East.

Much of the current literature on environmental peacemaking on the Jordan Basin underlines that this practice is predicated upon the depoliticization of natural problems, a strategy that downplays the political implications of water issues, emphasizing their technical management. According to this perspective, the depoliticization of environmental problems strengthens the status quo of water diplomacy on the Jordan Basin, thus supporting the bilateral management of natural resources favouring Israel at the expenses of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Jordan and local communities. Instead, this thesis argues that while the depoliticization of water issues played a key role in the definition of EcoPeace's ideas and practices, it did not entail a confirmation of the status quo. In fact, EcoPeace's emphasis on the amelioration of environmental conditions contributed to the advancement of new forms of water management built on the regional collaboration of different actors. In this way, the NGO set off an initial form of cooperation among Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians.

Therefore, this thesis fosters a better understanding of environmental peacemaking, and the role played in it by civil society, looking closer at the activity realized by the non-state actor EcoPeace.

Keywords: *EcoPeace Middle East, Jordan River, Non-Governmental Organizations, Environmental Peacebuilding, Constructivism.*

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EcoPeace	EcoPeace Middle East
GWN	Good Water Neighbors
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
IR	International Relations
PA	Palestinian Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNSC	United Nations Security Council



(Figure 1- UNEP)

INTRODUCTION

“We can be good water neighbors and we can be leaders for the rest of the world if we work together.”¹

In 2017, Gidon Bromberg, the Israeli co-director of the non-governmental organization (NGO) EcoPeace Middle East (EcoPeace) pronounced these words to optimistically describe the future of the relationship among Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians in the region of the Jordan Basin. Even though this statement might appear naïve, since the mid-1990s the lower part of the Jordan River, which runs from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea crossing Jordan, Israel, and Palestine (*Figure 1*), has been the scene of new opportunities for environmental cooperation that need to be addressed.² A unique example of this can be identified in EcoPeace, the only non-state actor that transcends national boundaries in this region bringing together Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians to foster collaboration to protect shared natural heritage in the Middle East.³ Since its establishment in 1994, the NGO has acted in multiple ways to tackle water security over the lower part of the Jordan River, a natural resource that is constantly threatened by water scarcity, water diversion and pollution.⁴ More precisely, to manage these issues, the three offices of EcoPeace situated in Amman, Ramallah and Tel Aviv grapple with environmental peacebuilding, seeking to advance both sustainable development and the creation of necessary conditions for lasting peace in the region of the Jordan Valley, which continues to be affected by the perpetual Arab-Israeli conflict.⁵

Through the years following its establishment, EcoPeace has been awarded prestigious international prizes including The Skoll Awards for Social Entrepreneurship in 2009, and the Euro-Med Award for Dialogue in 2010.⁶ Nevertheless, the role played by the non-state actor in environmental peacebuilding activities over the Jordan Basin has often been questioned by academics in the field of global natural governance. For instance, it has commonly been assumed

¹ Gidon Bromberg, “Water Security is National Security,” Tedx Talks, November 17, 2017, YouTube video, 15:03, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-TE1LHBhEE&ab_channel=TEDxTalks.

² Yurniko Yasuda, Juliane Schillinger, Patrick Huntjens, Charlotte Alofs, Rens de Man, *Transboundary Water Cooperation over the lower part of the Jordan River Basin: Legal Political Economic Analysis of Current and Future Potential Cooperation*, (The Hague: The Hague Institute for Global Justice, 2017), 1, https://www.siwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Jordan-Basin-Report_design.pdf.

³ “About Us,” EcoPeace Middle East, accessed December 27, 2020, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/about-us/>.

⁴ “Lower Jordan River,” EcoPeace Middle East, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/projects/lower-jordan-river/>.

⁵ “About Us,” EcoPeace Middle East, accessed December 27, 2020, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/about-us/>.

⁶ “Awards,” EcoPeace Middle East, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/awards-2/>.

that environmental peacebuilding over the Jordan River tends to enforce the unbalanced status quo of water cooperation favoring Israel at the expenses of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Jordan.⁷ Similarly, due to its nature as a civil society actor, EcoPeace is believed to benefit from a lower degree of legitimacy than states in the field of global governance and this is regarded as an obstacle to the realization of environmental projects.⁸

To provide insight into the relationship between EcoPeace and natural peacemaking this thesis attempts to answer the following question:

How did the non-governmental organization EcoPeace Middle East define its role as a civil society actor among Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians over the lower part of the Jordan River between 1994 and 2020?

In the following chapters, the research question is unpacked into two sub-questions. Firstly, the line of questioning guiding this dissertation focuses on EcoPeace's self-representation of its historical development as an NGO by providing an answer to the sub-question:

(1) *How did EcoPeace perceive its development as an environmental non-state actor in the political context of the Arab Israeli conflict between 1994 and 2020?*

Secondly, this dissertation analyzes how EcoPeace grappled with environmental issues over the Jordan River, by answering the sub-question:

(2) *How did EcoPeace approach and tackle environmental issues over the Jordan River between 1994 and 2020?*

Thus, these questions will foster a critical analysis of the work conducted by EcoPeace in the context of the Arab-Israeli war.

⁷ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 104-105; Tobias Ide, "The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding," *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog "Are there Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 214-215.

⁸ Kate O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 190.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Contributing to the debates regarding non-state actors in international relations, environmental peacebuilding, and EcoPeace

In seeking to answer the research question, this dissertation is positioned within three academic debates which relate to the fields of international relations (IR) and environmental governance.

Firstly, this thesis contributes to the advancement of the discussion revolving around the role of NGOs in international politics. Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, a large and growing body of literature in the field of IR has been investigating the role of non-state actors in global governance.⁹ The development of new approaches to the study of the international system, such as social constructivism, challenged the neorealist and neoliberal lack of attention towards non-state actors, setting up the basis for discussing the degree to which NGOs can participate in the global arena.¹⁰ In 1992, James Rosenau highlighted that the end of the Cold War paved the way for greater involvement of civil society in global affairs, thus marginalizing state actors in the global system.¹¹ In this regard, in 2002, Rodney Bruce Hall and Thomas Biersteker specifically analyzed how NGOs can exert their power, which they defined as a moral authority.¹² However, this position was challenged by a critical constructivist perspective that portrayed NGOs as actors that reproduce pre-existing orders imposed by states.¹³ To overcome the strict dichotomy opposing the NGOs' capability of enhancing change and the non-state actors' confirmation of the status quo, at the beginning of the 21st century new studies started to look at the work of NGOs following a Habermasian approach.¹⁴ Namely, in 2000 Thomas Risse and in 2005 John Searle emphasized that NGOs are observer-dependent actors since

⁹ Thomas Davies, "Introducing NGOs and International Relations," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1.

¹⁰ Davies, "Introducing NGOs and International Relations," 10.

¹¹ James N. Rosenau "Governance, Order and Change in World Politics," In *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, edited by James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-29.

¹² Rodney Bruce Hall, Thomas J. Biersteker, *The Emergence of Private Authority in Global Governance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 13-14.

¹³ Christopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 120.

¹⁴ Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist," 122.

their capability of fostering change depends on their ability to interact with the audience to which they address their ideas.¹⁵

Therefore, this research project seeks to integrate the IR debate revolving around NGOs by contributing to the advancement of the communicative constructivist regard. In fact, this approach has been generally overlooked by the constructivist debate and it has never been applied to the study of a non-state actor working on environmental issues within the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Secondly, this thesis is tied to the study of environmental peacebuilding since it examines the natural peacemaking practices elaborated by EcoPeace over the Jordan Basin. Environmental peacemaking is a relatively new subject that paved its way in the field of development and cooperation at the beginning of the 21st century, counterbalancing the assumption that water scarcity leads to conflictual relationships among peoples.¹⁶ Although the outcomes of environmental peacebuilding trigger debate among scholars, there appears to be some agreement that environmental peacebuilding leads to the depoliticization of natural issues. Among the authors that have drawn attention to this characteristic, it is possible to identify the environmental experts Karin Aggestam, Andres Jägerkog and Tobias Ide. In 2018, Aggestam highlighted that water cooperation leads to the depoliticization of environmental issues due to the excessive emphasis put by its actors on rational problem-solving.¹⁷ According to Aggestam's realist perspective, the depoliticization of water conflicts in areas as polarized as the Middle East prevents the elaboration of alternative ideas, reinforcing the status quo of power relations and marginalizing local actors.¹⁸ A similar position was shared by Jägerkog, who stressed that environmental peacebuilding in the Jordan Basin tends to undermine the rights of the Palestinians due to the lack of attention provided to the political implications of water management.¹⁹ Following this line of questioning, in 2020, Tobias Ide enquired about the drawbacks of environmental peacemaking, summarizing his results in the Six Ds: depoliticization, displacement,

¹⁵ Thomas Risse, "Let's Argue!: Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54, no.1 (Winter 2000): 1-39, https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/2601316?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents; John Searle, "What Is an Institution?" *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1-22, doi:10.1017/S1744137405000020.

¹⁶ Nicole Harari and Jesse Roseman, *Environmental Peacebuilding Theory and Practice*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: Friends of Earth Middle East, January 2008), 7, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/environmental-peacebuilding/>.

¹⁷ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018).

¹⁸ Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water," 104-105.

¹⁹ Andres Jägerkog "Are there Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

discrimination, deterioration into conflict, delegitimization of the state and degradation of the environment.²⁰ Even though these considerations contributed to fostering the general comprehension of environmental peacebuilding, they included two weaknesses. Firstly, these studies tended to draw conclusions focusing on the efforts to water diplomacy realized by state actors, hence adopting a realist point of view. Secondly, these experts agreed on considering the division between politics and the environment as a drawback of peacebuilding by overlooking the contextual and historical elements in which this practice was implemented. Thus, the depoliticization of environmental problems was *a priori* believed to reinforce the status quo of power relations, without referring to the singular efforts to water cooperation made by non-state actors.

In this regard, this research project seeks to contribute to the debate revolving around environmental peacebuilding by shedding light on the ideas and the practices adopted by the non-state player EcoPeace. Through a communicative constructivist approach combined with significant attention to the geopolitical arena of the Jordan Basin, this dissertation challenges the assumption that the depoliticization of environmental issues automatically results in the strengthening of the status quo of water diplomacy, seeking to better comprehend the practice of natural peacebuilding among Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians.

Thirdly, this thesis is concerned with previous studies conducted on EcoPeace since it stresses the historical developments of the NGO as well as its strategy of environmental peacebuilding. Overall, EcoPeace attracted increasing attention from the academic community thanks to the realization of the project Good Water Neighbors (GWN) in 2001. This project was frequently adopted as a case study for field research on environmental cooperation conducted by experts in the field, including Simona Benfenati who was one of the first researchers to shed light on this project in 2009 and Tobias Ide who studied this program in 2018 and 2020.²¹ Moreover, EcoPeace was also the subject of studies revolving around the NGO's strategy of environmental peacebuilding to work with communities and institutions over the two sides of the Jordan River. For instance, Marina Djaneas,

²⁰ Tobias Ide, "The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding," *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 1-9, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>

²¹ Simona Benfenati, "Il Progetto Good Water Neighbors nella pratica quotidiana: il people to people approach alla prova delle comunità israeliane, palestinesi e giordane. L'acqua quale strumento di pace e di empowerment sociale nel quadro del conflitto arabo-israeliano" (PhD diss., University of Bologna, 2009); Tobias Ide, Vakur Sumer and Larissa M. Aldehoff, "Environmental Peacebuilding in the Middle East" in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, ed. By Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 175-188; Tobias Ide, Amit Tubi, "Education and Environmental Peacebuilding: Insights from Three Projects in Israel and Palestine," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no.1 (2020) 1-17, <https://www-tandfonline-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/full/10.1080/24694452.2019.1613954>.

Teis Jorgensen and Elizabeth Koch-Ya'ari analyzed this aspect in 2015, while the graduate student Andrew Light conducted a study on EcoPeace's strategy in 2020.²² Nevertheless, the existing accounts on EcoPeace reveal three limits that this thesis seeks to overcome through its constructivist theoretical framework. First and foremost, the non-state actor has never been analyzed through the lenses of IR theories. Secondly, the studies conducted on the NGO tended to overlook some aspects such as its identity and its historical development. And finally, little has been written on the limits and the difficulties met by EcoPeace and its environmental peacebuilding strategy. In fact, a significant number of studies realized on the NGO have adopted a descriptive approach, simply outlining the projects and the activities realized by EcoPeace, thus duplicating the narrative put forward by the NGO.

Therefore, this thesis seeks to grapple with these historiographical weaknesses, attempting to create a critical discussion revolving around the work of EcoPeace through the lenses of the IR theory of communicative constructivism.

In the endeavour to contribute to these three historiographies, this thesis results to be both academically and socially relevant. Academically, this analysis fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the role played by EcoPeace in international politics, by conducting a communicative constructivist analysis of its development and its approach towards environmental issues over the Jordan Basin. In doing so, this research project also fosters the debate concerning environmental peacebuilding and the position held by the depoliticization of environmental resources in defining the outcomes of this practice. Whereas societally, this analysis increases awareness regarding EcoPeace's collaborative efforts over shared natural heritage in the Middle East, highlighting the weaknesses and the potentials defining the NGO.

²² Marina Djarneas, Teis Jorgensen, Elizabeth Koch-Ya'ari, "Evolution of Environmental Peacemaking Intervention Strategies in Jordan-Palestine-Israel," *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 10, no.2, (August 2015):74-80, https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/48602901?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents; Andrew Light, "Environmental Peacebuilding and the Transferability of EcoPeace Middle East's Strategy" (MS diss., University of Michigan, April 2020).

METHODOLOGY

To analyse EcoPeace's efforts to transform the Jordan River into a source of environmental cooperation, this study is built on the assessment of primary sources. This category encompasses official documents published by the NGO, like reports of its projects, overviews of its strategy, and policy briefs. In addition to these sources, this thesis analyses some materials coming from other international actors with which the NGO collaborated, such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Furthermore, this research project also employs articles and interviews published both by regional and international newspapers and some of the videoconferences available on the web. These materials are then combined with academic articles revolving around the historiographical discussions previously explained and the theoretical framework upon which this thesis is constructed.

By and large, the sources upon which this research project is built brought about three methodological challenges. Firstly, due to EcoPeace's engagement in the elaboration and/or selection of the materials, my research ran the risk of being descriptive, thus duplicating the NGO's narrative. Hence, throughout the analysis of my materials, I sought to overcome this obstacle by employing the constructivist theoretical framework outlined in chapter 1, which helped me to keep a critical eye during the realization of my analysis.

The second impediment was then represented by the limited number of available sources regarding the work of EcoPeace. Even though EcoPeace's website offers several materials, it is undeniable that non-state actors are less documented than states in terms of available archival sources.²³ To undermine this problem, since the first stages of my thesis I reached out to the NGO, arranging a digital meeting with the co-founder and Israeli co-director of EcoPeace, the environmental lawyer, Gidon Bromberg. After graduating with a thesis on the environmental impact of the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, in 1994 Gidon Bromberg convened a meeting of experts in water management coming from Jordan, Israel and Palestine which later gave rise to the project of EcoPeace. Today, Mr Bromberg is recognized as a specialist in water cooperation, and he is frequently invited to international conferences on environmental peacebuilding. More precisely, I decided to interview Mr Bromberg since he coordinated the work of EcoPeace from the establishment of the NGO, thus participating in the development of EcoPeace's techniques and understanding of environmental issues. The enlightening interview with Gidon Bromberg took place on the 1st of March 2021 and it revolved around the mission of EcoPeace in the Jordan River and its historical

²³ Julia Chaitin, Fida Obeidi, Sami Adwan, Dan Bar-On, "Environmental Work on Peace Work: The Palestinian-Israeli Case," *Peace and Conflict Studies* 9, no.2, (January 2002): 66, <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol9/iss2/4/>.

development between 1994 and 2020. With Gidon Bromberg's permission, I recorded our talk, and I included its transcript after the bibliography.

Although this interview provided me with valuable insight into the work of EcoPeace and its ideas of environmental peacebuilding, it is also crucial to highlight the third methodological limit arising from this technique. Namely, the fact that I only interviewed one of the three co-directors of the NGO, due to the availability of the collaborators. In this regard, I attempted to overcome this minor obstacle by including findings coming from conferences realized with the collaborators working not only in the office situated in Tel Aviv but also the ones in Amman and Ramallah.

Interestingly, the methodology defining this research project stands out among the studies conducted on EcoPeace and environmental peacebuilding. The existing accounts on the non-state actor tended to study the NGO through field research, hence focusing on specific projects yet failing to look at EcoPeace's relation with the international arena. For instance, Tobias Ide and Amit Tubi realized an enlightening analysis of EcoPeace's youth program, however they based their argument predominantly on the empirical findings gathered through field research, overlooking at the documents guiding this project and its genesis.²⁴ On the contrary, this thesis is built upon a wide range of primary sources stemming from within and outside EcoPeace, hence it provides a broader understanding of the NGO's role within the global stage.

More precisely, this thesis examines these documents following the research question and its two sub-questions, thus structuring the analysis into three chapters further divided into four sections.

The first chapter aims to provide a constructivist conceptual framework to study EcoPeace and its position in the international arena. Firstly, this section provides insight into the role of NGOs in international politics, explaining why communicative constructivism is the most suitable theory to adopt throughout the analysis. Secondly, this section highlights the role of civil society in environmental governance, revealing the possibilities and limitations faced by NGOs in this political sector. Then, this chapter draws attention to the concepts of peacebuilding and environmental peacebuilding, explaining how NGOs can participate in these practices. To do so, this part looks at Lederach's reflections and the constructivist understanding of peacebuilding, relating them to the study of EcoPeace. Hence, this chapter is built on the academic publications that will be used as lenses to analyze data deriving from primary sources.

²⁴ Tobias Ide, Amit Tubi, "Education and Environmental Peacebuilding: Insights from Three Projects in Israel and Palestine," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no.1 (2020) 1-17, <https://www-tandfonline-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/full/10.1080/24694452.2019.1613954>.

The second chapter refers to the self-representation of EcoPeace's historical development as an NGO in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict between 1994 and 2020. The first section looks at how the NGO perceived its development as an evolution from environmental non-state actor to environmental peacebuilder, and it is followed by a second section which examines the NGO's justification of this progressive change. Then, this chapter provides a critical analysis of the evolution of the NGO, hence analyzing the narrative constructed by the non-state actor through the inputs provided by the conceptual framework. Thus, this chapter is built on the interview realized with Gidon Bromberg, the strategic documents provided by the NGO, conferences held by EcoPeace and two diplomatic agreements that are essential to foster a critical analysis of EcoPeace's role over the Middle East.

The research project is then followed by the third chapter, which revolves around the analysis of EcoPeace's work in the Jordan Basin. In this regard, the first section outlines the strategy upon which the NGO built its environmental peacebuilding activities, encompassing institution-directed and community-based activities. In this regard, the second and third sections look closer at two projects devised by the NGO, namely the bottom-up program GWN and the advocacy project Water Cannot Wait. Hence, this section combines the strategic documents provided by the NGO with articles and diplomatic documents to critically assess EcoPeace's environmental peacebuilding strategy.

The findings gathered throughout the chapters are then summarized in the conclusion, which highlights the possibilities for future studies on the topic of environmental peacebuilding.

CHAPTER 1: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The role of NGOs in global politics

As a trilateral NGO, EcoPeace falls into the IR category of civil society. This term defines voluntary associations and movements that exist independently of the states and that can counterbalance state power while working as channels between institutions and societal demands.²⁵ Therefore, while IGOs as the UN are composed of states bound together by international agreements, NGOs as EcoPeace are established via the cooperation of individuals, thus they are recognized as non-state actors by international law.²⁶

In this regard, to better assess EcoPeace's role as a civil society player in the international arena, this thesis revolves around a threefold theoretical framework. Firstly, to analyze its primary sources, this dissertation adopts a constructivist perspective that sheds light on EcoPeace's ideas and interests within the arena of the Jordan Basin. Secondly, this dissertation looks closer at the role of civil society in natural governance to underline both the contributions and the limits experienced by EcoPeace in this field of international relations. Thirdly, this thesis resorts to the concepts of peacebuilding and environmental peacemaking, to investigate EcoPeace's strategy and projects of natural reconciliation over the Jordan Valley.

Although these concepts touch upon different topics related to the general understanding of non-state actors, these three elements are closely tied by the constructivist approach to IR upon which this thesis is built. Hence, through the lenses of constructivism, these three elements will help to define EcoPeace's identity, EcoPeace's participation in environmental governance and EcoPeace's contribution to environmental peacebuilding. To better grasp what these concepts refer to and why they are essential to this research project, this chapter outlines the three of them, highlighting their connection to the study of EcoPeace.

1.1. The role of NGOs in the constructivist approach to International Relations

To analyze EcoPeace's identity and strategy of environmental peacebuilding over the lower part of the Jordan River, constructivism represents the most suitable IR theory. Traditional IR approaches including realism, neoliberalism and liberalism analyze power relations as based on material

²⁵ Kate O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations*. Second edition (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2017), 57-58.

²⁶ Steve Charnovitz, "Nongovernmental Organizations and International Law," *The American Journal of International Law* 100, no.6 (2006): 352, https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/3651151?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

conditions (such as military forces and economic capabilities), hence stressing exclusively the role of states and IGOs in the global arena.²⁷ Conversely, constructivism challenges these perspectives by arguing that social aspects including ideas and thoughts can shape international politics, hence providing non-state actors as EcoPeace with the possibility of participating in global governance.²⁸ To better understand how constructivism can help to answer the main research question, this section looks at its pillars and debates tying them to the case study of EcoPeace.

Overall, constructivism agrees with the classical theories previously mentioned on the assumption that international politics is shaped by anarchy.²⁹ However, constructivists seek to overcome the dichotomy between the realist focus on the zero-sum game and the liberal focus on international cooperation, by drawing attention to the theorization of the structure and the rise of its actors.³⁰ In this regard, in 1992 Alexander Wendt explained that both anarchy and the distribution of power stem from the expectations that define international actors' identities and interests, hence highlighting that reality is socially constructed and not a priori determined by material conditions.³¹

Therefore, the constructivist interpretation of the international anarchy will be used as an analytical tool to comprehend EcoPeace's attempts to modify water cooperation over the Jordan Valley despite the NGO's limited material power. As we will remark, EcoPeace sought to counterbalance the status quo of water cooperation among states, bringing new ideas of water diplomacy to the table, hence shifting the attention from given material conditions to gradually devised thoughts.

Following this line of understanding, constructivism enlightens the crucial role played by ideas in shaping and developing social and global relations over time. More precisely, in 2005 Nina

²⁷ Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 209.

²⁸ Jackson and Sørensen, *Introduction*, 209.

²⁹ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring, 1992): 397, https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/2706858?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

³⁰ Sebastian Maslow, Ayako Nakamura, "Constructivism and Ecological Thought: A Critical Discussion on the Prospects for a "Greening" of IR Theory," *Interdisciplinary Information Sciences* 14, no.2 (2008): 135, https://www-jstage-jst-go-jp.proxy.library.uu.nl/article/iis/14/2/14_2_133/article.

³¹ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring, 1992): 397, https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/2706858?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

Tannenwald defined ideas as “*Mental constructs held by individuals, sets of distinctive beliefs, principles and attitudes that provide broad orientations for behaviour and policy.*”³²

In line with this definition, Daniel Philpott explained that revolutions in ideas predicated upon interactions can result in changes in international relations and sovereignty since they bring about modifications in identities and power relations.³³ Namely, Philpott highlighted that shared norms and mutually agreed ideas determine the constitution of international society.³⁴ The latter defines whether an actor is a legitimate polity or not in the international system, thus whether a member is recognized as properly participating in society or not.³⁵ Hence, this constructivist position challenges the traditional IR theories which believe that identities and interests depend on a priori material conditions and that states know who they are and what they want regardless of their interactions with other actors.³⁶ Yet how is this constructivist perspective relevant to the study of EcoPeace?

Overall, Daniel Philpott’s interpretation of ideas as norms that need to enhance mutual agreement to bring about change will help us to understand why EcoPeace emphasized environmental amelioration, instead of political peace during its projects. As a matter of fact, in the polarized arena of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the natural cooperation put forward by EcoPeace will be studied as an idea capable of enhancing more consensus among parties rather than political cooperation. Therefore, as we will see, EcoPeace’s focus on the idea of environmental amelioration can be perceived as a tool employed by the NGO to interact with the other actors of the international system, leading to change in water diplomacy.

After having understood the main concepts defining constructivism, it is crucial to better investigate how this IR theory perceives the position of the NGOs within the international arena. Contrary to realist and liberal perception of non-state actors as observers of the global system, constructivism considers NGOs to be an amalgamation of ideas capable of acting in the anarchical international arena.³⁷ However, even within constructivism, it is possible to identify three slightly

³² Nina Tannenwald, “Ideas and Explanation: Advancing the Theoretical Agenda,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no.2. (2005): 15,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265870633_Ideas_and_Explanation_Advancing_the_Theoretical_Agenda.

³³ Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2001), 4.

³⁴ Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, 3.

³⁵ Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, 15-20.

³⁶ Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 217.

³⁷ Christopher Marc Lilyblad, “NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory,” in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 118.

different approaches to the study of non-state actors and international relations. Firstly, both global and transnational constructivist paradigms emphasize that states are only one category of the multiple players involved in shaping the international system, hence they both draw attention to NGOs and their potential of determining the course of international relations.³⁸ For instance, in 2002 Rodney Bruce Hall and Thomas J. Biersteker explained that NGOs can acquire a moral authority, which differs from the territorial authority of states since it is not associated with the legitimate monopoly of violence, but rather with three mechanisms: agenda-setting, expertise, and establishment of progressive goals.³⁹ Therefore, according to this perspective, NGOs do not only influence international politics, but they can foster tangent institutional change.⁴⁰

A slightly different position is the one expressed by the critical constructivists. According to these scholars, non-state actors tend to reproduce states' norms and ideas, failing to enhance proper change in the international system.⁴¹ Following Neuman and Sending's argument, NGOs by working as intermediaries of government rationality tend to reinforce the status quo imposed by states instead of challenging it to introduce a new order.⁴²

On the contrary, the communicative approach lies at the crossroads between these two views, seeking to overcome the dichotomy between global and critical constructivism by shedding light on the observer-dependent nature of non-state actors. According to this perspective, the status of norms and rules devised by NGOs cannot be assumed to carry a priori moral, since they depend on how the observer reacts.⁴³ This means that NGOs try to interact with the other actors of the international arena by seeking to persuade them to abandon their pre-existing norms in favour of a new order appealing to their subjectivities.⁴⁴ According to this nuanced vision, NGOs work in strong relation with the international system in which they are inserted. In this way, non-state actors do not advocate for

³⁸ Cristopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 118-120.

³⁹ Rodney Bruce Hall, Thomas J. Biersteker, *The Emergence of Private Authority in Global Governance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 13-14.

⁴⁰ Hall, Biersteker, *The Emergence of Private*, 12-14.

⁴¹ Cristopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 120.

⁴² Iver Neumann, Ole J. Sending, "Nongovernmental Organizations: From Sovereignty to Liberal Governmentality," in *Governing the Global Polity: Practice, Mentality, Rationality*, ed. Ann Arbor (MI University of Michigan Press, 2014), 110-31.

⁴³ Cristopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 123.

⁴⁴ Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist," 123.

radical changes since their status is tied to the institutional structure of the system, but they rather advocate for systematic change to still have an impact on their audience.⁴⁵

Therefore, this thesis adopts a communicative constructivist approach to better understand EcoPeace's relationship with the international system. More precisely, communicative constructivism will help this dissertation to overcome the dichotomy opposing the enthusiastic global and transnational approaches to the sceptic and critical perspectives, drawing attention to EcoPeace's interaction with the context. Thus, following this interpretation, EcoPeace's ideas and practices of environmental peacebuilding based on the depoliticization of environmental issues will not be studied as tools that enabled the NGO to acquire a stable authority over the Jordan River, as suggested by the global regard. Similarly, EcoPeace's distinction between environmental problems and political issues will not be targeted as a reproduction of the status quo of water diplomacy among states, as suggested by the critical perspective. Instead, the communicative constructivist regard will highlight that EcoPeace's depoliticization of environmental issues was a moderate approach adopted by the NGO to enhance agreement among conflictual parties, while slowly challenging the status quo of water cooperation.

To sum up, constructivism, and especially communicative constructivism, work as perfect lenses to look at how EcoPeace paved its way into the global system. The constructivist perspective on the anarchical international arena as shaped by social interactions and ideas will be employed as an analytical tool to understand EcoPeace's emphasis on environmental amelioration resulting in EcoPeace's ideas and strategy of depoliticization of natural issues. Similarly, the communicative constructivist lenses will help this research project to understand that EcoPeace's distinction between politics and environment helped the NGO to interact with its audience while seeking legitimacy within the international system. Hence, this line of analysis would not be possible through the employment of traditional IR approaches, since they would neglect the non-material ways of modifying the international context, focusing exclusively on the anarchical system as shaped by state actors that benefit from material power. Similarly, other constructivist regards could be reductive in the realization of EcoPeace's analysis, since they would undermine the important relationship between the NGO and the context.

1.2. The role of NGOs in global environmental governance

⁴⁵ Christopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 124.

To study how EcoPeace defined its way into global environmental governance, constructivism represents an essential tool to draw attention to the relationship between the management of natural issues and civil society. More precisely, the degree to which non-state actors participate in the management of environmental politics has been subject to significant debates influenced by the perspectives provided by IR theories. Realists and neoliberalists tend to consider states and national interests as central paradigms of environmental governance, whereas constructivists examine environmental cooperation as shaped by the collaborative efforts of states and civil society in institutional and non-institutional contexts.⁴⁶ Hence, by employing a constructivist interpretation of global environmental governance, this research project highlights the participation of EcoPeace in the field of natural management, examining the impacts that this non-state actor had on the management of natural resources over the Jordan River. To better understand how a constructivist approach to environmental governance can help this thesis, this section underlines what motivates non-state actors to take part in environmental governance and how these players are involved in this field.

According to the constructivist position of Emile Dupuits, Liliana Andonova and Ronald Mitchell, civil society can contribute to environmental management by reacting to the difficulties met by states and IGOs in setting up regimes on shared natural issues.⁴⁷ Following this perspective, traditional state actors are challenged by environmental problems since these issues are complex and they hardly follow national borders. Following this analysis, civil society needs to be involved in natural governance to manage the complex transnational environmental crisis that challenges the state-based approach to environmental diplomacy.⁴⁸

In this regard, this constructivist perspective on the role of civil society in natural management will shed light on EcoPeace's contribution to water diplomacy over the Jordan Basin. More precisely, these reflections will foster our comprehension concerning EcoPeace's interest in grappling with water scarcity enhancing regional cooperation among institutions and communities.

⁴⁶ Kate O'Neill *The Environment and International Relations*. Second edition (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2017), 9.

⁴⁷ Liliana B. Andonova and Ronald B. Mitchell. "The Rescaling of Global Environmental Politics," *The Annual Review of Environment and Resource* 35, (November 2010): 256-258, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1146/annurev-environ-100809-125346>; Emile Dupuits, "Actors other than States: The Role of Civil Society and NGOs as Drivers of Change," in *Environmental Climate Change and International Relations*, ed. Gustavo Sosa-Nunez and Ed Atkins (Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 114-116.

⁴⁸ Dupuits, "Actors other than States," 119.

As we will remark, EcoPeace counterbalanced the traditional bilateral agreements among states, seeking to promote a new vision of natural management to grapple with shared environmental issues.

Shifting the regard from why civil society participates in environmental governance, to how non-state actors work within this field, it is possible to notice that NGOs generally contribute to environmental governance in four ways: bringing knowledge and expertise to the field, monitoring international agreements, lobbying during international negotiations, and increasing awareness concerning specific issues.⁴⁹

As we will remark while studying EcoPeace's environmental peacebuilding strategy, between 1994 and 2020 the NGO dealt with water security within the Jordan River following these four tasks. Hence, their explanation will help to understand that EcoPeace tackled water scarcity in the lower part of the Jordan River providing relevant attention to the technical challenges related to this problem to gain legitimacy as an environmental expert within the international arena.

However, even from a constructivist point of view, the participation of NGOs in global governance is not devoid of obstacles. Indeed, a noteworthy challenge experienced by civil society involved in natural management is the legitimacy issue, a recurring topic of EcoPeace's analysis within this research project. Since NGOs are not the product of popular elections, their actions can be seen as illegitimate both from within and outside the NGO.⁵⁰ In fact, not only the other actors of the international system can doubt the non-state actor's work, yet also the members of the NGO can lose trust in the work of the non-state actor.⁵¹ Thus, differently from states, environmental NGOs grapple with a lack of legitimacy, a condition that can undermine their position as leading players in the international arena.

Interestingly, the problems of internal and external legitimacy will be central in this dissertation. As we will see, since its establishment in 1994 EcoPeace had to face this issue due to its nature as a trilateral environmental non-state actor, and this challenge played a huge role in shaping the NGO's ideas and practices of environmental cooperation.

To sum up, a constructivist approach to the study of global environmental governance will raise awareness on the role held by EcoPeace in dealing with natural problems over the Jordan Basin.

⁴⁹ Emilie Dupuits, "Actors other than States: The Role of Civil Society and NGOs as Drivers of Change," in *Environmental Climate Change and International Relations*, ed. Gustavo Sosa-Nunez and Ed Atkins (Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 114-116; Kate O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations*. Second edition (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2017), 90-92.

⁵⁰ Kate O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations*. Second edition (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2017), 190.

⁵¹ O'Neill, *The Environment*, 190.

More precisely, this concept will help to understand what motivated the NGO to deal with environmental problems and how EcoPeace approached these issues while facing both internal and external legitimacy challenges. Thus, different IR approaches to the study of global environmental governance could not provide this study with accurate analytical tools, since they would focus exclusively on the efforts made by states without considering the contributions brought by non-state actors.

1.3. The role of NGOs in peacebuilding activities

The third and last conceptual element composing this theoretical framework is represented by the role of non-state actors in peacebuilding activities, analysed through the lenses of constructivism. More precisely, this approach will help this research project to enlighten the position of EcoPeace in environmental peacemaking, shifting the attention from the role played by material conditions to the contribution of ideas and norms in fostering peace over a conflictual arena. Before devolving into the analysis of the constructivist interpretation of peacebuilding, it is essential to define two key terms to study EcoPeace's strategy among Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians, namely peacebuilding and environmental peacemaking.

The former can be defined as a complex long-term activity that seeks to “*Reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development.*”⁵² This practice slowly became a discipline of global importance in the early 1990s and it gradually gave rise to multiple approaches to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts around the world. In this regard, at the beginning of the 21st century, the peacemaking practice met the natural collaboration, thus resulting in the discipline of environmental peacebuilding. Although it remains challenging for academics to provide a common interpretation of this practice, in 2019 Tobias Ide synthesized environmental peacebuilding as encompassing “*all forms of cooperation on environmental issues between distinct social groups, which aim at and/or achieve creating less violent and more peaceful relations between these groups.*”⁵³ Thus, natural peacebuilding can be understood as a practice that is built upon four

⁵² “Terminology- Peacebuilding,” United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed January 5, 2021, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology#:~:text=Peacebuilding%20aims%20to%20reduce%20the,necessary%20conditions%20for%20sustainable%20peace.>

⁵³ Tobias Ide, “The Impact of Environmental Cooperation on Peacemaking: Definitions, Mechanisms, and Empirical Evidence,” *International Studies Review*, no.21 (2019): 329, [https://academic-oupcom.proxy.library.uu.nl/isr/article/21/3/327/4953251?login=true.](https://academic-oupcom.proxy.library.uu.nl/isr/article/21/3/327/4953251?login=true)

mechanisms: the improvement of the environmental situation, the increase of trust and understanding, the creation of interdependence and the realization of new political institutions.⁵⁴

Yet, what is the role played by non-state actors in peacebuilding activities? According to the expert John Paul Lederach, NGOs play a role essential to enhance long-term peace both at national and local levels. In 1997 Lederach highlighted that NGOs are middle-range leaders since they are less vulnerable than grassroots communities, but they have more flexibility of thoughts than national and international institutions.⁵⁵ Therefore, Lederach explained that NGOs' middle-range position between top-level and local governance makes them crucial actors in the peacebuilding process, in which they can participate realizing educational projects (problem-solving workshops and training in conflict resolution), and advocacy programs (peace commissions and insider-partial teams).⁵⁶ Interestingly, Lederach's analysis of NGOs' interest in building bridges between grassroots communities and national institutions through a long-term strategy is in line with the constructivist interpretation of this practice, which shifts understanding of ideas as sources of peaceful relationships over a region.⁵⁷ More precisely, according to this constructivist perspective, enhancing peace requires three elements. Firstly, an interpretative bottom-up approach that brings the needs of peoples to the centre of the activities of peacebuilding.⁵⁸ Secondly, specific attention to the audience in its socio-cultural aspects to introduce new norms that can adapt to the context in which they are framed.⁵⁹ Thirdly, a strategy that aims at achieving sustainable peace in the long run.⁶⁰

Therefore, Lederach's reflection on the role of civil society in peacemaking activities and the constructivist interpretation of peacebuilding will help this research project to analyze EcoPeace's strategy of environmental peacemaking. In fact, from 1994 and 2020 EcoPeace worked closely both with local communities and national institutions, seeking to build bridges among top-level water

⁵⁴Tobias Ide, "The Impact of Environmental Cooperation on Peacemaking: Definitions, Mechanisms, and Empirical Evidence," *International Studies Review*, no.21 (2019): 331-332, <https://academic.oupcom.proxy.library.uu.nl/isr/article/21/3/327/4953251?login=true>.

⁵⁵ John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 94-95.

⁵⁶ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 94.

⁵⁷ Earl Conteh-Morgan, "Peacebuilding and Human Security: A Constructivist Perspective," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no.1, (Spring, Summer 2005): 72, https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/41852073?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

⁵⁸ Conteh-Morgan, "Peacebuilding and Human Security," 72

⁵⁹ Conteh-Morgan, "Peacebuilding and Human Security," 76.

⁶⁰ Conteh-Morgan, "Peacebuilding and Human Security," 72.

diplomacy and the needs arising from local communities. In doing so, EcoPeace aimed to foster peace in the long run, while adapting its norms and ideas to the context in which they were formed.

To sum up, the conceptual element of environmental peacebuilding and the role played within it by non-state actors will provide useful lenses to analyze EcoPeace's strategy of environmental reconciliation among Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians. These analytical tools will be employed to show that EcoPeace sought to promote a new form of long-term water cooperation in the Jordan Basin, based upon the combination of relevant attention to the needs of local communities and the adaptation to the socio-cultural environment. On the contrary, other IR approaches to peacebuilding would not provide this study with accurate interpretative lenses, since they would draw exclusive attention to the institutional attempts to securitize the region of the Middle East.

1.4. Conclusion

To conclude, the theoretical framework depicted in this chapter will guide the analysis of the civil society actor EcoPeace. Overall, the three concepts that will help this research project to study the NGO look closer at the role of non-state actors in three different, yet closely connected, fields: the international arena, global environmental governance, and peacebuilding activities. These conceptual tools will raise awareness on the role of EcoPeace as a civil society actor addressing the NGO's ideas, the NGO's participation in environmental governance and the NGO's contribution to environmental peacebuilding.

However, it would be incorrect to perceive these analytical concepts as separated elements since these pieces are closely tied by the IR theory of constructivism, which represents the fil rouge of EcoPeace's analysis.

Thanks to the communicative constructivist approach to the study of NGOs, this thesis will highlight the international role of the non-state actor EcoPeace, whose actions would be neglected by the traditional IR theories of realism, neorealism, and liberalism. In fact, constructivism will enable this thesis to analyze EcoPeace's ideas as sources of power in a global system characterized by anarchy, hence challenging the realist assumption that the international arena is dominated by states, whose power is tied to a priori material conditions. Similarly, the communicative constructivist approach will be useful to understand EcoPeace's relationship with the polarized context of the Arab-Israeli war. While transnational and critical constructivisms would look at the NGO's actions either as marked by moral authority or as defined by the enforcement of the status quo imposed by states, this thesis will seek to overcome this dichotomy, focusing on the relationship between EcoPeace's ideas and the context in which they are framed.

Similarly, the constructivist approach will also be essential to understand EcoPeace's contribution to global environmental governance. In fact, the traditional IR theories would be inaccurate to analyze the actions realized by the non-state actor, since they would predominantly focus on the state-based cooperation, overlooking the efforts realized by EcoPeace to manage the regional environmental crisis. Therefore, the analytical tools regarding the NGOs' possible contributions and limitations in the practice of environmental governance will help this thesis to understand how EcoPeace approached transnational environmental issues in the Jordan Basin.

Finally, constructivism will also play a key role in explaining how EcoPeace grappled with environmental peacebuilding. In fact, following a constructivist interpretation of this practice and combining it with Lederach's reflections on the role of NGOs in peacemaking, this thesis will shed light on EcoPeace's interest in building bridges among communities and institutions over the lower part of the Jordan River.

Hence, starting from the following chapter, these three theoretical elements tied by constructivism will be used as analytical tools to critically assess the findings coming from primary sources, seeking to achieve a clear answer to the research question.

CHAPTER 2: ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AND PEACE

Analysis of EcoPeace's development in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict

*“We are Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli environmentalists working together to protect our water – and our future.”*⁶¹

With this sentence, EcoPeace welcomes its audience to its recently renewed website. A short description that aims at providing an idea of what the NGO is and how it works over the Jordan Basin. To provide further insight into these topics, this section firstly analyzes how EcoPeace's portrayed its development from a non-state actor to leader in environmental peacebuilding. Secondly, this chapter draws attention to EcoPeace's understanding and justification of its evolution. And lastly, this section detaches the analysis from the NGO's self-analytical regard, hence providing a critical perspective on EcoPeace's development between 1994 and 2020.

In doing so, this chapter sheds light on an aspect that has been neglected by previous accounts on EcoPeace, namely the role of peace in the definition of the NGO's identity. In agreement with the studies on environmental peacebuilding conducted by Karin Aggestam, Andres Jägerskog, and Tobias Ide this chapter highlights that the search for peace in the Middle East was outweighed by EcoPeace's interest in the amelioration of environmental conditions.⁶² However, contrary to the aforementioned literature, this chapter argues that EcoPeace's focus on the improvement of water management did not result in the confirmation of the bilateral state-based water diplomacy characterizing the Jordan Valley.⁶³

Therefore, by studying EcoPeace's development and EcoPeace's ideas, this chapter clarifies how the NGO defined its role as a non-state actor over the Jordan River between 1994 and 2020.

⁶¹ “EcoPeace Middle East,” EcoPeace Middle East, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://ecopeaceme.org/>.

⁶² Karin Aggestam, “Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding,” in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, “The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding,” *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog “Are there Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin,” in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

⁶³ Aggestam, “Depoliticisation,” 104-105; Ide, “The Dark Side,” 3-4; Jägerkog, “Are There,” 216-217.

2.1. From environmental NGO to environmental peacebuilder: the evolution of EcoPeace from a self-perspective regard

EcoPeace was founded on the 7th of December 1994 in the Egyptian city of Taba during an environmental meeting that brought together Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians to discuss sustainable development issues in the Middle East.⁶⁴ As the website of the NGO underlines, this conference was the first-ever event bringing together the three peoples living by the lower part of the Jordan River and it was inspired by a desire for cooperation in line with the start of the Oslo peace process of 1993 between Israelis and Palestinians.⁶⁵

Both from the interview with Gidon Bromberg and the materials available on the website of the NGO, it is evident that EcoPeace perceived its role as characterized by a gradual development over time. Namely, between 1994 and 2001, EcoPeace regarded itself as a unique trilateral environmental NGO. Whereas from 2001 onwards, the NGO regarded its identity as shaped by the practice of environmental peacebuilding.

From a closer look at the narrative constructed by EcoPeace concerning its first years of activity, it is possible to notice that the NGO's actions stemmed from a very rational idea of environmental issues.⁶⁶ As Gidon Bromberg underlined, between 1994 and 2001, the NGO regarded environmental problems as regional challenges and it focused its work mainly on the protection and the improvement of the natural heritage of the region.⁶⁷

In line with this vision, Gidon Bromberg highlighted that EcoPeace aimed at fostering sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods in the region of the Jordan River, hence adopting a perspective essentially centred on the amelioration of environmental conditions.⁶⁸ Thus, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) explained that to achieve this goal, EcoPeace employed a technical approach based on the realization of studies, policy papers and analysis regarding the environmental conditions of the region, seeking to influence political institutions to make decisions

⁶⁴ "About Us," EcoPeace Middle East, accessed March 30, 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/about-us/>.

⁶⁵ "About Us," EcoPeace Middle East, accessed March 30, 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/about-us/>.

⁶⁶ Unknown, *Reflections Papers: EcoPeace Middle East, EcoPeace Middle East*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East), 1, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reflections-Paper-Gidon-Bromberg-EcoPeace-1.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

⁶⁸ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

that were sustainable both for the people and the environment.⁶⁹ For instance, between 1994 and 2001, the Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian collaborators of the NGO realized reports comparing the peace agreements and the place held by environmental concerns within them, thus concluding that water security was dangerously neglected by the diplomatic process managed by the states.⁷⁰

However, EcoPeace did not act in the same way throughout its whole existence. According to Gidon Bromberg, thanks to the implementation of the project Good Water Neighbors (GWN) in 2001, the NGO progressively acquired a more active role in the peace process within the Arab-Israeli conflict, fulfilling its role as an environmental peacebuilder.⁷¹ From the self-analytical paper of the NGO, it is possible to notice that with the beginning of the new century EcoPeace envisioned environmental issues in a more integrative way.⁷² This entailed that the NGO did not only focus on the technical amelioration of natural problems, but it also tackled the political, economic, and social implications tied to environmental issues.⁷³

In this regard, EcoPeace aimed to promote collaborative efforts to preserve the natural heritage of the Jordan River, while enhancing sustainable development and sustainable peace among conflictual peoples. To achieve this objective, the CEO stressed the importance of the introduction of a community-based approach, a strategy set off through the program GWN as a support of the research-based projects realized by the NGO.⁷⁴ Namely, this entailed that from 2001 to 2020, EcoPeace's activities sought to promote environmental cooperation among communities from both sides of the Jordan River through the organization of educational programs concerning the management of shared water resources.⁷⁵ These initiatives were geared towards the improvement of environmental conditions while seeking to build peace among the three peoples divided by the Arab-

⁶⁹ Unknown, *Reflections Papers: EcoPeace Middle East, EcoPeace Middle East*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East), 1, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reflections-Paper-Gidon-Bromberg-EcoPeace-1.pdf>

⁷⁰ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

⁷¹ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

⁷² Unknown, *Reflections Papers: EcoPeace Middle East, EcoPeace Middle East*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East), 1, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reflections-Paper-Gidon-Bromberg-EcoPeace-1.pdf>

⁷³ Unknown, *Reflections Papers*, 1.

⁷⁴ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

⁷⁵ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

Israeli conflict. As Giulia Giordano (EcoPeace’s international affairs manager) underlined, thanks to the program GWN, EcoPeace acquired experience as an environmental peacebuilder and this enabled the non-state actor to broaden its network, becoming a well-known player in the emerging field of natural peacemaking.⁷⁶

Therefore, according to the NGO’s point of view, between 1994 and 2020 EcoPeace gradually developed from being a unique environmental non-state actor to becoming a leader in the practice of environmental peacebuilding. This evolution was gradual, yet 2001 can be considered as a turning point due to the realization of the program GWN, which brought communities into the process, providing the NGO with a new role as a peacemaker.

2.2. Between survival and ideological reasons: EcoPeace’s justification of its evolution

To justify EcoPeace’s evolution, Gidon Bromberg shed light on two dynamics: the NGO’s quest for legitimacy and the NGO’s idea of environmental cooperation.

As far as the former is concerned, Gidon Bromberg stressed the connection between the historical development of the Arab-Israeli war and EcoPeace’s evolution. Namely, the CEO highlighted that since its establishment the non-state actor sought to pave its way into the region of the Jordan River by filling the gaps left by states in terms of environmental management.⁷⁷

More precisely, the self-analytical paper explained that initially, EcoPeace drew attention to issues related to the sustainable development of the Jordan Valley to counterbalance the overdevelopment programs put forward by Israel, Jordan and the PA during the peace process that characterized the 1990s.⁷⁸ According to Gidon Bromberg’s words:

⁷⁶ Giulia Giordano, “EcoPeace Global Dialogues: Webinar 1, April 22nd, 2020,” EcoPeace Middle East, April, 28, YouTube video, 0:25, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgaAXchXT1Y&list=PLm7kfdWVUWST92QuFP0OMV9NIHJbZZm2w&ab_channel=EcoPeaceMiddleEast.

⁷⁷ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

⁷⁸ Unknown, *Reflections Papers: EcoPeace Middle East, EcoPeace Middle East*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East), 1, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reflections-Paper-Gidon-Bromberg-EcoPeace-1.pdf>

“The motivating force behind the creation of the organization is (was) a concern that environmental issues were only been given leap service in the peace process.”⁷⁹

In this regard, Gidon Bromberg remembered that during the Oslo peace process that marked the diplomatic relationships in the Jordan Basin in the 1990s, EcoPeace believed in the fulfilment of a just peace for the Middle East.⁸⁰ However, the NGO’s collaborators were worried that the political agreements would have demised the Jordan River, thus the NGO decided to advocate for greater attention to sustainability. A similar explanation of EcoPeace’s evolution was provided by the Jordanian co-director of the NGO, Yana Abu Taleb in June 2019 during a webinar realized with the University of Connecticut. On this occasion, the CEO highlighted that since its establishment in 1994, EcoPeace was worried about the environmental conditions of the Jordan River since the policymakers seemed to undermine the environmental challenges surrounding the waterway.⁸¹ Therefore, Yana Abu Taleb explained that during its first years of activity, EcoPeace was inspired by the desire of preserving the water situation neglected by the states, thus gaining legitimacy as a natural non-state actor over the lower part of the Jordan Basin.⁸²

However, the decline of the peace process at the end of the 1990s resulted in a complicated period of transition for EcoPeace. As Gidon Bromberg clarified, not only, the collaborative work of EcoPeace started to be associated with the failure of the peace process, thus resulting in a lack of external legitimacy.⁸³ But also, the NGO’s campaign for sustainable peace started to be perceived as an irrelevant goal, since institutional peace was no longer regarded as a reachable objective in the Jordan Basin.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

⁸⁰ Unknown, *Reflections Papers: EcoPeace Middle East, EcoPeace Middle East*. (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East), 1, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reflections-Paper-Gidon-Bromberg-EcoPeace-1.pdf>

⁸¹ Gidon Bromberg, Yana Abu Taleb, “2019 Abrahamic Workshop Interview with Gidon Bromberg & Yana Abu Taleb,” UConn Global Affairs, January 6, 2020, YouTube video, 18:39, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QUGp9Frt4Y&t=868s&ab_channel=UConnGlobalAffairsUConnGlobalAffairs.

⁸² Bromberg, Abu Taleb, “2019: Abrahamic Workshop,” 19:00.

⁸³ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

⁸⁴ Gidon Bromberg, (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

Hence, Gidon Bromberg underlined that to remain a relevant player, EcoPeace drew attention to environmental cooperation and its capability of building peace in a polarized context such as the one of the Arab-Israeli war.⁸⁵ According to this perspective, from 2001 onwards, EcoPeace sought to acquire legitimacy in the conflictual context characterizing the Middle East by presenting itself as an environmental peacebuilder, hence counterbalancing both the absence of environmental attention and the absence of peace among Israel, the PA and Jordan.⁸⁶ This argument was further stressed by the CEO during a conference held at the University of Connecticut in June 2019. On this occasion, Gidon Bromberg highlighted that the end of the 1990s represented a phase of reinvention for EcoPeace since the NGO had to face a legitimacy challenge arising from the end of the peace process.⁸⁷ In this regard, he underlined that this did not stop the NGO from acting in the Middle East, yet the difficulties rather inspired EcoPeace to devise its environmental peacebuilding approach.⁸⁸

According to the NGO's collaborators, a second crucial aspect that motivated the evolution of EcoPeace was the organization's desire of fulfilling its vision of environmental cooperation.⁸⁹ More precisely, Gidon Bromberg stated that:

*“It took us a few years to conclude that actually, we were an example of how we can work productively together. The fact that we all came with a common understanding of our environmental education that nature knows no borders that cooperation when it comes to sustainable development is not a privilege, it's a necessity. That types of cooperative activities that we were suggesting could improve things on the ground and then help build trust between peoples, governments.”*⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Gidon Bromberg, (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1; Unknown, *Reflections Papers: EcoPeace Middle East, EcoPeace Middle East*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East), 3, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reflections-Paper-Gidon-Bromberg-EcoPeace-1.pdf>

⁸⁶ Gidon Bromberg, (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1;

⁸⁷ Gidon Bromberg, Yana Abu Taleb, “2019 Abrahamic Workshop Interview with Gidon Bromberg & Yana Abu Taleb,” UConn Global Affairs, January 6, 2020, YouTube video, 20:45, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QUGp9Frt4Y&t=868s&ab_channel=UConnGlobalAffairsUConnGlobalAffairs.

⁸⁸ Bromberg, “2019 Abrahamic Workshop,” 21:30.

⁸⁹ Unknown, *Reflections Papers: EcoPeace Middle East, EcoPeace Middle East*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East), 1, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reflections-Paper-Gidon-Bromberg-EcoPeace-1.pdf>

⁹⁰ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

In this way, the CEO highlighted that since its establishment in 1994 EcoPeace's workers were inspired by a common understanding of environmental issues as challenges that transcend national borders afflicting an entire region with problems related to water scarcity and pollution. Thus, he argued that EcoPeace's members did not only perceive natural challenges as issues requiring transboundary cooperation to be overcome, but they also believed that these collaborative efforts could lead to building trust among conflictual peoples.⁹¹ This interpretation was further stressed during the convention held by Gidon Bromberg and Yana Abu Taled at the University of Connecticut. On this occasion, the two co-directors explained that since EcoPeace's creation, the NGO sought to overcome national borders, building bridges among peoples and enhancing a common understanding of water problems.⁹² For instance, they underlined that since its first activities EcoPeace sought to challenge the "blame game" according to which natural problems were caused by the enemy, attempting to fostering a common understanding of environmental problems based on trust and cooperation, two integral elements defining EcoPeace's technique of environmental peacebuilding.⁹³

To sum up, according to the NGO's perspective, EcoPeace's development between 1994 and 2020 was predicated upon the struggle for legitimacy experienced by the NGO and the idea of environmental issues as regional challenges.

2.3. Peace, a minor character in EcoPeace's plot to challenge the status quo of water diplomacy

After having analyzed EcoPeace's development from the perspective of the NGO's collaborators, it is crucial to adopt a communicative constructivist approach to understand how the non-state actor paved its way into global governance. Differently from realism and liberalism, constructivism highlights the importance of non-material conditions as ideas in the definition of the NGO's interests.⁹⁴ However, unlike global constructivism and critical constructivism, the communicative

⁹¹ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

⁹² Gidon Bromberg, Yana Abu Taleb, "2019 Abrahamic Workshop Interview with Gidon Bromberg & Yana Abu Taleb," UConn Global Affairs, January 6, 2020, YouTube video, 22:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QUGp9Frt4Y&t=868s&ab_channel=UConnGlobalAffairsUConnGlobalAffairs.

⁹³ Bromberg, Abu Taleb, "2019 Abrahamic Workshop," 11:55.

⁹⁴ Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 209.

lenses stress the important relationship between the NGO's ideas and the international arena in which they are framed.⁹⁵

A closer glance at EcoPeace's documents reveals that between 1994 and 2020, the NGO's interests and actions were shaped by the concern for the improvement of the natural conditions of the lower part of the Jordan River. Hence, the idea of political peace among Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians was outweighed by EcoPeace's attention toward the preservation of natural conditions.

More precisely, EcoPeace's vague idea of peace can be depicted by looking at the last strategic document elaborated by the NGO for the years from 2017 to 2021. In this paper, the non-state actor listed among its core values the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, yet it failed to expand on this topic both within this programmatic document and within other publications.⁹⁶ In fact, even in the theoretical document explaining the practice of environmental peacebuilding, the NGO did not mention the kind of peace it sought to achieve with the elaboration of this specific practice, hence leaving the question of reconciliation relegated to a secondary position.⁹⁷ Similarly, EcoPeace's accent on the improvement of the regional natural heritage rather than on the creation of peace can be remarked by looking at the objectives guiding the project GWN. This program was described as directed towards:

“Create(ing) local constituencies that empower youth, adult residents, mayors and other municipal officials to call for and lead necessary cross-border solutions to regional water issues.”⁹⁸

Thus, even in this case, regional peace among Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians was not addressed as an objective to be accomplished through the flagship program of environmental peacebuilding. An interesting aspect that undeniably shows the secondary role played by peace in the definition of EcoPeace, whose main attention remained centred on the technical amelioration of environmental problems.

⁹⁵ Christopher Marc Lilyblad, “NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory,” in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 123.

⁹⁶ Unknown, *EcoPeace Middle East- Strategic Five-Year Plan, 2017-2021*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2017), 5, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/our-strategy/>.

⁹⁷ Nicole Harari and Jesse Roseman, *Environmental Peacebuilding Theory and Practice*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: Friends of Earth Middle East, January 2008), 16, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/environmental-peacebuilding/>.

⁹⁸ Unknown, *EcoPeace Middle East- Strategic Five Year Plan, 2017-2021*, (Annan, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2017), 20, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/our-strategy/>.

Hence, although the NGO highlighted that after 2001 EcoPeace focused on the political and social implications of environmental problems, it can be argued that the search for political peace remained a minor character in the definition of the NGO's identity, both before and after the implementation of the program GWN.⁹⁹ More precisely, this aspect seems to be consistent with the studies conducted by Karin Aggestam, Andres Jägerkog and Tobias Ide on environmental peacebuilding over the Jordan River, since it sheds light on the emphasis put by this practice on the technical management of natural problems at the expenses of the political concerns tied to environmental challenges.¹⁰⁰ In fact, the three experts agreed on considering environmental peacebuilding over the Jordan Basin as an activity marked by the lack of attention towards the political turns of environmental problems and this dynamic is exemplified by EcoPeace's predominant attention towards the preservation of the natural heritage of the Jordan Basin.¹⁰¹ Yet how can this disproportionate relation be explained?

Through the constructivist lenses, it is possible to understand that EcoPeace emphasized the idea of environmental amelioration instead of focusing on peace, to find legitimacy as a non-state actor in a divided political context. As Daniel Philpott underlined, ideas can lead towards the creation of a new international society if they are shared by different actors and if they generate mutual agreement.¹⁰² Moreover, as the communicative constructivist regard suggests, non-state actors tend to enhance gradual change within a specific arena, by taking into consideration the audience with which they interact, thus avoiding revolutionary positions.¹⁰³ Hence, following this line of thinking, EcoPeace's interest in the amelioration of environmental conditions can be understood as a way to

⁹⁹ Gidon Bromberg (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1; Unknown, *Reflections Papers: EcoPeace Middle East, EcoPeace Middle East*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East), 1, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reflections-Paper-Gidon-Bromberg-EcoPeace-1.pdf>

¹⁰⁰ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, "The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding," *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog "Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

¹⁰¹ Aggestam, "Depoliticisation," 103-105; Ide, "The Dark Side," 3-4; Jägerkog "Are there Limits," 216-2017.

¹⁰² Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2001), 4.

¹⁰³ Cristopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 124.

generate consensus among Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians, while gaining legitimacy as a non-state actor working in the polarized arena of the Jordan Basin.

The connection between the search for consensus and the downplay of hydro-politics confirms the observations highlighted by Karin Aggestam in her study on the depoliticization of environmental issues.¹⁰⁴ In fact, the expert explained that the technocratic approach characterizing peacebuilding practices can be recognized as a way to find agreement among the parties involved and divided by the conflict.¹⁰⁵

However, while Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog targeted the distinction between politics and the environment as an enforcement of the status quo of the state-based water diplomacy favouring Israel instead of the PA and Jordan, the case study of EcoPeace shows that this consideration is reductive and misleading.¹⁰⁶ More precisely, the three researchers seemed to prefer a realist/ liberal perspective to study environmental peacebuilding over the Jordan Basin since they tended to overlook the ability of thoughts and ideas to modify the comprehension of water diplomacy, mainly focusing on the state-based domination of water cooperation. In this regard, the employment of a communicative constructivist perspective can show that EcoPeace did not duplicate the understanding of water diplomacy as imposed by the states. Although EcoPeace did not take any revolutionary stances on the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, between 1994 and 2020, the NGO slowly contributed to modifying the understanding of water management in the region of the Middle East.

More precisely, in the Jordan Basin, the management of natural resources was tackled by states during the bilateral peace negotiations aimed at stabilizing the region of the Middle East. For instance, article 6 of the Israeli Jordanian treaty of 1994 mentioned the importance of bilateral cooperation to solve water shortage in the region, yet it failed to put forward any project to achieve

¹⁰⁴Karin Aggestam, “Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding,” in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 98-99.

¹⁰⁵ Aggestam, “Depoliticisation, Water,” 98-99.

¹⁰⁶ Karin Aggestam, “Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding,” in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, “The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding,” *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog “Are there Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin,” in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

this goal.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, in the Second Oslo accord of 1995 negotiated between Israel and the PA, the question of water shortage was presented as a bilateral problem among the two parties.¹⁰⁸ This position undeniably favoured the state of Israel instead of the proto-state of the PA, giving the former control over the waterway.¹⁰⁹

In this regard, the technical approach put forward by EcoPeace to deal with environmental issues sought to modify the status quo of water cooperation in the Middle East under two points of view. Firstly, the trilateral NGO stressed the regional understanding of water issues over the Jordan River, hence opposing the bilateral management of these challenges. Secondly, the NGO also sought to foster the idea that cross-border problems require transnational cooperation among a wide range of actors, thus opposing the understanding of water diplomacy as a field dominated by states. Namely, these two positions are evident while looking at the main mission of EcoPeace, which is defined as developing “*cross border environmental solutions, by working with constituencies and building partnerships in the Middle East.*”¹¹⁰ An aspect that is constantly reiterated by the NGO’s collaborators, as we could understand by analysing the conference of Yana Abu Taleb and Gidon Bromberg at the University of Connecticut in which the two CEO stressed the relevance of regional efforts going beyond the “blame game” to deal with water resources.¹¹¹ Therefore, EcoPeace’s interest in the technical management of environmental problems challenged the understanding of bilateral state-based water diplomacy, fostering the importance of regional cooperation between peoples and actors different from states. Interestingly, EcoPeace’s interest in engaging within environmental politics to tackle complex issues confirms the constructivist analysis of natural governance realized by Emile Dupuits, Liliana Andonova and Ronald Mitchell according to whom

¹⁰⁷ The State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. *Treaty of Peace Between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, 1994, <https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/594>.

¹⁰⁸ The Government of the State of Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization, *Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip*, (Washington D.C. 1995), https://ecf.org.il/media_items/624.

¹⁰⁹ Ian Black, “Water under the bridge: how the Oslo Agreement robbed the Palestinians,” *The Guardian*, February 4, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/on-the-middle-east/2013/feb/04/israel-palestinians-water-arafat-abbas>.

¹¹⁰ Unknown, *EcoPeace Middle East- Strategic Five Year Plan, 2017-2021*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2017), 6, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/our-strategy/>.

¹¹¹ Gidon Bromberg, Yana Abu Taleb, “2019 Abrahamic Workshop Interview with Gidon Bromberg & Yana Abu Taleb,” UConn Global Affairs, January 6, 2020, YouTube video, 22:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QUGp9Frt4Y&t=868s&ab_channel=UConnGlobalAffairsUConnGlobalAffairs.

natural challenges transcend national borders, hence they entail the participation of multiple actors (different from states) to be tackled under their multiple aspects.¹¹²

To sum up, from 1994 to 2020 EcoPeace failed to take a clear stance on the question of peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict, preferring to focus on the technical amelioration of environmental conditions. This choice can be understood as a way employed by the NGO to acquire further legitimacy as an environmental non-state actor working in the polarized context of the Jordan Basin. Yet, the search for consensus did not result in the confirmation of the status quo of water diplomacy, since EcoPeace fostered a regional comprehension of environmental issues, thus counterbalancing the state-based bilateral agreements.

2.4. Conclusion

To conclude, between 1994 and 2020 EcoPeace perceived itself in two different ways. Up to 2001, the non-state actor regarded itself as a unique trilateral environmental NGO bringing together Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians to grapple with issues related to sustainable development. Whereas after 2001 and the implementation of the program GWN, EcoPeace perceived itself as a leader in environmental peacebuilding. According to the NGO's collaborators, this development stemmed from a combination of the NGO's search for legitimacy and its desire to enhance regional environmental cooperation that inspired the creation of EcoPeace since the beginning.

Following a communicative constructivist analysis of EcoPeace's available sources, it is possible to comprehend that between 1994 and 2020 the role played by peace in the definition of the NGO's identity came after EcoPeace's vivid attention to the amelioration of environmental conditions over the lower part of the Jordan River. In fact, by looking at EcoPeace's strategic documents it is difficult to find any relations to the question of peace over the Jordan Basin. This aspect did not only confirm previous studies conducted by Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog on the

¹¹² Liliana B. Andonova and Ronald B. Mitchell. "The Rescaling of Global Environmental Politics," *The Annual Review of Environment and Resource* 35, (November 2010): 256-258, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1146/annurev-environ-100809-125346>; Emilie Dupuits, "Actors other than States: The Role of Civil Society and NGOs as Drivers of Change," in *Environmental Climate Change and International Relations*, ed. Gustavo Sosa-Nunez and Ed Atkins (Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 114-116.

depoliticizing effect of environmental peacebuilding, yet it also provided new insight into EcoPeace, thus fostering our understanding of the NGO.¹¹³

More precisely, through communicative constructivism, this section has highlighted that the NGO's focus on the environment was motivated by EcoPeace's interest in enhancing mutual agreement among parties, thus putting forward its idea of environmental management in the Jordan Valley. Apart from enlightening a topic generally neglected by the NGO's accounts, this aspect also challenges the aforementioned literature on environmental peacebuilding, according to which the depoliticization of natural problems leads to the confirmation of the status quo of the water conflict's understanding imposed by states.¹¹⁴ In fact, this section has stressed that although EcoPeace did not take a clear stance on the issue of political peace, its interest in the management of environmental issues fostered the idea that natural problems can be overcome through regional efforts encompassing a wide range of actors. Hence, through this vision, the NGO challenged the status quo of water diplomacy in the Jordan River predicated upon the unbalanced bilateral cooperation led by the institutional actors of the Basin.

Therefore, the communicative constructivist approach has shed light on the role of EcoPeace's ideas in the definition of its position within the arena of the Jordan River. Namely, this analysis could have been attained neither through the employment of traditional IR theories nor through other constructivist paradigms. Realism, liberalism, and neoliberalism would have neglected how non-material aspects can contribute to modifying the understanding of water cooperation over the Jordan Basin. As it can be remarked by looking at the studies of Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog, these theories analyze water relationships among Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians highlighting state-based agreements predicated upon material power, while they tend to overlook the efforts realized by non-state players as EcoPeace.¹¹⁵ Similarly, global constructivism would have limited the analysis of EcoPeace, since it would have focused exclusively on the NGO's moral authority, failing to address the challenges arising from the conflictual arena of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The opposite problem would have been caused by the employment of a critical constructivist

¹¹³ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, "The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding," *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog "Are there Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

¹¹⁴ Aggestam, "Depoliticisation," 103-105; Ide, "The Dark," 3-4; Jägerkog "Are there Limits," 216-217.

¹¹⁵ Aggestam, "Depoliticisation," 103-105; Ide, "The Dark," 3-4; Jägerkog "Are there Limits," 216-217.

approach since it would have analyzed the NGO as a victim of states' interests, undermining the efforts made by EcoPeace to modify the status quo of water cooperation.

Hence, this chapter has contributed to the advancement of the debate revolving around the role of non-state actors in international politics since it has underlined that NGOs can play an active role in defining water diplomacy thanks to the elaboration of their ideas in close relationship with the context. Similarly, this section has integrated the studies so far conducted on EcoPeace, since it has challenged the narrative of the NGO, studying it from a more critical point of view. Last but not least, this chapter has contributed to enhancing our understanding of the practice of environmental peacebuilding in two ways. Firstly, this section has confirmed that this practice is marked by a lack of attention towards issues related to peace. Secondly, this section has shown that in EcoPeace's case this depoliticization did not result in the confirmation of the status quo of bilateral cooperation over the Jordan River.

CHAPTER 3: BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH THE DEPOLITICIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Analysis of EcoPeace's approach towards environmental challenges over the Jordan River

*“Parties in dispute always require a neutral mediator to facilitate proactive discussions on climate and water security that adopt a problem-solving rather than a blame-game approach. (...) EcoPeace has many initiatives which foreign policy can adopt, including our Regional Jordan Valley Master Plan, our Water Energy Nexus concept as well as our Water Cannot Wait vision, where we aspire that water issues can be resolved in a negotiated manner.”*¹¹⁶

The Palestinian co-director of EcoPeace, Nada Majdalani, pronounced these words during an interview on the management of shared environmental resources in 2019 providing an interesting window on the relationship between EcoPeace's ideas of environmental issues and its practices in the Middle East.

To analyze this connection, the first section of this chapter examines the backbone of EcoPeace's environmental peacebuilding strategy, namely the NGO's attention towards grassroots communities and the NGO's advocacy towards political institutions. Then, the second and third parts look closer at two examples of EcoPeace's programs, namely Good Water Neighbors (GWN) and Water Cannot Wait, to understand how the NGO translated into practice the ideas of environmental cooperation outlined in chapter 2.

In line with a large and growing body of literature encompassing the studies of Karin Aggestam, Andres Jägerskog, and Tobias Ide on environmental peacebuilding, this section argues that EcoPeace's strategy of environmental peacemaking was predicated upon the depoliticization of

¹¹⁶ Raquel Munayer, "We Can't Disengage From Our Shared Environment – Interview with Palestinian, Jordanian and Israeli EcoPeace Directors," *Climate Diplomacy*, published August 26, 2019, accessed May 28, 2021, <https://climate-diplomacy.org/magazine/environment/we-cant-disengage-our-shared-environment-interview-palestinian-jordanian-and>.

water issues.¹¹⁷ However, this chapter disagrees with the aforementioned accounts since it argues that the depoliticization of natural issues did not result either in the confirmation of the status quo of water cooperation or in the marginalization of certain players.¹¹⁸

Therefore, by drawing attention to EcoPeace's top-down and bottom-up practices, this chapter clarifies how the NGO defined its role as a non-state actor over the Jordan River between 1994 and 2020.

3.1. The double strategy: EcoPeace's environmental peacebuilding techniques

On its webpage, EcoPeace describes itself as a project-oriented organization, highlighting that its work is structured on the elaboration and the implementation of a wide range of long-term initiatives over the Jordan Basin.¹¹⁹

More precisely, between 1994 and 2020, EcoPeace operationalized these projects employing what it defined as its double strategy of environmental peacebuilding, a twofold approach stemming from the synergy between the bottom-up and the top-down techniques and aimed to “*maximize the impact (of EcoPeace projects) and create new political will.*”¹²⁰ In this regard, the international affairs manager of the NGO, Giulia Giordano, explained that by combining these two approaches EcoPeace advanced concrete answers to water problems, having an impact on national policies and tangible benefits for the peoples living in the Jordan Valley.¹²¹ Yet, what type of characteristics did define this strategy? And why is it relevant to answer the research question?

¹¹⁷ Karin Aggestam, “Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding,” in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, “The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding,” *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog “Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin,” in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

¹¹⁸ Aggestam, “Depoliticisation,” 104-105; Ide, “The Dark Side,” 3-4; Jägerkog, “Are there,” 216-217.

¹¹⁹ “Ongoing, Active Projects,” Projects, EcoPeace Middle East, accessed May 5 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/our-projects/>.

¹²⁰ Unknown, *EcoPeace Middle East: Strategic Five-Year Plan 2017-2021*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2017), 7, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/our-strategy/>.

¹²¹ Giulia Giordano, “Water as a Source of Regional Cooperation in the Middle East: the Work of EcoPeace Middle East in Jordan, Israel and Palestine,” *Open Rivers* no.11 (Summer 2018): 27, <https://editions.lib.umn.edu/openrivers/article/the-work-of-ecopeace-middle-east/>.

As far as the bottom-up strategy is concerned, this technique shaped the programs realized with Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian communities and it was defined by EcoPeace as based on:

*“Educating local constituencies to call for, and lead, necessary cross-border solutions to regional water issues.”*¹²²

Hence, according to this definition, an integral element of EcoPeace’s environmental peacebuilding approach was predicated upon the NGO’s capability of educating and empowering local communities to take an active role in the management of regional environmental challenges. To translate into practice the bottom-up strategy, since the beginning of the 21st century, the NGO implemented two different groups of educational programs on both sides of the Jordan River. One group addressed the empowerment of students, through the organization of water diplomacy workshops, regional camps on the management of the Jordan River, and conventions on sustainable social entrepreneurship aimed at supporting green economy initiatives coming from the youth.¹²³ The other group was focused on the empowerment of local stakeholders and the residents of the communities through the organization of gatherings, debates and joint projects.¹²⁴ As we will notice through the analysis of GWN, EcoPeace realized the bottom-up strategy thanks to the collaboration of professionals coming from the Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian communities. In this regard, the NGO did not only take care of the organization of the events, yet its educators and its environmental experts also trained the local staff, providing materials on water diplomacy like textbooks and toolkits.¹²⁵ Thus, through the bottom-up approach, EcoPeace sought to work with communities bringing them to the centre of water diplomacy.

A different, yet complementary technique employed by EcoPeace in its environmental peacebuilding strategy was represented by the top-down approach, which encompassed the initiatives directed towards the institutional players of the Jordan Basin. In this regard, the NGO defined this approach as based on:

¹²² “Bottom-Up” EcoPeace Middle East, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/what-we-do/bottom-up/>.

¹²³ Unknown, *Collection of the Environmental Peacebuilding Educational Materials Developed by EcoPeace Middle East: an Historical Progression*, (Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East Archive 2020), 2-4.

¹²⁴ Nicole Harari, Jesse Roseman, *Environmental Peacebuilding Theory and Practice*, (Amman, Tel Aviv, Ramallah: Friends of Earth Middle East, January 2008), 18, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/environmentalpeacebuilding/>.

¹²⁵ Harari, *Environmental Peacebuilding*, 18.

“Research, on the publication of policy briefs, and on the holding of events that highlight the national self-interest of each side in advancing our policy recommendations.”¹²⁶

Thus, according to this definition, the second integral element shaping EcoPeace’s strategy was embedded in the NGO’s expertise in researching and writing policy papers to advocate for the amelioration of environmental conditions with regional and international state actors. Among the research projects realized through the top-down technique, it is possible to include Water Cannot Wait, the NGO Master Plan and the Water-Energy Nexus. As we will see in the third section, the first program was aimed at stipulating a new agreement on the management of water resources to deal with the dangerous water crisis afflicting the Gaza Strip.¹²⁷ Similarly, with the second project, the NGO intended to promote possible ecological, political, and economic interventions to restore the natural value of the Jordan Valley, while leading towards a more equitable share of the Basin’s resources.¹²⁸ In line with this emphasis on the sustainable management of the Jordan Valley, with the third program, EcoPeace attempted to study how to transform the Jordan River into a provider of large-scale renewable energy for the Middle East, hence analyzing the technical, economic and geopolitical implications of this transition.¹²⁹ During the interview, Gidon Bromberg explained that to operationalize the top-down approach, between 1994 and 2020, the three offices of the NGO collaborated to achieve a unique report encompassing findings and recommendations directed to the three nations.¹³⁰ To realize these projects, EcoPeace often benefitted from the help of international partners, such as the Global Nature Fund or the Stockholm International Water Institute, which supported the NGO in its investigations. The reports were then shared by EcoPeace and its partners, seeking to advance the NGO’s idea on a national and international level.

By analyzing this double strategy from a critical perspective, it is possible to argue that the definitions provided by EcoPeace of its twofold technique remained vague on explaining how the top-down and bottom-up approaches could boost peace in the Middle East. Both from the programmatic document of the NGO and the description offered by Giulia Giordano, it is difficult to

¹²⁶ “Top-Down” EcoPeace Middle East, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/what-we-do/top-down/>.

¹²⁷ Unknown, *EcoPeace Middle East: Strategic Five-Year Plan 2017-2021*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2017), 14, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/our-strategy/>.

¹²⁸ Unknown, *Regional NGO Master Plan for Sustainable Development in the Jordan Valley*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2015), 3.

¹²⁹ “Water and Energy Nexus,” EcoPeace Middle East, accessed May 29, 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/projects/water-energy/>.

¹³⁰ Gidon Bromberg, (co-founder and co-director of EcoPeace Middle East) in discussion with the author March 1, 2021, Appendix 1.

grasp how the synergy between community-based and institutions-directions projects could enhance peace in the Middle East.

This aspect can be regarded as closely related to the analysis conducted in chapter 2 regarding the uncertain position of political peace in the definition of the NGO's identity. More precisely, the vague idea concerning the impact of EcoPeace's strategy on the political peace in the region of the Jordan River confirms the emphasis on the technical management of water resources depicted by Karin Aggestam, Andres Jägerkog and Tobias Ide in their studies on environmental peacemaking.¹³¹

However, a closer look at the techniques employed by the NGO suggests that on a programmatic level, EcoPeace sought to introduce new practices to grapple with environmental problems, relating them to peacebuilding strategies. Namely, through the double approach, EcoPeace did not only resort to the typical tasks employed by civil society in global environmental governance, such as providing expertise and knowledge regarding specific environmental problems while lobbying in international negotiations.¹³² Yet, on a programmatic level, EcoPeace also sought to fulfil its role as a peacemaker by interacting both with local communities and institutions on long-term projects. As the NGO explained in its theoretical document on environmental peacebuilding, with its double strategy EcoPeace sought to follow Lederach's understanding of civil society's role in peacebuilding activities, working both with communities and institutions.¹³³ Interestingly, the NGO's twofold technique also appeared to be in line with the constructivist comprehension of peacebuilding, an aspect that has been neglected by the NGO's accounts. In fact, the bottom-up program devised by EcoPeace sought to draw attention to the needs arising from grassroots

¹³¹ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, water, and environmental peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 104-105. (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, "The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding," *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-5, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104777>; Andres Jägerkog "Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin" in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 216-217. (New York: Routledge, 2018).

¹³² Emilie Dupuits, "Actors other than States: The Role of Civil Society and NGOs as Drivers of Change," in *Environmental Climate Change and International Relations*, ed. Gustavo Sosa-Nunez and Ed Atkins (Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 114-116; Kate O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations*. Second edition (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2017), 90-92.

¹³³ Nicole Harari, Jesse Roseman, *Environmental Peacebuilding Theory and Practice*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, January 2008), 16-17, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/environmentalpeacebuilding/>; John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 94.

communities, fostering a long-term interaction with them to better address their needs, as underlined by the study of Earl Conteh-Morgan.¹³⁴

Hence, EcoPeace's double strategy was not explicitly directed towards the creation of peace in the Middle East. However, on a programmatic level, this strategy seemed to introduce peacebuilding techniques to the management of water resources in the Jordan Basin, providing greater attention to grassroots communities. Yet how did the NGO translate this strategic approach into practice?

3.2. Good Water Neighbors: depoliticization and cooperation through the bottom-up approach

A relevant example of EcoPeace's bottom-up approach can be found in the program GWN launched in 2001 over the Jordan Basin. To examine this project, this section employs a communicative constructivist perspective geared towards understanding GWN's impact on the definition of EcoPeace's role as a non-state player in Jordan Valley. In fact, global constructivism and critical constructivism would neglect the relationship tying the NGO to the context in which it acts, reciprocally stressing a given moral authority on, or an a priori submission to the state-based order of the international arena.¹³⁵ Instead, communicative constructivism raises awareness on how EcoPeace used GWN to pave its way into water diplomacy, slightly challenging the rules imposed by states while seeking to acquire legitimacy.¹³⁶

Overall, the program GWN encompassed educational, ecological, and economical activities addressed to Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian communities placed on both sides of the Jordan River.¹³⁷ Communities were twinned in pairs based on their common dependency on the same scarce water resource of the Jordan River, thus Israeli villages were linked to Palestinian and Jordanian

¹³⁴ Earl Conteh-Morgan, "Peacebuilding and Human Security: A Constructivist Perspective," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no.1, (Spring, Summer 2005): 69-86, https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/41852073?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

¹³⁵ Rodney Bruce Hall, Thomas J. Biersteker, *The Emergence of Private Authority in Global Governance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 13-14; Iver Neumann, Ole J. Sending, "Nongovernmental Organizations: From Sovereignty to Liberal Governmentality," in *Governing the Global Polity: Practice, Mentality, Rationality*, ed. Ann Arbor (MI University of Michigan Press, 2014), 110-31.

¹³⁶ Cristopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 123.

¹³⁷ "Our Strategy- EcoPeace Middle East's 5-Year Strategy (2017-2021)," Our Strategy, EcoPeace Middle East, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/our-strategy/>.

towns facing similar struggles on the other side of the river Jordan.¹³⁸ In this context, EcoPeace selected a local staff from each community, whose task was to work in close contact with youth, adults, and mayors, fostering the idea of environmental issues as regional challenges that require cooperation to be tackled, while empowering them to take an active role in water diplomacy.¹³⁹ In doing so, EcoPeace trained the local staff, providing guidelines, toolkits and constant support in the realization of the educational activities.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, the NGO managed the gradual interaction among communities taking place in joint conferences of stakeholders and joint youth camps.¹⁴¹

A closer glance at GWN shows that the activities composing this project tended to approach environmental issues leaving aside the political dimension in which these were enrooted.

For instance, if we analyze the Resource Guide for Environmental Educators devised by EcoPeace, it is possible to grasp that despite the activities presented in chapter 5 aimed at increasing awareness regarding the social and political implications of water management, the other four sections were built on fostering a scientific comprehension of water issues.¹⁴² In fact, the activities characterizing four out of five chapters shed light on the essence of water, the geographical characteristics of waterways, the water footprint and the connection between this source and ecosystems.¹⁴³ Whereas only one group of initiatives grappled with the unequal power distribution favouring Israel and the consequences that the conflict had on the Jordan River.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, the Jordan EcoPark built by Jordanian communities within the program GWN suggested the importance provided by the NGO to the rational idea of environmental amelioration, yet it failed to address the political challenges of water cooperation in the broader context of the Arab-Israeli war. In fact, the park offered multiple activities to its visitors, who could engage in hiking, birdwatching, meditating, and participating in workshops on the topic of sustainability.¹⁴⁵ However, it remained unclear how

¹³⁸ Nicole Harari, Jesse Roseman, *Environmental Peacebuilding Theory and Practice*, (Friends of Earth Middle East, January 2008), 18, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/environmentalpeacebuilding/>.

¹³⁹ Harari, *Environmental Peacebuilding*, 19.

¹⁴⁰ Harari, *Environmental Peacebuilding*, 19.

¹⁴¹ Harari, *Environmental Peacebuilding*, 18.

¹⁴² Amy Lipmn Avizhar and Sami Beckleh, *Resource Guide for Environmental Educators: Good Water Neighbors*, (Amman, Ramallah and Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2013), 3, https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Resource_Guide_English.pdf.

¹⁴³ Avizhar, *Resource Guide*, 26-133.

¹⁴⁴ Avizhar, *Resource Guide*, 168-173.

¹⁴⁵ “Activities and Services,” Jordan EcoPark, accessed May 9, 2021, <http://jordaneopark.com/activitiesAndServices.php>.

these initiatives were linked to the political challenges related to environmental management, namely how the Jordan EcoPark could promote peace in the Middle East.

Therefore, the division of environmental issues from politics shaping the program GWN mirrors the studies conducted by Karin Aggestam, Andres Jägerkog, Tobias Ide and Amit Tubi on the depoliticization of environmental issues. The first two experts agreed on considering environmental peacebuilding over the Jordan Basin as predicated upon the lack of attention towards politics.¹⁴⁶ While the third and the fourth scholars went even further by underlining that EcoPeace's educational activities were marked by the depoliticization of water problems, a conclusion reached through the empirical investigation of the NGO's educational activities conducted through field research.¹⁴⁷

Once having understood that GWN relied on the depoliticization of natural problems, it is then essential to investigate why this aspect is relevant to understand EcoPeace's role as a non-state actor in the Jordan Basin. As John Searle underlined, non-state actors are observer-dependent agents that try to enhance progressive change in the international arena, building their strategy on the audience that they aim to convince.¹⁴⁸ Namely, to maximize their outcomes, NGOs need to consider the audience with which they are talking, thus leading their observers to abandon their norms to adopt new practices and ideas.¹⁴⁹ In line with this analysis, EcoPeace's depoliticization of environmental issues might be considered as a way employed by the NGO to acquire legitimacy among the communities of the Jordan Basin divided by the tensions arising from the failed peace process of the 1990s. Therefore, as a tri-lateral non-state actor dealing with communities divided by war, EcoPeace's implementation of GWN as a program focused on technical environmental activities can be interpreted as a way employed by the NGO to gain legitimacy overcoming the political

¹⁴⁶ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Andres Jägerkog "Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

¹⁴⁷ Tobias Ide and Amit Tubi, "Education and Environmental Peacebuilding: Insights from Three Projects in Israel and Palestine," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no. 1 (2020): 11, <https://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/full/10.1080/24694452.2019.1613954>.

¹⁴⁸ John R. Searle, "What Is an Institution?" *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no.1 (2005): 3 doi:10.1017/S1744137405000020; Cristopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 123.

¹⁴⁹ Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivism," 123.

polarization of the communities, while setting off an initial form of cooperation among Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians.

By following this communicative constructivist analysis, this section seeks to overcome the limitations arising from the current literature on environmental peacebuilding. Namely, this analysis agrees with Karin Aggestam's consideration of the downplay of hydro-politics as a consensus tool.¹⁵⁰ However, contrary to the expert, this section associates the depoliticization of environmental issues with EcoPeace and the context of the Arab-Israeli war, thus comprehending that the division between politics and environmental problems was not a limit to environmental peacebuilding, but rather a tool to enhance cooperation. Namely, Karin Aggestam and Andres Jägerkog seemed to adopt a realist perspective, targeting the distinction between environmental issues and politics as a dynamic that results in the enforcement of the state-based water diplomacy over the Jordan Basin, favouring Israel (the actor with the greatest material power) at the expenses of the PA and Jordan.¹⁵¹ Similarly, Tobias Ide and Amit Tubi appeared to adopt a critical constructivist approach, stressing that EcoPeace's environmental education based on the depoliticization of natural issues undermines the reconciliation among peoples divided by the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁵² Instead, through a communicative constructivist approach, this section shows that the depoliticization of environmental problems defining GWN was not a drawback of natural peacebuilding leading to the enforcement of the status quo, but rather a necessary path that the NGO had to follow in order to set off natural cooperation among communities divided by political questions.

In fact, thanks to the bottom-up approach typical of the constructivist comprehension of peacebuilding, EcoPeace sought to rescale the management of water issues away from the typical bilateral state agreements, thus empowering local communities from both sides of the river to play an active role in water diplomacy. For instance, the NGO organized youth camps gathering Israelis,

¹⁵⁰ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 98-99.

¹⁵¹ Aggestam, "Depoliticisation," 103-105; Andres Jägerkog "Are there limits to environmental peacebuilding? A critical reflection on water cooperation in the Jordan basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

¹⁵² Tobias Ide, Amit Tubi, "Education and Environmental Peacebuilding: Insights from Three Projects in Israel and Palestine," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no.1 (2020) 11, <https://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/full/10.1080/24694452.2019.1613954>.

Palestinians, and Jordanians to talk about the sustainable management of water resources.¹⁵³ Moreover, EcoPeace organized water conferences for local stakeholders gathering Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians to talk about the sustainable management of water.¹⁵⁴ In this regard, the non-state actor even carried out some symbolic initiatives such as the “Big Jump” during which mayors from Israel, the PA and Jordan jumped into the Jordan River to increase awareness concerning the environmental pollution of the waterway.¹⁵⁵

Following this approach, the NGO sought to overcome the marginalization of the Palestinians, historically disadvantaged by the agreements on water cooperation in the region of the Middle East.¹⁵⁶ Not only EcoPeace integrated the Palestinian communities within GWN, but in 2019 EcoPeace also launched a specific project to foster young female leadership in the Occupied Territories, providing fifty students with the possibility of participating in several workshops to learn about natural diplomacy.¹⁵⁷

Hence, a closer look at GWN suggests that EcoPeace’s approach towards environmental issues was characterized by the depoliticization of natural problems. This separation can be explained as a tool employed by the NGO to acquire consensus in a polarized arena, finding legitimacy among communities. Yet, it is important to stress that the separation between politics and the environment did not result in the confirmation of the status quo of water diplomacy in the Middle East, but it rather set off collaboration among peoples, empowering even marginalized actors to take an active role in water diplomacy.

3.3. Water Cannot Wait: depoliticization of environmental issues and cooperation through the top-down approach

¹⁵³ “Regional Youth Meetings,” EcoPeace Middle East, accessed May 9, 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/projects/youth-education/regional-youth-meetings/>.

¹⁵⁴ Yermi Brenner, “Saving the Jordan Vally Ecosystem,” *Huffington Post*, May 5, 2010, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/saving-the-jordan-valley_b_564290.

¹⁵⁵ Linda Gradstein, “Mayors Jump into Jordan River,” *NPR*, July 15, 2007, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11957852&sc=emaf%5b?storyId=11957852&sc=emaf%5b&t=1620486441533>.

¹⁵⁶ Eugenia Ferragina. “The Effect of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on the Water Resources of the Jordan River Basin,” *Global Environment 2* (2008): 170, <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/4596>.

¹⁵⁷ Unknown, *Environmental Peacebuilding Newsletter*, December 2019, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2019), <https://mailchi.mp/ecopeaceme.org/y51r2x9w4z-758794?e=c47e9978bd>.

Interestingly, a similar depoliticization of environmental problems can be recognized by looking at the top-down program Water Cannot Wait, an initiative realized by EcoPeace to tackle the water crisis afflicting the Palestinian territories of West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹⁵⁸ Overall, this project covered an important space within EcoPeace's activities, yet, the NGO's literature failed to analyze this institution-directed program from a closer perspective, hence leaving room for further research on this topic. To fill this historiographical gap, this section draws attention to this program through the lenses of communicative constructivism. In doing so, this chapter links the top-down project to EcoPeace's definition of its role as a non-state actor over the Jordan Basin, by shedding light on the place of ideas in international politics, while overcoming the strict dichotomy identifying NGOs either as moral authorities or as victims of the state-based order.¹⁵⁹

By and large, the program Water Cannot Wait encompassed a wide range of publications and policy papers conceived by EcoPeace's experts working in Tel Aviv, Amman, and Ramallah. Each report analyzed a specific issue related to the problem of water distribution in the region of the Middle East, providing data and stressing the advantages that Israel and the PA could draw from a fair and sustainable allocation of water resources in the region of the Jordan Basin.¹⁶⁰ In combination with these research documents, EcoPeace also realized policy papers aimed at lobbying to reach a new Israeli-Palestinian agreement on water security, hence advocating the NGO's position both with regional state actors and international organizations.¹⁶¹

Although this program might appear closely connected to hydro-politics, a closer look at the documents encompassing this project confirms that the top-down approach to environmental peacebuilding was not devoid of the depoliticizing effect shaping this practice.

For instance, the study Gaza on the Edge: The Water and Energy Crisis in Gaza shed light on the frightening water crisis afflicting the Gaza Strip, analyzing its characteristics, its possible consequences and the policies put in place.¹⁶² However, this report did not provide insight into the connection between these technical aspects and the disproportionate Israeli domination of water

¹⁵⁸ Unknown, *EcoPeace Middle East: Strategic Five-Year Plan 2017-2021*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2017), 14, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/our-strategy/>.

¹⁵⁹ Cristopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 122.

¹⁶⁰ "Water and the Peace Process," EcoPeace Middle East, Accessed May 14, 2021, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/publications/publications/water-peace-process/>.

¹⁶¹ Unknown, *EcoPeace Middle East: Strategic Five-Year Plan 2017-2021*, (Amman, Ramallah, Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2017), 14, <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/ecopeace/our-strategy/>.

¹⁶² Gidon Bromberg, Giulia Giordano, *Gaza on the Edge: The Water and Energy Crisis in Gaza*, (Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2018), <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Gaza-on-the-Edge.-May-2018.pdf>.

resources, hence maintaining the examination on a scientific level.¹⁶³ Similarly, the lack of engagement in the political challenges revolving around water issues can be found by looking at the advocating campaign realized by EcoPeace in the context of the UNSC meeting of April 2019 on the question of Palestine. During this gathering, EcoPeace's Israeli and Palestinian co-directors preferred to stress the importance of the NGO's projects, without targeting Tel Aviv's government for its domination of water resources at the expenses of the Palestinians.¹⁶⁴ This depoliticizing stance on the issue of water problems was embedded by the words of the CEO Nada Majdalani, who attempted to draw attention to the importance of cooperation, failing to consider the differences related to the unequal distribution of power. According to her perspective:

*“Climate change does not differentiate between the stronger and weaker side of the conflict. Action is needed today. A reassessment of assumptions, a rejection of unilateralism and an effort to advance cross-border water cooperation is needed as a matter of national and regional stability and security.”*¹⁶⁵

Therefore, the downplay of hydro-politics characterizing the program Water Cannot Wait seem to be consistent with the studies realized by the experts Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog, who stressed the depoliticizing effect stemming from programs on water cooperation over the Jordan Basin.¹⁶⁶

To understand this distinction between political and environmental issues adopted by EcoPeace within Water Cannot Wait, the perspective offered by communicative constructivism can

¹⁶³ Gidon Bromberg, Giulia Giordano, *Gaza on the Edge: The Water and Energy Crisis in Gaza*, (Tel Aviv: EcoPeace Middle East, 2018), <https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Gaza-on-the-Edge.-May-2018.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ United Nations, Security Council, *The Situation in the Middle East Including the Palestinian Question*, S/PV.8517, April 29, 2019, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_PV.8517.pdf.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, Security Council, *The Situation in the Middle East Including the Palestinian Question*, S/PV.8517, April 29, 2019, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_PV.8517.pdf.

¹⁶⁶ Karin Aggestam, “Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding,” in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, “The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding,” *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog “Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin,” in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

perfectly suit the task. Due to its observer-dependent nature, EcoPeace's actions might be perceived as shaped by the context in which they were inserted and the audience towards which they were directed.¹⁶⁷ As previously mentioned, the communicative constructivist approach explains that non-state actors seek to change the status quo of the international arena, by adopting moderate positions in order to be perceived as legitimate players and maximize their outcomes.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the depoliticization of environmental issues produced by the program Water Cannot Wait can be regarded as a tool used by the NGO to gain legitimacy as a water expert among institutions, while fostering cooperation among Israelis and Palestinians on the management of natural resources.

In this regard, it would be incorrect to conclude that the distinction between environmental issues and politics characterizing Water Cannot Wait resulted in the consolidation of the unbalanced Israeli-Palestinian water diplomacy, as it has been implied by the studies on environmental peacebuilding conducted by Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog.¹⁶⁹ In fact, these experts stressed that dividing politics from the environment leads to the enforcement of power relations favouring the actor with the greatest material power (Israel) at the expenses of the PA, Jordan and local constituencies.¹⁷⁰ Instead, through the lenses of communicative constructivism, this section draws attention to how EcoPeace's non-material conditions can challenge the state-based approach to water cooperation, inspiring an initial form of collaboration among conflictual parties through the depoliticization of the environment.

For instance, through the program Water Cannot Wait, EcoPeace attempted to modify the management of water resources between Israel and the PA, overcoming the unbalanced power-relation between a state (Israel) and a proto-state (the PA) by involving further institutions in the management of water problems. Namely, by looking at the Water Agreement proposed by EcoPeace to the policymakers, it is possible to grasp that the NGO advocated for a new approach to water

¹⁶⁷ Cristopher Marc Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist International Relations Theory," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies (New York: Routledge, 2019), 123; John R. Searle, "What is an Institution?" *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no.1 (2005): 3, doi:10.1017/S1744137405000020.

¹⁶⁸ Lilyblad, "NGOs in Constructivist," 124.

¹⁶⁹ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, "The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding," *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www.sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog "Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

¹⁷⁰ Aggestam, "Depoliticisation," 103-105; Jägerkog "Are There Limits," 216-217.

management built on a flexible allocation of water resources, managed by the constant interactions of governments, water commissions, water authorities, local communities and regional experts.¹⁷¹ Hence, this strategy rejected the reality of environmental management on the ground, which aimed at creating a permanent allocation of water resources, essentially managed by state actors.¹⁷² In doing so, both the Israeli and the Palestinian collaborators of the NGO attempted to promote increasingly inclusive governance of natural resources built upon the needs arising from local communities.¹⁷³

To sum up, EcoPeace's top-down approach towards environmental issues was predicated upon the depoliticization of environmental resources, an aspect that was employed by the NGO to find legitimacy among institutions. Nevertheless, the downplay of hydro-politics helped EcoPeace to challenge the reality of water cooperation on the ground since the program Water Cannot Wait presented alternative ideas to water management built upon cooperation.

3.4. Conclusion

To conclude, between 1994 and 2020, EcoPeace dealt with environmental issues through a double strategy that encompassed community-based (bottom-up) and institution-directed (top-down) techniques, predicated upon the distinction of natural challenges from their political implications.

On a strategic level, the environmental peacebuilding approaches employed by the NGO were vague on the question of political peace, thus confirming the studies of Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog regarding the emphasis on problem-solving defining environmental peacebuilding.¹⁷⁴ In this regard, this section has underlined that although EcoPeace's techniques were focused on natural amelioration, they improved the attention towards local actors through the bottom-

¹⁷¹ David Brooks and Julie Trotter, *An Agreement to Share Water Between Israelis and Palestinians: the FoEME Proposal*, (Amman, Bethlehm, Tel Aviv: Friends of Earth Middle East, March 2012). https://old.ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Water_Agreement_FINAL.pdf

¹⁷² Brooks, *An Agreement to Share*, 19.

¹⁷³ Brooks, *An Agreement to Share*, 19.

¹⁷⁴ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, "The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding," *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog "Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

up approach, an aspect that results to be in line with the constructivist understanding of peacebuilding and Lederach's comprehension of civil society's role within this practice.

Similarly, this section has further confirmed the studies conducted by Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog by shedding light on the depoliticizing character of EcoPeace's bottom-up project GWN and top-down program Water Cannot Wait.¹⁷⁵ As a matter of fact, both initiatives led to the depoliticization of water issues since they emphasized the scientific management of water problems, overlooking the political challenges related to this field.

However, through the communicative constructivist approach, this section has fostered a new understanding of the distinction between politics and environmental issues. Namely, this chapter has disagreed with the aforementioned literature that targeted the depoliticization of water problems as a drawback of natural peacebuilding that leads to the enforcement of the unbalanced and unfair state-based water diplomacy over the Middle East.¹⁷⁶ In fact, this section has argued that EcoPeace's depoliticization of environmental problems was not per se a drawback of the practice of natural peacebuilding, but it was rather an essential tool employed by the NGO to implement this practice. Namely, as a non-state actor, EcoPeace sought to pave its way into the arena of the Jordan River seeking to find legitimacy among Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians, the three peoples divided by the Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, according to the communicative constructivist approach, the depoliticization of natural problems can be regarded as a tool employed by the NGO to enhance mutual agreement among parties, slowly introducing new practices of environmental cooperation to build bridges among peoples. For instance, through the depoliticizing program GWN, the NGO sought to empower local communities to take an active role in the traditional state-based water cooperation, including Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian communities into the process. Similarly, the apolitical Water Cannot Wait challenged the status quo of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements,

¹⁷⁵ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, "The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding," *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Tobias Ide and Amit Tubi, "Education and Environmental Peacebuilding: Insights from Three Projects in Israel and Palestine," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no. 1 (2020): 11. <https://www-tandfonline-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/full/10.1080/24694452.2019.1613954>; Jägerkog "Are there Limits," 216-217; Andres Jägerkog "Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

¹⁷⁶ Aggestam, "Depoliticisation," 103-104; Ide, "The Dark," 3-4; Ide, Tubi "Education and," 11; Jägerkog "Are there Limits," 216-217.

attempting to redefine the allocation of water through the involvement of both national and civil society players.

Hence, this conclusion could not have been reached through the employment of traditional IR approaches such as realism, neorealism, and liberalism. As it can be remarked by looking at the studies conducted by Karin Aggestam and Andres Jägerkog, realism understands the depoliticization of natural problems as a reinforcement of the predominant role played by states in water diplomacy, yet it fails to connect this practice to civil society's contribution to environmental governance.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, a critical constructivist approach like the one that guided Tobias Ide and Amit Tubi in their analysis of GWN would have limited the analysis conducted by this thesis.¹⁷⁸ As a matter of fact, critical constructivism tends to neglect the important relationship between the NGO and the context in which it acted, depicting the non-state actor as a victim of states' interests. Conversely, the communicative constructivist lenses have enabled this section to study EcoPeace's environmental peacebuilding programs tying them to the geopolitical arena of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the NGO's nature as an observer-dependent actor.

To sum up, in proving this point, this chapter has fostered our understanding of communicative constructivism, relating it to the work of EcoPeace over the Jordan Valley. Besides, by following this line of questioning, this chapter has contributed to fostering our understanding of environmental peacebuilding, since it has provided a new interpretation of the question of depoliticization, relating it to the broader context of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the strategies put forward by the non-state actor. Last but not least, this section has risen awareness on the general understanding of EcoPeace's projects, detaching the analysis of the NGO from a merely descriptive record of its actions, providing insight into its projects through the examination of primary sources.

¹⁷⁷ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Andres Jägerkog "Are there Limits," 216-217; Andres Jägerkog "Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

¹⁷⁸Tobias Ide and Amit Tubi, "Education and Environmental Peacebuilding: Insights from Three Projects in Israel and Palestine," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no. 1 (2020): 11. <https://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/full/10.1080/24694452.2019.1613954>;

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, between 1994 and 2020, EcoPeace defined its role as a non-state actor working in the Jordan River through the depoliticization of water issues, a process that enabled the NGO to enhance collaboration among Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians, slightly challenging the status quo of water diplomacy in the Jordan Valley.

More precisely, in attempting to realize this investigation, this research project has fostered a new interpretation of the ideas and practices of environmental peacebuilding carried out by EcoPeace over the lower part of the Jordan River.

As far as the ideas of the NGO are concerned, this dissertation has underlined that between 1994 and 2020 EcoPeace focused on the amelioration of environmental resources, leaving the question of political peace among Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians relegated to a secondary position. This aspect is consistent with the findings of the studies on environmental peacebuilding conducted by Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog, which stressed the technocratic emphasis defining the practice of natural reconciliation.¹⁷⁹ However, this thesis has challenged the aforementioned literature, explaining that EcoPeace's attention towards natural improvement did not reproduce the vision of environmental cooperation put forward by the states. Indeed, the NGO fostered a regional understanding of water diplomacy, outlining it as an activity that should also encompass actors different from states.

As far as the practices of the NGO are concerned, EcoPeace's projects directed towards communities and institutions were predicated upon a division between environmental issues and political challenges. Once again, this dynamic mirrors the studies of Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog, which stressed the depoliticizing effect of water cooperation over the Jordan Basin.¹⁸⁰ Yet, in contrast to the aforementioned studies, this thesis has explained that thanks to this division between politics and the environment, EcoPeace was able to acquire legitimacy as a non-

¹⁷⁹ Karin Aggestam, "Depoliticisation, Water, and Environmental Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, 103-105 (New York: Routledge, 2018); Tobias Ide, "The Dark Side of Environmental Peacebuilding," *World Development* 127, (March 2020): 3-4, <https://www-sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0305750X19304267>; Andres Jägerkog "Are There Limits to Environmental Peacebuilding? A Critical Reflection on Water Cooperation in the Jordan Basin," in *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, edited by Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 216-217.

¹⁸⁰ Aggestam, "Depoliticisation," 103-104; Ide, "The Dark Side," 3-4; Tobias Ide and Amit Tubi, "Education and Environmental Peacebuilding: Insights from Three Projects in Israel and Palestine," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no. 1 (2020): 11. <https://www-tandfonline-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/full/10.1080/24694452.2019.1613954>; Jägerkog "Are there Limits," 216-217.

state player, while introducing new practices in the field of water diplomacy. For instance, GWN brought Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian communities into the process of environmental governance, while Water Cannot Wait shed light on alternative forms of water agreements built upon the flexible allocation of natural resources among Israel and the PA.

To achieve this conclusion, this study has employed a conceptual framework revolving around the IR theory of constructivism, which has enabled this thesis to raise awareness on the work of a non-state actor grappling with environmental issues in the polarized arena of the Arab-Israeli conflict. More precisely, the communicative constructivist approach has helped this dissertation to understand that EcoPeace's ideas and actions were tied to the context in which the NGO played. Following the perspectives of Thomas Risse and John Searle, it is possible to understand that EcoPeace sought to gradually modify the status quo of water management, yet avoiding revolutionary stances to gain legitimacy among Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians.¹⁸¹ In line with this approach, the constructivist perspective on environmental governance has stressed that EcoPeace played a relevant role in this field, even though it had to grapple with legitimacy issues. In the same way, the constructivist approach to peacebuilding combined with Lederach's attention to civil society in peacemaking situations have been particularly useful to analyze EcoPeace's attention towards local communities to rescale water diplomacy away from states.

Hence, communicative constructivism has helped this research project to enlighten how non-material forms of power (as ideas and thoughts) can shape water diplomacy, connecting EcoPeace to the geopolitical context in which it acted. This type of analysis would have been impossible through the employment of other IR theories. Traditional approaches to international politics would have looked at water cooperation as a field dominated exclusively by a priori material conditions, thus undermining non-state actor's potentials of modifying the status quo of environmental governance, as Karin Aggestam, Tobias Ide and Andres Jägerkog tended to do in their studies. Similarly, transnational constructivism would have limited the analysis of EcoPeace to a description of its moral authority, failing to address the legitimacy challenges faced by the NGO. Whereas critical constructivism would have stressed exclusively the NGO's submission to states' power, thus failing to look closer at its innovative ideas.

Through this theoretical framework, this thesis has underlined that the depoliticization of environmental issues should not be always regarded as a drawback to the practice of natural

¹⁸¹ Thomas Risse, "Let's Argue!: Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54, no.1 (Winter 2000): 1-39, https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/2601316?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.; John Searle, "What Is an Institution?" *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1-22, doi:10.1017/S1744137405000020.

peacebuilding since this detachment can also lead to the modification of the status quo of water diplomacy. In doing so, this dissertation has shed light on the collaborative efforts conducted by the non-state actor EcoPeace, thus highlighting its struggles and its potentials while dealing with environmental peacebuilding.

Given the findings outlined by this dissertation, a number of avenues for further research open up. First and foremost, further studies need to be undertaken on the practice of environmental peacebuilding, to better frame its characteristics, its actors, its consequences, and its relationship with political peace. This practice remains a relatively new approach to water conflicts, hence it requires further investigation to be defined. Moreover, in the future, it would be interesting to follow the analysis of EcoPeace by looking at how the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship characterizing the start of 2021 impacted EcoPeace's work in the region of the Jordan River, namely whether this outbreak of violence brought about new legitimacy challenges for the NGO. Finally, given EcoPeace's expansion of its network on an international level, a future study could examine how the non-state actor combines its regional with its international audiences.

Therefore, this thesis might inspire other research projects on civil society both in the field of environmental governance and in the field of international relations. As demonstrated by this dissertation, these two academic areas can largely benefit from their mutual interaction and communicative constructivism can enlighten the challenges and the contributions experienced by non-state actors' participating in the international arena.

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ANNEX 1: INTERVIEW WITH GIDON BROMBERG MARCH 1, 2021

Interviewee: Gidon Bromberg (Israeli Co-Founder and Co-Director of EcoPeace Middle East)

Interviewer: Alice Carnevali

Alice Carnevali (AC): Good afternoon Mr. Bromberg. Thank you very much for agreeing on meeting me today, it's an honor for me to have this possibility.

Gidon Bromberg (GB): Yeah, no problem. So go ahead, let's go straight into... Do you want to introduce yourself?

AC: Sure. My name is Alice Carnevali. I am originally from Italy, where I attended a bachelor's degree in diplomacy. And right now ...

GB: Where?

AC: In Forlì, which is part of the University of Bologna.

GB: Ah, ah, ok.

AC: And then I moved to the Netherlands to study History of International Relations in a master's degree offered by Utrecht University. And I am really passionate about environmental governance and the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. So that's how I got to know EcoPeace, just looking at environmental peacebuilding and I discovered your NGO. Since the very first readings I was extremely shocked in a positive way about the amount of work that you do, your values, your projects, so that's why I decided to focus my attention on EcoPeace for my master's degree and my master's thesis.

GB: Terrific, thank you.

AC: If for you it is ok, I would like to ask you some questions regarding the development of the NGO EcoPeace and how the NGO understands environmental peacebuilding and environmental peacebuilding projects. Feel free to take as much time as you want to answer these questions and if you do not understand something because of my Italian accent or the online setting please tell me and I will rephrase them and repeat them again.

So let's start from the beginning. *Could you please tell me what motivated the establishment of EcoPeace in 1994 and what were the main projects that EcoPeace organized in what you describe as the first phase of the NGO, so 1994-1998?*

GB: So clearly you have read an article that describes a little bit about history. And there it does describe the motivating forces behind the creation of the organization is actually a concern that environmental issues were only been given lip service in the peace process. And that the peace process was proposing massive development programs that potentially threatened the environment in many sensitive locations. You know 50 thousand new hotel rooms were being proposed and built around the Dead Sea by the Israeli side, by the Palestinian side, by the Jordanian side. All separately without anyone taking into account capacity issues. So that was the research question of my master, like you, but 26 years ago. I did a master's in international environmental law and I asked the question: Is peace going to be good for the environment? Clearly peace is going to be good for people, cause we are going to stop killing each other's, we hoped, but can peace also be good for the environment we live in? That was my research question and my research concluded that the environment wasn't been taken seriously. And that perhaps if a regional NGO that would include at that time also Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis as it was created we could help place these issues on the political agenda. As I say in that article that describes rather quickly we came to see that peace hadn't broken out. I mean, one of the first projects that we did actually, in those years we were very much sort of top-down, we were very much writing reports and presenting reports to decision makers. And the very first report that we did was a report that looked at all of the plans that were being proposed to highlight that environmental concerns were not being taken seriously. And then we were trying to produce more detailed reports, so we produced a very important report on the gloy yakaba. We produced another important report on the Dead Sea and we tried to highlight that the plans being proposed for the ecosystems were not sustainable and needed to be reconsidered.

But very quickly we saw that the peace process had lots of holes in it. You know, there was lots of violence, there were new groups on both sides who literally objected to any peace and were using physical force and various means to stop, and indeed in such circumstances our investments were not coming. So our concerns for overdevelopment were not forthcoming cause the peace process itself broke down and then we moved to a second stage of reinventing ourselves, of trying to understand what purpose (if any) do we now serve. Should we just close, or do we have some values?

And we concluded, it took us a few years to conclude that actually we were an example of how we can work productively together. The fact that we all came with a common understanding of our environmental education that nature knows no borders that cooperation when it comes to sustainable

development is not a privilege, it's a necessity. That that types of cooperative activities that we were suggesting could improve things on the ground and then help build trust between peoples, governments. At that time there was no concept of environmental peacebuilding, we just saw that the environment was an entering point for trust-building. So improving things on the ground because there was a common threat that environment knows no borders. So that's when in 2001 we launched the Good Water Neighbors Program which is all like the bottom-up program to complement the top-down. We still continue with top-down, but we came to understand that we needed legitimacy. That only top-down, so policy work didn't bring us the needed legitimacy, didn't build constituency. While in the honey-moon period of 1994-1998 people were very eager to meet. After 1998, so after the outbreak of the Second Intifada, people were scared to meet, people were threatened that if they would meet they were traitors. So our work very much focused on empowering people, to stand up to justify why meeting, why working together on these issues served their own interests, of course also mutual interests but their own interests first and foremost. And that's how we came to develop an environmental peacebuilding program where environment is an entry point for peacebuilding because of the common threat that the environment face whether you are on the Israeli side, the Palestinian side or the Jordanian side. It doesn't mean it is the same threat, it doesn't mean it is an equal threat, but there are strong elements that are in common and that create common interests and that can help create win-wins. And on those common interests and the creation of win-win instead of a win-loose, than that's the basis of building trust, of building more cooperation, of improving things on the ground.

AC: Perfect, thank you. Just out of curiosity, so as you said EcoPeace was one of the first environmental peacebuilding NGOs. But *when you reinvented EcoPeace as an environmental peacebuilder that looked also at the bottom-up approach, did you take inspiration from any other academic theory/practical example? Or it was just based on your past experience and the weaknesses that you remarked in the first steps of the NGO?*

GB: Yes, it was based out of necessity coming from the experience. No, we didn't have an academic background to it and we didn't have any model to try and copy. I don't think that any other module existed. Planning the Good Water Neighbors programs probably already in 1999 we were thinking this is what's needed because the issue of empowering people to stand up and work together was already very prevalent. The idea that we needed a constituency, the idea that our political leaders were failing us and that we needed to look that politicians weren't leading at all, the politicians were feeding for most part, or many of the politicians were feeding more violence. And we felt that that doesn't reflect the community perspective. At the community perspective there was a greater

understanding, a greater willingness to work with the other side if you could show gain, if you could show gain, if you could show benefits. And from our perspective it need to be mutual, mutual gain. And from their perspective as long as they saw benefits they would join. So yeah, I don't think there was any other example.

AC: Yes, so it was extremely new and it showed positive outcomes.

GB: Yeah, you know, today we are a model for peacebuilding around the world. For environmental peacebuilding.

AC: *This is a very general question, but how would you define the role of EcoPeace as a non-state actor dealing with environmental peacebuilding issues in such a conflictual context as the one of the Arab-Israeli war? How does EcoPeace present and deal with this, what's his role?*

GB: So, I think we have many roles. A key role is a convener. Someone that is able to bring the sides together with a level of legitimacy from all three sides and the international community. And our ability to convene is our critical role, so many times throughout our twenty-six years and certainly in the last twenty years there have been many occasions where the only times that, you know that governors, ministers from different sides came together was at our conferences. Where mayors coming together at our different events.

So our ability to convene is based on other critical roles, so common fact-finding, that's a very important role because, you know, in the midst of conflict the blame game is what roles. Everyone just blames the other side for all of their problems. By hiring experts from all of the sides to work together and come out with a common report it means that we have to reach for the facts and reach agreements on those basic facts and generally those facts show that every side has some level of responsibility. Again, it does not have to be the same level of responsibility, but they can't blame 100%. If they also have a level, maybe less in water, more in pollution, but the whole is that every side has something that it could do better. It has something that it could improve by its own behavior. You know, common fact-finding is a critical issue that helps overcome the blame game. It does more than that, it also identifies and empowers each side to take steps and to identify the steps that they can move forward even without cooperation. And of course, even better when there is cooperation. But yes, there is always something you can do to improve your reality under all circumstances. So, you know, a role of convening, a role of common fact finding in order to empower.

I think we have a role of narrative building. We build a new narrative. And that's part of our ability to convene. We go beyond the blame game to identify either the lose-lose or the win-lose, or the win-win. So in the Jordan Valley, the first thing that findings show is that we are all losers. Even though

everyone has different responsibility, the end result is that we all lose. Even the Israeli side that was taking half of the water of the Jordan River is also losing from the current demise. Ahh that's very important. But than it is even more important to highlight the win-win, the potential for win-win for all sides. The idea that comes down to your ability to convene is only useful if that convening leads to new actions. And therefore those new actions need to be based on win-win. In identifying investment and projects that improve the reality on the ground in different ways for all sides.

AC: Yeah, I understand that this aspect of the narrative is crucial. I had the opportunity to talk with Lisa Cohen, always from the office in Tel Aviv, and we discussed on the importance of building a new narrative also of the conflict which is crucial to enhance change and make people take some steps towards it.

GB: Our latest report on the Green New Deal is a wonderful example of new narrative. On the one hand is a narrative of environment as a threat multiplier, so lose-lose. But on top of that we put climate as an opportunity to work together, which is a win-win.

AC: Yes, that's crucial. And how many minutes do we have?

GB: We have five minutes

AC: Just to conclude. *How do you interact with institutions and, at the same time, with community? And how have you seen that these local communities and national institutions react to the projects that you present?*

GB: So, I think that we don't present projects. We work with the community to identify the projects needed. It is not that we come and tell them, it is actually them telling us. The strength of our organization is that the Israeli side will tell us their perspective, the Palestinian side will tell us their perspective, the Jordanian community will tell the Jordanian office their perspective and then we are able to come together and hear the three perspectives and try to draw out a new narrative, a new solution that we think as practical and environmentally sounder such as the lower engine nexus. You know, it comes out of the needs of communities on water, the needs of communities for more sustainable energy and by working in big level. We are currently working with two communities on either side of the Dead Sea in Jordan and Israel that were suffering from flies, fly infestation. And there was this Israeli mayor that called us and said "we know that most of the problem is coming from the Jordanian side, and we don't have relations there, we can't communicate, can you help us understand the Jordanian perspective, how can we solve this problem together?" This is recent, you know, where we have many examples of mayors coming to us to help on all sides. We have a community in Gaza that recently said "How can you help us with cross-border floods?" So, what we

normally do is that we have our respective offices explore and understand the needs better. So we have Israeli speaking with Israelis, Palestinians speaking with Palestinians, Jordanian speaking with Jordanians. There is a level of trust, there is much better comprehension. Then we come together, we brainstorm as to “ok, how can we see a new narrative here? How can we understand who are the losers and how can we make everyone winners?” And then with the community we will come out to different proposals that will come from the community. The issues are issues that the community members are already suffering from.

AC: *And have you seen an improvement? An increase in the level of legitimacy of EcoPeace when talking with external actors? Right now, thanks to this top-down and bottom,-up approach is EcoPeace perceived as a legitimate actor?*

GB: It depends, it really depends. It is nothing static in here, it's ups and downs. It's one step forward, one step backwards. You develop trust with a mayor and then the mayor is no longer appointed or no longer elected and you need to build that trust again. Or you know, someone is trying to targeting you, at times you are targeted by anti-normalization, anti-cooperation movements of all sides. That causes us damage and we need to build trust again. It is not a static issue, it is a constant investment, it's like democracy. You need to invest on it every day. You know, the fact that you have a democratic system in place today, as America saw with Trump, does not guarantee anything for you. You need to protect, to continue, it's a constant investment. As long as the conflict continues, than the investment in peacebuilding must continue. And well after! When the conflict ends there are still going to be lots of animosities, so it's a long-term investment. It's not that because you are being successful once everyone will just come to you. No, you constantly need to keep building those constituencies, you constantly need to work with youth, the communities and with the decision makers since they all change.

AC: Well, I think our time is off. So, thank you very much, it was enlightening. Congratulation on all your work. I'm grateful for this opportunity.

GB: Sure, we'll keep in touch and in our offices, we have virtual internships.

AC: I am actually thinking about this. So thank you for pointing this out.

GB: Sure.

PLAGIARISM RULES AWARENESS STATEMENT

Fraud and Plagiarism

Scientific integrity is the foundation of academic life. Utrecht University considers any form of scientific deception to be an extremely serious infraction. Utrecht University therefore expects every student to be aware of, and to abide by, the norms and values regarding scientific integrity.

The most important forms of deception that affect this integrity are fraud and plagiarism. Plagiarism is the copying of another person's work without proper acknowledgement, and it is a form of fraud. The following is a detailed explanation of what is considered to be fraud and plagiarism, with a few concrete examples. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list!

If fraud or plagiarism is detected, the study programme's Examination Committee may decide to impose sanctions. The most serious sanction that the committee can impose is to submit a request to the Executive Board of the University to expel the student from the study programme.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the copying of another person's documents, ideas or lines of thought and presenting it as one's own work. You must always accurately indicate from whom you obtained ideas and insights, and you must constantly be aware of the difference between citing, paraphrasing and plagiarising. Students and staff must be very careful in citing sources; this concerns not only printed sources, but also information obtained from the Internet.

The following issues will always be considered to be plagiarism:

- cutting and pasting text from digital sources, such as an encyclopaedia or digital periodicals, without quotation marks and footnotes;
- cutting and pasting text from the Internet without quotation marks and footnotes;
- copying printed materials, such as books, magazines or encyclopaedias, without quotation marks or footnotes;
- including a translation of one of the sources named above without quotation marks or footnotes;
- paraphrasing (parts of) the texts listed above without proper references: paraphrasing must be marked as such, by expressly mentioning the original author in the text or in a footnote, so that you do not give the impression that it is your own idea;
- copying sound, video or test materials from others without references, and presenting it as one's own work;
- submitting work done previously by the student without reference to the original paper, and presenting it as original work done in the context of the course, without the express permission of the course lecturer;
- copying the work of another student and presenting it as one's own work. If this is done with the consent of the other student, then he or she is also complicit in the plagiarism;
- when one of the authors of a group paper commits plagiarism, then the other co-authors are also complicit in plagiarism if they could or should have known that the person was committing plagiarism;
- submitting papers acquired from a commercial institution, such as an Internet site with summaries or papers, that were written by another person, whether or not that other person received payment for the work.

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I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.	
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Date and signature:	
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