

The Role of Water Management in  
Peacemaking in the Middle East:  
case study of the Good Water  
Neighbors project

Anna Shinkovskaia

Examensarbete i Hållbar Utveckling 211  
Master thesis in Sustainable Development

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UPPSALA  
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**Abstract:** This thesis seeks to explore the potential role of cooperation over water resources between Israel, Jordan and Palestine in facilitating the peacemaking process in the region. This was done by conducting an analysis of the Good Water Neighbors (GWN) project, an initiative launched by Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) in 2001 to raise awareness of the shared water problems that exist between the three conflicting parties.

The primary data for this research was obtained through interviews with three FoEME's employees, who are involved in the GWN initiative in Israel, Jordan and Palestine.

It was concluded that while water cooperation at the NGO level can serve as a starting point for dialogue, it does not generate enough spillover into a wider political peace process in the Middle East at the moment. However, water cooperation at the NGO level has a bigger chance to contribute to peacemaking in the long term by gradually replacing politically defined and historically distrustful identities with a concept of a common environmental community, provided that development of shared perceptions and experiences through the means of the GWN project continues to be fostered. By significantly reducing the animosity and hostility, which have been mutually reinforced by the conflicting parties, the formation of the common identity through water cooperation would give stable ground to the traditional diplomacy, engaged in the region, to be able to continue the peacemaking efforts through conventional means of dialogue, mediation and negotiations in a more efficient and effective way. The success of the transition of the joint water management from simple cooperation at the NGO level to the peacemaking tool largely depends on whether the people in the region choose to harness the positive effects from water cooperation for the peace process in the Middle East.

**Keywords:** Environmental cooperation, environmental peacemaking, environmental security, FoEME, GWN, water cooperation, water wars, sustainable development

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**Summary:** Through the analysis of the Good Water Neighbors (GWN) project, an initiative launched by Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) in 2001, this thesis seeks to explore whether water cooperation between Israel, Jordan and Palestine at the NGO level can help to move forward the peace process in the Middle East. Three interviews with the FoEME's representatives from Israel, Jordan and Palestine were conducted to get the primary data for this research.

It was concluded that while at the moment water cooperation at the NGO level does not generate enough of spillover effects to be able to facilitate the peace process in the Middle East, it has a bigger chance to contribute to the peacemaking in the long term, provided that water cooperation through the means of the GWN project continues to be fostered. In the long view, by creating habits to cooperate and fostering trust, this joint water management is expected to reduce animosity and replace mutually exclusive identities in the region with an idea of a common environmental community. This, in turn, is expected to provide a better platform for negotiating and thereby making the probability of reaching peace much more likely. At the same time, it was noted that water cooperation at the NGO level does not magically advance itself to the peacemaking level. Instead, the study underscored the important role the people play in translating the positive effects from water cooperation at the community level into actual steps for facilitating the peace process in the region.

**Keywords:** Environmental cooperation, environmental peacemaking, environmental security, FoEME, GWN, water cooperation, water wars, sustainable development

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## Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
etc.	et cetera = and so forth
FoEME	Friends of the Earth Middle East
GWN	Good Water Neighbors
HDR	Human Development Report
i.e.	id est = that is
JWC	Joint Water Committee
MSD	Master's Degree in Sustainable Development
n.d.	no date
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PWA	Palestinian Water Authority
SIWI	Stockholm International Water Institute
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNWCED	United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development
US	United States

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## Foreword

“Every year, around the globe, old conflicts worsen, new ones erupt and, occasionally, some situations improve” (Arbour, 2012). For instance, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (n.d.) shows that there were 23 armed conflicts happening in the world in 2012. Last year saw the conflict unfolding in Ukraine; with little chance of putting an end to the fighting in 2014, the war in Syria is likely to drag on for more years to come (Jenkins, 2014); the South China Sea continues to be the scene of escalating maritime disputes with a high risk of an armed conflict between China and the United States (Glaser, 2014) etc.

Since the end of the Cold War the states and international organizations have been engaged in peacemaking efforts to resolve the conflicts that have been springing up around the world. The term peacemaking is widely seen as a part of the “tripartite approach” to peace, which was introduced by Johan Galtung (1975 cited in Gawerc, 2006, p.439). To help and guide third-party intervention Galtung (1975 cited in Gawerc, 2006, p.439) drew a distinction among peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-building (the last two are, however, frequently confused and interchanged in the academic literature). While this thesis will only concentrate on peacemaking, for convenience purposes the difference between all three complimentary approaches will be briefly described below.

Peacekeeping is the first step in the peace process, which involves third-party intervention to keep the warring parties apart through the deployment of armed forces who act as the buffer zone between adversaries, maintain ceasefire and guarantee the absence of direct violence, in general (or at least act to reduce it) (United Nations, n.d.).

Peacemaking can be described as the second step in the peace process. Along with peacekeeping, it can be considered to be the most wide-spread form of tackling conflicts and violence. It has also been the main focus of conflict research (Gawerc, 2006). Peacemaking refers to the diplomatic efforts (such as negotiations, mediation, conciliation etc.) to end conflict between the conflicting parties with an ultimate goal of reaching a peace agreement (United Nations, n.d.). By contrast, the term peace-building remains to be the least understood of all three and, as a result, it has received the least attention from conflict researchers (Gawerc, 2006). In essence, it focuses on the process of “institutionalizing” peace and consists of activities that were traditionally considered to be the sole prerogative of states (David, 1999). Therefore, peacebuilding can be defined as a more fundamental approach to peace, which is closely tied with building of democratic institutions, justice and security (Galtung, 1975 cited in Gawerc, 2006, p.439).

As old conflicts risk breaking out again and more conflicts are expected to emerge, the already strained capacity of conventional diplomacy is most likely to become overstrained. Some, therefore, would agree that the handling of conflicts, both new and old, requires that the familiar methods of peacemaking should be replaced with a much more sophisticated, creative, yet universal approach to conflict resolution. This could be effective in solving the conflicts that the world has inherited from the past as well as the new types of conflicts that are most likely to arise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This discussion has inspired the overarching purpose behind this paper. While this research does not attempt to challenge the primacy of the conventional means of conflict resolution, such as negotiations and mediation, it seeks to explore the peacemaking capacity of non-traditional tools that could be later incorporated in the traditional peacemaking process.

Given the nature of this research, which represents an essentially novel approach to the concept of peacemaking by blending together peace, security and environmental cooperation studies, it is meant to come across as an engaging, thought-provoking read, that will, hopefully be of equal interest to the future MSD students, Peace and Conflict researchers, public policy consultants and practitioners, who are working in the field of conflict prevention and peacemaking, as well as to the general audience.

The Middle East conflict, which is central to this study, certainly deserves a research of its own, however due to space and time constraints, the present paper will only provide a somewhat simplified overview of the conflict and the peace process between Israel, Jordan and Palestine, without going into further detail about all the parties concerned or the geopolitical power play in the region.

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Sustainable Development. All of the work presented henceforth was conducted from February to May, 2014.

Anna Shinkovskaia  
April, 2014  
Uppsala, Sweden



# 1. Introduction

In keeping with the best traditions of the chicken-egg dilemma, peace is an essential prerequisite for sustainable development; however, there can be no development without peace (UNWCED, 1987). If handled poorly, conflicts (that is, the lack of peace), regardless of their causes and nature, can create major obstacles for sustainable development by placing great demands on human resources, the already scarce natural resources and wealth (UNWCED, 1987). Therefore, peacemaking becomes as important for sustainable development as the use of new technologies is for moving towards greener societies.

However, in recent years peacemaking initiatives have been facing a lot of criticism for failing to deliver. Mac Ginty (2010, p. 159) notes that on many occasions peace initiatives have helped to “freeze rather than transform” the conflicts. In most cases the conflicting parties end up in a vicious circle of negotiations over same inoperative demands and mutual accusations rather than get to the root of problem. Needless to say, that this is not the best way to establish trust at the negotiating table, which, ironically, is also a precondition for facilitating a successful outcome of the peace talks.

The criticism of peacemaking is getting especially loud in the light of the growing warning of the impending “climate wars” due to the increasing environmental degradation, which is expected to put a severe strain on the capacity of diplomatic efforts. This speculation has generated a sprawl of literature on environmental security and conflict, preoccupying the brains of global security strategists, military policy gurus and hence, quite conveniently filling the gap that had taken shape on the security landscape after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Barnett, 2000). Yet, there is a growing belief that the risks of conflict over resources can instead be turned into opportunities for peace among adversaries with the help of environmental cooperation (Carius, 2006; Conca and Dabelko, 2002). This argument has led to the idea behind this research.

This thesis will attempt to explore the role of environmental cooperation in facilitating the peace process between the conflicting parties to the non-environmentally induced conflict, by applying it to the case of the Good Water Neighbors (GWN) project, an initiative launched by the Friends of the Middle East (FoEME) to raise awareness of the shared water problems between Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians (FoEME, n.d.). Hence, the views expressed in this paper are solely those of the NGO sector promoting peacemaking through water cooperation in the region.

The Middle East, a region that has been rife with religious, ethnic and political tensions for a very long period of time, is frequently viewed as an archetypical example of an intractable conflict (Handelman, 2008). It also considered a textbook example of the potential conflict over natural resources (water, in particular) due to its semi-arid and arid climate and unsustainable water management practices (Chaitin et al., 2004). This alleged proneness to resource wars, as well as the recurring challenge it presents to the peacemakers predetermined its choice as a case study for this research - not to mention, it becomes especially interesting to analyze the potential role of cooperation over water as a peacemaking tool in the region in the light of the most recent failure of the latest round of peace talks between Israel and Palestine in spring 2014 (Aljazeera.com, 2014).

## 1.1. Water as a source of conflict or cooperation

For many years now, the idea that violence and climate change can go hand in hand has been persistently incepted into people’s minds (Welzer, 2012). In the academic literature the resource wars thesis has been spearheaded by Thomas Homer-Dixon and the so-called Toronto group (Wolf, 2007).

While according to Barnett (2000, p.271) the existing empirical data suggests that natural resources can hardly ever be the sole direct reason for conflict, but rather the catalyst that can trigger social instability, which in turn will lead to conflict, the term quickly caught up with the general public, becoming a media darling and, subsequently, a Hollywood blockbuster favorite, spawning the likes of “Mad Max” and “Hunger Games”, thanks to its dystopian appeal, for which the today’s audience seems to be having a big soft spot.

Perhaps the most consistent concern of the “resource wars” frenzy is the likelihood of the conflict over water (Barnett, 2000; Zeitoun and Mirumachi, 2008). Successive UN Secretaries generals, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-Moon, have all been warning about the rising risk of water wars in a not too distant future (cited in Aggestam and Sundell-Eklund, 2014, p. 11). There are several characteristics that make the speculation on the water-war linkage so attractive.

First of all, water is arguably the world's single most important finite resource. Indispensable to literally every sector of human activity, water has no known substitutes for most of its uses, unlike oil, for example, dependence on which can be reduced by switching to other means of generating energy (Chellaney, 2013). Life would not be possible without it. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the critical degree of water scarcity can easily create a serious rift even between the friendly and peaceful neighbors.

Secondly, water is one of the few vital resources that know no political boundaries and, therefore require “balancing competing interests of various stakeholders” (Kramer, 2008). Failing to do so can potentially lead to disputes that can snowball into violent conflicts - especially if the predictions about the looming threat of water scarcity become true. Gleick (1993, p.99) also pinpoints the importance of the extent to which water supply is shared by more than

one region or state as well as the power dynamics in the region as a source of potential rivalry that could spark a full-scale war between the parties concerned.

Another significant contributing factor to the persistence of the water-war discourse is what Barnett (2000, p.266-277) calls “a pervasive disinterest in peace”, that the world has inherited from the days of the Cold War.

Regardless of the unyielding popularity of the water-war scenario, there is still a consistent lack of historical perspective on the direct causality between the two (Barnett, 2000). Similarly, Gleick (1993, cited in Wolf, 2007, p. 4), despite being often quoted as “providing what appears to be a history replete with violence over water resources”, points that water has never been the cause, but rather a tool, target or a victim of warfare.

According to Wolf (2007, p.244) the only true “water war” took place almost 4500 years ago between the two Mesopotamian city-states of Lagash and Umma (in modern days, Southern Iraq) over the Tigris River, and there is a much richer record of cooperation, manifested in over 3600 water-related treaties, that have been documented throughout the course of history, as opposed to conflicts.

There is also great historical evidence that joint water management institutions happen to be resilient and surprisingly stable even in the times of bitter conflict – for example, the Mekong River Committee, an intergovernmental organization, established by Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam in 1957, which continued to exchange data on the development of water resources in the region despite the Viet Nam War, or the Permanent Indus Commission, which has survived multiple disputes as well as the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965,1971 and 1991 (Carius, 2006).

## 1.2. Overview of the Middle East conflict

The Middle East conflict is easily the world’s most covered and well-known conflict. It is also probably the most enduring and explosive conflicts in the history of international relations, given the “historical trauma and the passions of the confrontation over land, identity, and religion” (Miller, 2014). Moreover, the Middle East conflict represents a classic example of the regional power asymmetry, with Israel wielding “the power of the strong” and Palestinians wielding “the power of the weak” (Miller, 2014). Its complexity certainly deserves some research of its own. However, since the main purpose of this study is to focus on the processes that could facilitate peacemaking in the region, this subchapter will only provide a very brief, if not simplified, history of the Middle East conflict in order to familiarize the readers with the major events and factors that have shaped the conflict as it is known today. It will also give a short overview of the developments in the peace process in the region.

For convenience purposes, however, many details regarding Israel’s relationship with the majority of the neighboring Arab states, such as Syria and Lebanon, as well as the specifics of the peace process (for example, Kissinger’s “shuttle diplomacy”) will be largely left out from this overview. Instead, it will mostly focus on the relationship dynamics between Israel, Jordan and Palestine.

### 1.2.1. Background of the Middle East conflict

The origins of the conflict go back to the rise of Zionist movement in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (BBC, n.d.; Zeitoun, 2012). The Zionist movement conceived the idea of building a Jewish national home in their “historical homeland” in Palestine (which was placed under British mandate at the time), which also happened to be the territory that had been earlier promised to the Arab leadership for the establishment of an independent Arab state in the region in exchange for their support of Britain against the Ottoman Empire in World War I (Shah, 2006). The famous Balfour Declaration of 1917 de facto marked the start of the Middle East conflict by giving the green light to mass Jewish immigration to Palestine (Zeitoun, 2012).

In 1947 the British handed over the responsibility for solving the mounting Arab-Israeli problem to the United Nations, which recommended the creation of Arab and Jewish states on the territory of Palestine and the internalization of Jerusalem, as a part of the so-called partition plan (BBC, n.d.; Shah, 2006). The resolution was never implemented and instead further fueled the antagonism between the native Arab population and Jewish immigrants, which quite quickly turned into the civil war between the two (UCDP, n.d.). This civil war transformed into First Arab-Israeli War after the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948 (BBC, n.d.). Since then the situation in the region has become especially complex and tense.

In 1956 Israel (together with Britain and France) launched an attack into the Sinai Peninsula following Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez Canal, thereby giving a start to Second Arab-Israeli War (Shah, 2006).

In 1967 in response to the mobilization of the Egyptian forces on the Israeli border Israel simultaneously attacked Egypt, Syria and Jordan in a so-called “pre-emptive strike”, which later became known as the Six Day War (Shah, 2006). As a result of this war Israel took control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria, thereby nearly doubling its size (Fig. 1) (Shah, 2006; UCDP, n.d.). Sinai, was however, later returned back to Egypt in exchange for peace between the two states as a result of the Camp David accords in 1978 (Shah, 2006). Since then the conflict started to slowly shift from regional Arab–Israeli conflict to a more narrow Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Jägerskog, 2003).

The late 1980s saw a mass Palestinian uprising—the Intifada - against the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories, which resulted in violence and death of many civilians (BBC, 2013).

The 1990s were marked by the optimism about the peacemaking prospects in the region, however, things went downhill drastically in the early 2000s, quickly developing into the Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which has put the Middle East peace process into a “deep freeze” (Robinson, 2010; Shah, 2006). As of July, 2014, a little more than a decade later

since the end of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which de facto ended in 2004 with the death of Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), there have been many concerns that the recent killings of three Israeli teenagers may bring the region on verge of the third intifada, with many observers fearfully noting that this tragic incident could go beyond “the normal escalatory cycle that the world has grown accustomed to” and, perhaps, put a permanent end to all peacemaking efforts in the region (Mackey, 2014; Miller, 2014; Sobelman, 2014).



Fig.1. Map of the Jordan River Basin (Haddadin, 2011)

## 1.2.2. Overview of the peace process in the Middle East

After the Six-Day War, the UN Security Council issued the Resolution 242, which established the principle “land-for-peace” that would guide (or haunt) the peacemaking process in the region (Friedman, 2012). However, initially, the land-for-peace formula looked promising and even managed to cement peace between Israel and Egypt in the aforementioned Camp David accords of 1978, which it was the basis of, making it probably the most successful negotiations in the whole peace process in the region (Rubin, 2012).

As stated above, the 1990s saw the development of some very promising peacemaking prospects in the region: the Madrid Conference of 1991, the Oslo Accords and the meeting between the leaders of the US, Israel and the PLO in Camp David in 2000 were among them. The Madrid Conference was organized to consolidate the success of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel by encouraging Jordan (the Palestinians were represented as part of the joint delegation with Jordan), Lebanon and Syria to sign their own peace agreements with Israel (BBC, 2013). The conference is widely believed to have led to the signing of the historic Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994 that officially ended the “state of belligerency” between the two countries (Shamir, 1998). The Palestinian track of the conference led to the secret talks which in turn led to Oslo Agreement of 1993 (BBC, 2013).

The signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993 between Israelis and Palestinians, represented by the PLO, is often seen as the watershed moment in the relationship between the two parties. The agreement was meant to build on the land-for-peace formula that proved to be successful in the Camp David accords (Rubin, 2012). While it has prompted the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, the agreement has been largely criticized for being one-sided and favoring Israel over the Palestinian people (BBC, 2013; Shah, 2006). The Oslo Accord of 1993 was followed by the Oslo II Accord, signed in 1995 (Friedman, 2012).

The meeting in Camp David in 2000 between Clinton, Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat, leaders of the US, Israel and the PLO respectively, largely failed (BBC, 2013). It was almost immediately followed by the outburst of the aforementioned Second Intifada (Friedman, 2012).

Despite these historic treaties, Israel continues to control a big portion of land, water and other resources in the region (Shah, 2006). The issues of borders, settlements, refugees and status of Jerusalem (the Israeli are unwilling to divide Jerusalem, whereas the Palestinians want East Jerusalem, as the capital of a Palestinian state) continue to dominate the political agenda in the region (BBC, 2013; Shah, 2006). Inability and unwillingness to move forward reful animosity in the region.

### 1.3. Water's issue in the Middle East conflict

“Not all waters are equal; some are more political than others” (Allan, 2001 cited in Vraneski, 2001, p.160). Water has always been playing a crucial role in the Arab-Israeli relations. For instance, according to Zeitoun (2012, p.65) the Zionist founders of Israel had been expressing interest in Palestinian water resources long prior to the aforementioned Balfour Declaration of 1917. Access to water was crucial for the implementation of the Zionist movement's development plans, which heavily depended on water for large-scale irrigation and electric power - not to mention, the religious and cultural significance that the Jordan River waters have always carried for both religions (FoEME, 2013; Kramer, 2008; Zeitoun, 2012).

Water has in part played a significant role in the events leading up to the aforementioned UN partition plan in 1947, as the British were unable to deal with the social tensions that were in turn stemming from their inability to control the water resources in the region (Jägerskog, 2003). In all fairness it must be said that the complexity of the local water sector, which was (and continues to be) composed of numerous contending social groups, that developed their own customary water laws, as well as the administrative legacy left by the governments that had previously ruled over the Palestinian land, significantly contributed to the previous failure of the British (Jägerskog, 2003; Trottier, 1999; Zeitoun, 2012). The creation of the Jewish hydraulic network in 1920 – 1948 facilitated the establishment of the State of Israel (Trottier, 1999). Since the emergence of Israel on the political map, the water issue has become an integral part of the Arab-Israeli conflict, perhaps, only second to the question of land, borders and the status of Jerusalem (Elmusa, 1993; Gleick, 1993).

Both Zeitoun (2012, p.66) and Fietelson (2000, p.345) note that the first decade after Israel's independence can be characterized as one of the most impetuous periods in the history of Israeli-Palestinian “water conflict” due to Israel's rapid development, and the minimal development of the Palestinian side. This period is also known as the ideological era, as key driving force behind Israeli actions to secure shares of the Jordan River system were the ideology of redemption (el Musa 1997, cited in Zeitoun, 2012, p.67) and the idea of territoriality (Schnell 2001, cited in Zeitoun, 2012, p.67). According to Fietelson (2000, p.346), priority was given to rural settlement and agricultural development, and the development of the water resource was seen as a crucial element for the implementation of the former.

The first Israeli attempts to divert the Upper Jordan River resulted in political confrontations with Syria in the early 1950s and mid-1960s and led to the so-called “Johnston plan”, designed by the US envoy Eric Johnston as a part of the mediation efforts to resolve the tension (Zeitoun, 2012). In 1964 Israel completed the construction of the Israeli National Water carrier which triggered further confrontation between Israeli and its neighbors, who viewed the carrier as nothing short of a theft of water, that belonged to them (Fietelson, 2000; Zeitoun 2012).

Some researchers go so far as to claim that the Six Day War in 1967 between Israel, on the one side, and the neighboring states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, on the other, was essentially a struggle for headwaters of the Jordan River (Gleick, 1993). While this claim is still a matter of speculation, the fact remains that the outcome of the 1967 war drastically changed the hydro political map of the Middle East, with Israel getting control over most of the contested water resources in Palestine, thereby worsening the already existing water asymmetry in the region (Elmusa, 1993; Zeiton, 2012). For instance, following the aftermath of the Six Day War, the Israeli imposed severe restrictions on the drilling of new wells in the occupied territories, which now required a permit obtainable only through a complicated bureaucratic process, and limits were placed on the amount withdrawn from each existing well, despite the fact that these wells often provide the only source of income of hundreds of Palestinian families who depend on agriculture (Kramer, 2008). Interestingly, according to Jägerskog (2003, p.86), Israel issued only 23 new drilling permits to Palestinians, granted mostly for domestic needs, in the period of 1967 – 1990.

### 1.4. Water issue in the negotiations process

Based on all stated above, it is fair to say that water is now a crucial part of the peace process, just as much as it was and continues to be an important factor in the Middle East conflict (again, only secondary to the issue of borders and settlements). The sub-chapters below present a general overview of the key provisions regarding water in the agreements between Israel and Palestine and Israel and Jordan, respectively.

#### 1.4.1. Water issue in the Israeli-Palestinian agreement

The Oslo II Agreement in 1995 underscored the attempts to change the hydro political atmosphere in the region (Zeitoun, 2012). However, while Article 40 of the agreement did recognize the Palestinian water rights for the first time in history, it did not specify or define them, therefore allowing Israel to continue to control water supply and drilling of the wells (Haddadin, 2002). Also any further discussion on the Palestinian water rights and the allocation of the water resources was postponed until the permanent status of the negotiations (Haddadin, 2002; Kramer, 2008).

Many researchers point out that one of the major obstacles to reaching a fair and mutually beneficial agreement over water (as well as other issues) stems from the fact that both Israel and Palestine tend to approach the issue (and the peace process in general) very differently (Jägerskog, 2003). According to Jägerskog (2003, p.112), the former tends to view control over water as a national security issue, seeing Palestine as a non-trustworthy partner and, should they gain control over transboundary water resources - as a source of high risk. By contrast, Palestinian claim for independent control and rights to water resources has been guided by the idea of nationhood (Jägerskog, 2003). The unresolved hard security issues, the disagreement on the issue of territory and borders contribute significantly to the lack of Israeli-Palestinian water cooperation.

Pursuant to the agreement, Israel and Palestine also set up the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) and the Joint Water Committee (JWC) for coordination of sewage-related issues. While this step was meant to signify positive dynamics in water cooperation in the region on a state level, the structure and the work agenda of the JWC have been criticized for power asymmetry in favor of Israel, with the latter being accused of “dressing up domination as cooperation” (Selby, 2003, cited in Zeitoun, 2012, p.109).

#### 1.4.2. Water issue in the Israeli-Jordanian agreement

Since the early 1980s both Israel and Jordan have maintained secret contact on managing the Jordan River, which later became known as the “picnic table talks”, making it the first attempt to find mutually beneficial solutions after the overall failure of the aforementioned Johnston plan in the mid-1950s despite both parties being technically in the state of war since the establishment of Israel (Wolf, 2007). The dialogue over water issues continued in the early 1990s (Haddadin, 2011).

As previously mentioned, in 1994 both parties signed a peace agreement (Shamir, 1998). While some could argue that “picnic table talks” were one of the contributing factors that led to the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan, it is still a matter of speculation that deserves some research of its own and will not be covered in this paper. Article 6 of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan contains important water provisions, committing both sides to the recognition of each other’s rightful water shares, cooperation over water (both bilateral and regional), information exchange, and the use of sound water management practices to prevent water degradation (Haddadin, 2011; Shamir, 1998). While, generally speaking, the treaty between Jordan and Israel basically maintains the existing water allocations for the latter, it also states that the subject of water can serve as the basis for advanced cooperation between the parties, thereby signifying the peacemaking capacity of water cooperation (Jägerskog, 2003). Just like the interim agreement between Israel and Palestine, the treaty also led to the establishment of a Joint Water Committee (JWC) between Israel and Jordan in order to facilitate the implementation of the treaty (Shamir, 1998). However, the ambiguities in the treaty’s provisions created significant obstacles in the work of the JWC, making it the target of criticism (Kramer, 2008).

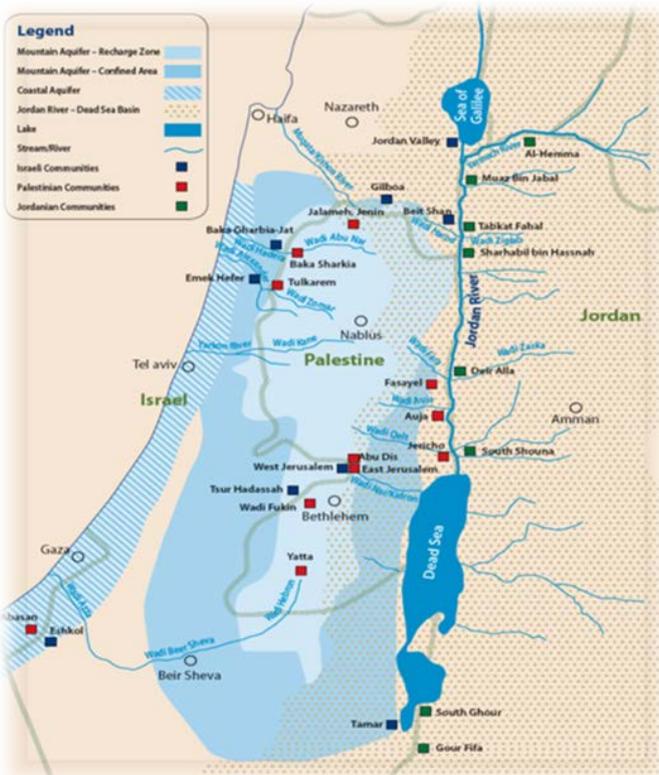


Fig.2. Good Water Neighbors Communities (FoEME, 2013)

#### 1.5. Good Water Neighbors

Despite the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2001, the Good Water Neighbors project was successfully initiated by FoEME in the same year, initially starting with only 11 communities – 5 Palestinian, 5 Israeli and 1 Jordanian (Milner, 2013). Since then the project has expanded to include 28 communities (11 Palestinian, 9 Israeli and 8 Jordanian), who share the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, the Mountain and Coastal aquifers and several cross-border streams (Fig.2) (Milner, 2013).

The GWN was primarily established: “1) to raise awareness of the shared water problems through educating both young and adult residents of these communities and utilizing their mutual dependence on these shared water resources as a basis for developing cooperation on sound water management and advancing the need to protect the shared water resources on the ground; 2) to facilitate peace in the region through building trust and a habit for cooperation between the neighboring communities” (Kramer, 2008). In essence, FoEME and the GWN assume the role of

a middleman between the communities or communities and local authority etc. (Milner, 2013).

The GWN actively cooperates with municipal leaders, as part of its multi-level approach that makes the program stand out amongst other similar initiatives that exist in the region (FoEME, 2005). According to Kramer (2008, p.24), one of the biggest assets of the program is that it works both bottom-up and top-down: the community level work is complimented by FoEME's efforts to advocate for environmental justice on the governmental level.

The field staff is present in each of the GWN communities and is selected from the community by the national FoEME coordinator based on the candidate's ability to work with the community; his/her influence and credibility in the community; and his/her ability to build and maintain relations with the local authority and decision makers (Kramer, 2008). Field staff helps FoEME to identify the priority initiatives for each pair or several pairs of cross border communities on the basis of its/ their local conditions (Milner, 2013).

## 1.6. Problem formulation

All the above demonstrates the cooperative potential of water resources and that the argument about "water wars" is mostly overstated due to it primarily being a product of strategic rationality and media exaggeration (Barnett, 2000). It is also safe to say that the alleged factors (such as water's indispensability to life as we know it) that are likely to lead to war, are the very same factors that can shape water's peacemaking capacity. Therefore, water can act as "both an irritant and a unifier, and as an irritant, water can make good relations bad and bad relations worse" (Wolf et al., 2005).

On the other hand, from the very brief coverage of history of the Middle East conflict and the role of the water issue in it, it is clear that the Middle East is an intricate tangle of complex relationships originating from mutually exclusive identities, which also define the approach to the water issue, thereby further instigating the rivalry and increasing the already huge water asymmetry in the region.

While climate change is believed to worsen the relationship in the water sector to the point of violent conflict, according to the first argument, water is as likely to induce violence and lead to war as it is to facilitate peace. Therefore, it is up to the parties concerned to either use or miss this opportunity, especially now that, quite ironically, climate change is providing such a unique platform for fostering cooperation. Moreover, the idea of using water as a peacemaking tool becomes increasingly important since it can be also applied to other conflicts, both new and old, regardless of their nature and cause.

## 1.7. Aim and Delimitations

The aim of this thesis is to explore the opportunities that water cooperation at the NGO level provides for facilitating the peacemaking process between Israel, Jordan and Palestine.

The research will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- *What impact do NGOs that promote water cooperation have on facilitating the peacemaking process in the Middle East?*

Sub questions:

Q 1: *Does the depoliticized NGO initiative between Israel, Jordan and Palestine generate enough of spillover effects to resolve the political issues between the parties?*

Q 2: *What are the factors limiting NGO spillover effects?*

In order to narrow down the scope of this thesis, the research will only focus on the Good Water Neighbors project. Although there are a few other similar initiatives that operate in the region they will not be covered in this study and no comparative analysis will be drawn between them and the GWN. Due to the time limitation, complexity of the issue in focus and several other practical constraints, the study will not attempt to refer to all the actors and stakeholders involved in the Good Water Neighbors initiative. Nor will it attempt to analyze the attitudes of members of communities or political elites. The focus of this research is only on the middle-level effort.

## 1.8. Outline

This section gives an outline of the present study. The graphic illustration of the thesis' outline, shown in Figure 3, is also presented to provide a visual structure of the research.

The first chapter is an introduction to the research. It sets the general tone for the research by providing an overview of the causal relationships between water, conflict and cooperation, as well as a brief history of the Middle East conflict and the role of water issue in it. The chapter concludes with the problem formulation behind the thesis, its aims and delimitations. The introductory chapter of the study is then followed by seven more chapters.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the theory that is later used in Chapter 5 for the analysis of the empirical findings presented in Chapter 4. The third chapter seeks to provide sufficient detail of the methodology selected to conduct

the present research study so that it can be replicated. It also describes the rationale for choosing those particular research methods.

Chapter 4 covers results of the interviews. The next chapter, Chapter 5, revisits the research questions, offers the analysis and the discussion of the results, outlined in the previous chapter.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents a brief, final conclusion of the research, and is then followed by the recommendations for the future research, given in Chapter 7, which is in turn followed by the Acknowledgement section. Both the Recommendations for the future research and the Acknowledgement section are not included in Figure 3.

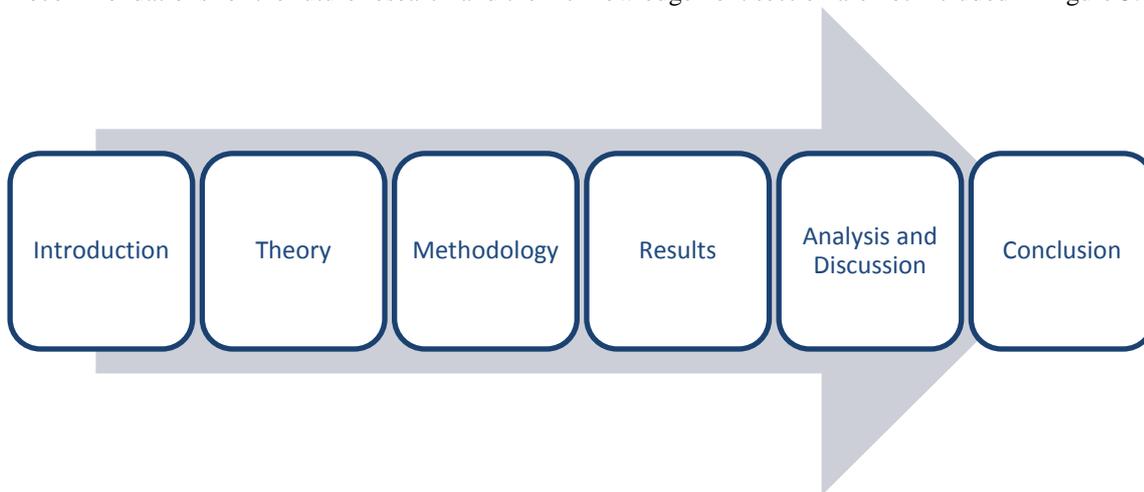


Fig.3. Illustration of the outline of the study.

## 2. Theory

This chapter starts off with an overview of the concepts that led up to the introduction of the theory chosen for this study. It then proceeds to present the theory, which will later provide the foundation for the analysis and the discussion of the empirical findings presented in Chapter 5. The choice of the following theory is based on the problem formulation and the research questions presented in Chapter 1.

### 2.1. Environmental security

While the notion of “environmental security” is often believed to represent one of the seven dimensions of the more overarching paradigm of human security (first introduced in the United Nations Development Program’s annual Human Development Report (HDR) in 1994 (p.3)) - along with personal, economic, political, community, food and health security - it actually started to emerge as a separate concept back in the 1970s and 1980s, coinciding with the rapid growth of environmental consciousness in the world, when a number of peace and environmental scholars began to question the ability of national security institutions to respond to the non-conventional threats, such as climate change (Barnett, 2000). It then gained significant prominence after the end of Cold War (Brock, 1997).

While the meaning of environmental security remains somewhat ambiguous (Deudney, 1990 cited in Brock, 1997, p.18), its predominant focus has always been the possible links between environmental change and conflict.

Many researchers, most notably, Thomas Homer-Dixon of the Toronto group, have tried to demonstrate the alleged connection between environment and security by conducting case studies. Although the results of his research have been criticized for being poorly supported, he and his colleagues found evidence that environmental scarcity of renewable resources can at times lead to violent conflict (Homer-Dixon, 1994).

According to the group’s findings, environmental scarcity generates social effects (for example, increased poverty or migration) that can often be interpreted by analysts as the immediate causes of conflict (Fig.4) (Ronnfeldt, 1997).

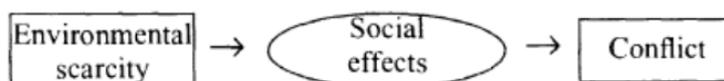


Fig.4. The Toronto group key model (Ronnfeldt, 1997, p.475)

This focus on conflict has led to the concept of securitization, theorized by what has come to be known as the Copenhagen School of security studies, led by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (Buzan, Waever and Wilde, 1998 cited in Biswas, 2011, p.3). According to the concept of securitization, any potential issue can be transformed into an

existential threat that would justify the use of exceptional measures, such as the use of armed force (Biswas, 2011). Daniel Deudney has been one of the most prominent opponents of environmental securitization, warning against the counterproductive results, that such thinking can lead to (1990, cited in Dalby, 2009, p. 50). Unlike the traditional threats, which can be fought with military, environmental hazards know no boundaries and have no direct targets, therefore fighting with arms against each other, instead of cooperating, would only make matters significantly worse (Deudney, 1990 cited in Dalby, 2009, p. 50).

## 2.2. Environmental cooperation

In essence environmental cooperation is a concept that is opposite to the concept of environmental security and it, therefore, represents a more positive take on the environment and conflict causality. Unfortunately, the concept of environmental cooperation has received significantly less attention in the research community than environmental security and remains largely unexplored (Carius, 2006).

Countering the more pessimistic environment – war discourse, the proponents of environmental cooperation assert (also without much substantiation - just like their environmental security counterparts) that environmental interdependence will force states to “magically” go beyond traditional ways of militaristic thinking about national security (Darst, 2003).

Peter Haas (1990 cited in Ali, 2003, p.167) is often considered to be the mastermind behind the concept of environmental cooperation. According to him (1990, cited in Ali, 2003, p.167), environmental concerns have certain characteristics (for instance, the fact that they know no boundaries) that enable them to facilitate consensus catalysis, by leading to the emergence of the so-called “epistemic communities,” which are able to distance themselves from bickering on the political level, break the vicious circle of mutual accusations and, hence, promote cooperation. Similarly, Ali (2003, p.168) argues that environmental issues have at least “a potential for injecting a degree of objective and depoliticized discourse in negotiations”.

Environmental cooperation is often viewed strictly as a matter of the low politics (Aggestam and Sundell-Eklund, 2014; Carius, 2006). The term low politics implies that the issue is not being discussed amidst the questions of national security or foreign policy, therefore it is less politically charged, does not threaten the most sensitive issues, that may exist between the parties, and, hence, can be a safe first step to initiate dialogue between the adversaries (Harari, 2008).

In regard to the concept of environmental cooperation, it is important to note that cooperation does not necessarily mean complete absence of conflict; however, it does mean that there is a mutual will to resolve the conflict with the help of non-violent means and dialogue (Rogers, 1997).

The cooperative potential of environmental issues has prompted the idea of using it as a tool to resolve large conflicts that have been caused neither by environmental scarcity nor by the abundance of natural resources (Heidenreich, 2004). However, the emergence of environmental cooperation as well as its transformation into a peacemaking tool does not happen automatically, rather it is a long-term process (Heidenreich, 2004).

## 2.3. The theory of environmental peacemaking

The theory of environmental peacemaking was first introduced and formalized by Ken Conca and Geoffrey Dabelko (2002, p.9). According to Darst (2002, p.116) environmental peacemaking is first of all a product of Conca and Dabelko’s frustration with the limitations of the concept of environmental security, which, despite its dominance in the security studies and popularity with the general public, fails to demonstrate how environmental degradation and rivalry over natural resources could be the direct cause of violent conflicts. It is also the authors’ response to the environmental cooperation enthusiasts (Darst, 2002). In other words, the theory of environmental peacemaking is meant to bridge the gap between these two traditional approaches.

According to Conca and Dabelko (2002, p.10-11), the theory of environmental peacemaking is meant to work on at least two different levels:

- to foster trust and habits of cooperation between parties to the conflict by using environmental problems as opportunities;
- to transform state institutions and shape a shared collective identity (within which violent conflicts become inconceivable) by building civil society linkages at the transnational level and fostering environmental responsibility.

The latter implies that environmental cooperation can go far beyond simply resolving environmentally induced conflicts (Conca and Dabelko, 2002).

In a nutshell, environmental peacemaking initiatives can be described as: “1) efforts to prevent conflicts related directly to the environment; 2) attempts to initiate and maintain dialogue between parties in conflict; 3) initiatives aimed at achieving lasting peace by promoting conditions for sustainable development” (Carius, 2006). According to Darst (2002, p.118) for the foreseeable future the focus of environmental peacemaking efforts would be resolving only environmentally induced conflicts which is already a “sufficiently ambitious goal in and of itself”.

### 2.3.1. Environmental peacemaking and environmental conflict resolution

This latter argument leads up to the necessity of distinguishing between environmental peacemaking and environmental conflict resolution (with the former being the most overarching of the two) (Table 1).

At its core, environmental conflict resolution represents the most simplistic and direct interpretation and understanding of environmental peacemaking (Heidenreich, 2004). It has also, by contrast, received significantly more attention in the research community as opposed to environmental peacemaking itself (Harari and Roseman, 2008).

	<b>Environmental conflict resolution</b>	<b>Environmental peacemaking</b>
<b>Cause of conflict</b>	Scarcity or abundance of natural resources (such as land, water, forests, oil etc.)	Other than environment
<b>Idea</b>	Resolution of environmental conflicts through the common management of natural resources	Resolution of conflicts through cooperation between adversaries on environmental issues
<b>Range</b>	From regional to global. Importance of top-level leadership, national and international stakeholders	Local and regional. Importance of grassroots and mid-level leadership, local stakeholders
<b>Goals</b>	Fair allocation of natural resources. Equitable access to natural resources. Shared management of disputed resources. Cooperation on environmental matters, that scarcity or abundance of which could lead to conflict. Successful cooperation would lead to environmental security.	Creation of cross-border societal linkages through trust- building, generation of a shared vision and the establishment of common gains and benefits. Creation of a shared identity. Change of perceptions and behavior towards environment, cooperation and peace. Effectuating the establishment of intergovernmental relations.
<b>Means</b>	Creating agreements on cooperation and joint use and management of natural resources. Changing existing laws concerning the use of resources and land.	Creating long-lasting bonds between communities. Foster trust and confidence through ongoing cooperation. Developing shared knowledge on common environmental threats and possible solutions.
<b>Potential</b>	Just distribution and use of natural resources as a prerequisite for sustainable peace. Shared benefits of joint management of natural resources may lead to the conflict resolution.	Building source of dialogue and creating long-lasting harmonious relationships. Abandoning negative stereotypes and perceptions of adverse society. Envisioning a common future. Environmental cooperation fosters cooperation in other fields and facilitates further dialogue between adverse parties.
<b>Limitations</b>	Complexity of the causality between scarcity and abundance of natural resources and conflict. Other, often less evident issues may be a part or even a main source of conflict.	Decisions by national policy-makers or military may hinder or prevent cooperation. Crucial political events may have negative impacts on long and sensitive process of trust and confidence building. Difficulties to gain financial support for local endeavors.

Table 1. Comparison of the two concepts of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Environmental Peacemaking (Harari and Roseman, 2008, p.12-13)

### 3. Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological approach and methods used to conduct the study. It also explains in detail the rationale behind the selection of those particular methods.

#### 3.1. Research purpose

According to Bhattacharjee (2012, p. 6), there are three basic types of research purposes: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Exploratory research is usually applied to investigate a new, previously unexplored phenomenon or a problem that has few or no earlier studies to refer to (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The aim of the exploratory research is to “test the ground”, rather than to provide a general description of the phenomena. This kind of strategy is very useful to determine the feasibility of further studies (Bhattacharjee, 2012). According to Yin (2014, p.10) exploratory research tends to answer the “what” question.

By contrast, descriptive research is carried in a scientific way (therefore is easy to replicate) and involves careful observation and thorough documentation of the phenomena in focus (Bhattacharjee, 2012). As a result, such kind of research design is more fundamental and more reliable as opposed to other research designs. It can be used to answer the “what”, “where” and “when” questions (Yin, 2014).

Judging from its name explanatory research seeks to explain rather than simply to describe the phenomena studied (Bhattacharjee, 2012). This research design usually requires strong theoretical and interpretation skills, as well as a great deal of personal experience, and can be especially useful to seek answers to “why” and “how” types of questions (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of water cooperation in facilitating the peace process between Israel, Jordan and Palestine, rather than to describe or explain it. Therefore this study will use the exploratory research design.

#### 3.2. Research strategy

According to Yin (2014, p. 10), questions, like “what” and “how”, are most likely to lead to the use of case study, history or experiment as the preferred research method. The choice of a research method in large part depends on: a) the research question(s) of the study; b) the extent of control a researcher has over the events under study and c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events (Yin, 2014).

The experiment was rendered irrelevant as a research method due to the impossibility of control over the events that are being analyzed. The contemporary nature of the events in focus implies case study as the most appropriate research strategy.

As for the historical method, Yin admits (2014, p.12), that it can be used to analyze the fairly recent events, however, in that situation, the method begins to overlap with case study. Both historical and case study methods rely on similar techniques (such as analysis of documents, reports and artifacts), but the latter has access to a much bigger variety of sources, including those that are not usually available to the former – for example, direct or participant observation of the events being studied and interviews with the people currently involved in the events (Yin, 2014). The historical method will be, therefore, used in this research to a very limited extent as an additional backup method for the case study to help to trace down the principal past developments in the Middle East that seem to have been directly significant in bringing about the current situation in the region. This knowledge might also help to give insights into the future trends of water cooperation in the region as well as its possible sufficiency to initiate more far-reaching cooperation between the conflicting parties.

Like any other research method, case study, however, has certain disadvantages. A major limitation of the case study as a method is that, according to the conventional view, it seems to be a poor basis for generalization and is mainly useful in the early stages of an investigation (Yin, 2014). Single-case case studies have been drawing particularly harsh criticism.

In their defense of the case study, Flyvbjerg (2006, p.227-228) and Stake (1995, p.85-86) argue that it is possible to learn what is general from single cases to help modify old generalizations. Yin (2014, p.20-21) also states that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.

This study does not seek to make any kind of generalizations - its primary objective is exploration of the phenomena. Moreover, this study is done in full awareness that all conflicts are unique and so are the peace processes, as many different factors come into play, therefore it would be especially presumptuous to attempt to make any type of generalizations based only on the peacemaking process in the Middle East.

### 3.3. Case study selection

There are three main approaches to selecting a sample for qualitative research: convenience sampling (when a case study is selected because of its convenient accessibility or proximity), judgment sampling (when a case study is selected based on the researcher's knowledge or a professional judgment) and theoretical sampling (when the selection is based on emerging theories and theoretical concepts) (Marshall, 1996).

This research focuses on the Good Water Neighbors project. The case selection was based on the judgment sampling in order to ensure that the chosen organization matched all three criteria:

- It had to have peacemaking explicitly mentioned as one of its primary goals, as that was the main focus of this research.
- It had to have more or less substantial experiences to draw lessons from, which would enable to provide insights into the future implications of such kind of cooperation for the ultimate conflict resolution in the region;
- It had to involve all three conflicting parties (that is Israel, Jordan and Palestine) in its activities.

It is important to note that initially the duration of activities was also one of the criterion due to the importance of long time spans in building of trust and establishing cooperation. However, it was later omitted: most water cooperation initiatives in the Middle East with longer duration of activities than the GWN initiative did not match either one or all the criteria above. The fact that the Good Water Neighbors project is one of the few cooperation projects in the region that withstood the Second Intifada in the 2000s, indicating its huge resilience capacity and cooperative potential, significantly contributed to the selection process.

Last, but not the least, it helped that the initiative was located through the author's network at Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). It was also frequently mentioned in the literature as one of the successful projects that employs "environmental peacemaking" on the ground. Therefore, convenience sampling was also utilized to a certain extent in the process of case study selection.

### 3.4. Data collection

The material for the research was collected from January 2014 to May 2014. The exploratory nature of this research is complimented by primary data that was obtained from the interviews with key participants, involved in the project. Several key factors contributed to the selection of interviews as a method for gathering information for this study.

First, interviews are believed to be a particularly useful source of data when the focus of research is on recent and/or ongoing processes (Yin, 2014). This means that the information gathered will be fresh and unique.

Secondly, given the complexity of the Arab-Israeli conflict, it was important to portray multiple views of the case, and, according to Stake (1995, p.64), interviews are the main road to multiple realities. Finally, the interview format also enables the researcher to focus directly on the topic and gather information and personal opinions of the interviewees in a very handy and consistent way (Yin, 2014).

A big portion of data for this study comes from secondary sources such as various reports, articles, books, Internet etc. Initially, a field trip to one of the FoEME's offices in Tel-Aviv, Amman or Bethlehem was intended to be made in order to compliment and/or challenge the literature review. However, after encountering several difficulties (such as visa accommodation, schedule clashes, financial concerns etc.) while making travel arrangements, the idea of the trip had to be postponed indefinitely. Instead, the data on the Good Water Neighbors project were obtained through the reports, published on the organization's website.

#### 3.4.1. Interviews

According to Roulston (2010, p.14), there are structured versus unstructured approaches to qualitative interviewing. Structured interviews require strict adherence to a very particular set of standardized questions, same for each individual interview (usually in a form of survey) with no deviation possible (Roulston, 2010). Unstructured interviews are exactly the opposite of structured interviews.

By contrast, the format of unstructured interviews allows researchers to proceed with no pre-set guidelines, giving room for spontaneity and making it possible for the questions to develop over the course of the interview (Roulston, 2010). In other words, unstructured interviews are essentially very much like relaxed, everyday conversations.

The complexity and the sensitivity of the issue in question, as well as the sufficiently different cultural background of the interviewees precluded the use of the standardized interview framework. On the other hand, the nearly unlimited flexibility of the unstructured interviews would have inevitably led to a large amount of data, thereby significantly complicating the analysis process for this research. It was, therefore, decided to use semi-structured interviews to obtain the primary data for this study.

Centered in a mixed framework of general themes and pre-determined questions, semi-structured interviews take the form of “conversation with a purpose” (Burgess, 1984). In these kinds of interviews, interviewers refer to the prepared list of questions to provide the same starting point for each of the interview conducted, however they are free to leave certain questions out, mix the order of questions, or ask follow-up questions (Roulston, 2010). Each of the interviews will vary depending on what perceptions and opinions the respondents decide to explore, and how the interviewer chooses to follow up on what is being said (Roulston, 2010). Just like unstructured interviews, they are conducted in a relaxed, sociable and friendly manner.

Three interviews - given respectively by Ms. Elizabeth Ya'ari, the representative of FoEME's Israeli office, Ms. Yana Abu Taleb, the representative of FoEME's office in Jordan, and by Mr. Mohammed T. Obidallah, the representative of FoEME's office in Palestine - were conducted for this study in March –May, 2014. All three respondents were located through the author's network of contacts at SIWI. While it was important to find people who are actively and directly involved in the initiative to gain first-hand knowledge, it later proved to be a significant limitation during the analysis process of this research as the interviewees' direct affiliation with the project increased the risk of their biasness when responding to questions.

The interviews were conducted over Skype, in order to overcome the obstacle of the geographical distance between the researcher and the respondents. Despite the initial intention to run the Skype interviews like a face-to-face interview, they had to be conducted in a form of telephone interviews due to technical reasons. This unforeseen challenge significantly reduced the availability of such social cues as the interviewees' body language. However, other social cues, such as voice and intonation were still available as a source of extra information. Prior to the scheduled date of the interview, all three respondents received the approximate list of questions to have an idea about the upcoming conversation.

All the three interviews lasted for about 45 minutes on the average. In order to make sure that no data was lost, each of the interviews was recorded after the necessary permission had been obtained from the respondents at the start of the interview, however, the Palestinian representative refused to be tape recorded. The transcript versions of the interviews with his Israeli and Jordanian counterparts may, however, be found in the Appendices section of the present thesis. In addition, extensive notes were taken during the interviews.

All three respondents expressed no objection to being contacted after the interviews for further questions or clarifications, if needed. They did not, however, wish to review the interview transcripts, data and data analysis prior to the thesis submission, nor did they request to have a copy of this study once it is finished.

### 3.4.2. Literature review

The purpose of the literature review is the careful examination of a body of literature that exists in the field of the present research (Mertens, 2005). It also helps to test the research question(s) against what is already known about the subject in focus (Mertens, 2005).

Most of the literature used in this study was found through the library of Uppsala University. Almost all of the books, that were necessary for writing this thesis, were available for home loan with very rare exceptions when the content of a book had to be accessed online, through the university library's website (<http://www.ub.uu.se/>).

The majority of scholarly articles were located through JSTOR ([www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)), Taylor & Francis Online platform (<http://www.tandfonline.com/>) and Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com/>) databases. The main reasoning behind choosing to use these particular databases to conduct the present study is based on the prior familiarity with their characteristic features. The key words used for the articles search were: environmental peacemaking, environmental conflict, water management, Middle East and environmental security. Several relevant articles were found through the key word search and using the list of references from those articles helped to track down even more relevant research.

Regular Google web search engine was extremely helpful in finding related reports, news and other information. A number of other websites, devoted to environmental peacemaking, were also used to conduct the present study. The FoEME's website ([www.foeme.org](http://www.foeme.org)) was used to gain access to the organization's reports, publications and news updates.

### 3.5. Data analysis

According to Stake (1995, p. 71), there is no particular moment when data analysis begins as it is an ongoing process. In fact, qualitative data collection and analysis usually proceed simultaneously and ongoing findings affect what types of data are/need to be collected, as well as the choice of tools for further data collection (Suter, 2006).

Yin (2014, p. 136-140) distinguishes four general strategies for data analysis: 1) relying on theoretical propositions; 2) using both qualitative and quantitative data; 3) developing a case description and 4) examining rival explanations (the latter can be used in combination with the three previous strategies).

The data analysis for this paper will be based on the theoretical propositions and previous research in the field that have led to this research, as the most appropriate data analysis strategy, which would allow to prioritize the data.

After the recorded interviews were transcribed, the answers given during the interviews were thoroughly reviewed and analyzed in order to identify common themes, similarities and differences of what had been said (this process in the science community is called data reduction (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Several techniques were applied to help to sort and organize the data in order to be able to implement content analysis – such as structural coding, code frequency reports etc.

The identification of common patterns eventually led to some preliminary conclusions regarding the collected data. These conclusions were later compared with assumptions of the previous studies and tested against the theory on environmental peacemaking discussed in Chapter 2. The notes made during the interview were also extremely useful in the analysis as they helped to back up the explanation of certain answers and come up with a final conceptualization of the results.

The final conclusion of this paper is based on the results of this comparison. While the process of data analysis described in this subchapter might appear as a sequence of separate steps, in practice most of these steps occurred simultaneously.

## 4. Results

This section presents the results of the interviews with the representatives of the FoEME's offices in Israel, Jordan and Palestine, who are involved in the Good Water Neighbors initiative. The responses of the interviewees are organized in a way to demonstrate the common themes, similarities and differences of what had been said. For convenience purposes, a summary table of what has been said by each interviewee will be presented at the end of the section in order to better illustrate the results of the interviews.

### 4.1. General overview of the interview questions

The questions towards the interviewees primarily addressed the following issues: *the peacemaking impacts* of the Good Water Neighbors project, *the challenges* experienced during the work on the initiative, the interviewees' *personal opinion* on the peacemaking capacity of the project and its future. Over the course of the research the latter, however, proved to be a limitation for the analysis, presented in Chapter 5, due to the high probability of bias among respondents when giving answers to the questions regarding their personal beliefs and future of the GWN initiative.

For convenience purposes, the cross comparison of the responses will be provided simultaneously along with the description of the answers, given by the interviewees, and no separate sub-chapter will be provided for it.

### 4.2. Good Water Neighbors project: a view from the Israeli side

The full text of the interview with Ms. Elizabeth Ya'ari, a Jordan River Projects Coordinator, can be found in the Appendices section of the present research. The most important parts of the interview are presented below.

#### 4.2.1. Peacemaking impact

The respondent commented that building on shared interests and increasing the shared benefits is the heart of the work of the GWN and that it is an essential element for building mutual trust, which for some time has been almost non-existent in the region. Therefore by fostering trust the GWN project creates a better atmosphere for constructive dialogue. For instance, Elizabeth said that positive changes in the attitude towards the other side (for example, loss of fear) and discovery of common ground can already be noticed.

As opposed to many other similar initiatives in the region, the GWN successfully works at various levels (both bottom-up and top-down) including the local, regional, and policy levels, which, according to Elizabeth, is essential for building lasting relationships, and, hence, peacemaking. She also mentioned how environmental meetings are often the only platforms where all three parties can convene; thereby reaffirming the belief that environmental cooperation can be a good starting point for constructive dialogue. According to Elizabeth, at the time of interview, in March, 2014, the GWN was also extremely involved in issues surrounding the peace negotiations with regards to presenting issues of how political processes were holding environment and water hostage. She also added that the Israeli office of the GWN is basically encouraging water solutions (such as, for example, supplying additional water to their Palestinian neighbors) that have a low political and low economic cost for Israel but bring important political gains for peacemaking.

#### 4.2.2. Challenges

According to the respondent, the work of GWN is also curbed by many challenges, with most of them being beyond

FoEME's power, such as the government in Israel that does not support FoEME's work all the time (or supports them on the water issue but does not support them on the political part) or the governments in Jordan and Palestine. She added that personalities of governmental officials play a strong role. Amongst other challenges that were mentioned by Elizabeth were travel restrictions, logistics of bringing all the different players together, language and even the political priorities of the participants (in reference to the Palestinian counterparts).

#### 4.2.3. Personal opinion

Elizabeth expressed a lot of optimism regarding the future of the project, noting that the framework of specific actions within the GWN program often have multiplier effects as cross border relationships are established, nurtured and often grow well beyond environmental issues. She added that she personally noticed that on the sidelines of any of FoEME's regional workshops, conferences, activities, site tours etc. there was a great deal of discussion between the participants regarding other aspects of potential cooperation, which can be definitely seen as a good sign for facilitating the peace process in the region.

### 4.3. Good Water Neighbors project: a view from the Jordanian side

While the full text of the interview with Ms. Yana Abu Taleb, an assistant director of Projects in the Amman office of FoEME, can also be found in the Appendices section of the present study, a general overview of the most important parts of the interview is presented in the subchapter below.

#### 4.3.1. Peacemaking impacts

Similar to her Israeli counterpart, Yana mentioned the fostering of trust and cooperation as one of the major implications for the peace process in the region. She also noted the significantly less "politicized" and conflicting atmosphere of the dialogue over water cooperation, as the GWN initiative is mostly community-based and its main purpose is to make the people's voices heard (not dampen them). This is also instrumental in helping to find common ground and a mutually beneficial solution. While noting the successful experience of working with the Jordanian government, Yana also emphasized the huge potential of the GWN's work with the youth on peacemaking. GWN manages to bring youth from all three conflicting parties and make them work side by side together on the environmental issue, so they learn to look past each other's differences and concentrate on what can help to increase their mutual benefit. She added that it was not always easy to do, but it was still possible, noting that the significance of having this kind of experience among youngsters becomes increasingly important, should they go on to become politicians and future decision-makers in their respective governments, as it implies tremendous positive effects on facilitating the peace process in the region.

#### 4.3.2. Challenges

Just like Elizabeth, Yana also noted that there are a lot of challenges that impede the work of the GWN initiative in Jordan. The most prominent of these challenges are skepticism of cooperation, mutual hostility (both among the people and on the political level), a need for reform in the water sector (both in Jordan and in the Middle East in general). The limited resources in terms of finances, human resources were also mentioned among the challenges.

#### 4.3.3. Personal opinion

Yana commented that the people are the driver behind the change and anything is possible if cooperation and trust continue to be fostered and the positive effects are harnessed. She added the importance of time in their work, and that the positive changes do not happen overnight, instead they require hard work and long time span.

### 4.4. Good Water Neighbors project: a view from the Palestinian side

Unfortunately, as previously mentioned in Chapter 3, the transcript of the interview with Mr. Mohammed T. Obidallah, an Assistant Director for Technical Affairs and Project Manager for the Good Water Neighbors project in Palestine, is not available due to the author's failing to secure his permission to be tape recorded. Nevertheless, the most essential extracts from his answers can be found in the following subchapter.

#### 4.4.1. Peacemaking impact

First off, not unlike his counterparts from Israel and Jordan, Mohammed also underscored the importance of water cooperation for building trust among people in the region, as, according to him, it is a key element to reaching success in the peace process. Similar to Elizabeth, he also noted that effective governance of water resources can be achieved at a low political cost for Israel, and with huge benefits for both Israel and Palestine – and it would help to build lasting local connections and preserve the environment for future generations.

The respondent also added that the water cooperation within the project managed to bring main stakeholders such as the municipalities’ heads, parliamentarians and residents in different events (for example, site visits, workshops or annual conferences of various projects), which enables the participants to speak about the shared environmental problem and try to find the solution on the ground together and broaden the cooperation in areas such as treated waste water reuse challenges and encourages to exchange experience. All these have driven the negotiations on the water issue and demonstrated the possibility for broader cooperation in other areas.

#### 4.4.2. Challenges

According to Mohammed, the main challenge is to bring people together especially on the Palestinian side while Israeli occupation still exists and Israel’s “daily practice of violating all customs and laws” hurdles the process of normalization. Moreover, any contact with Israel will be described as being collaboration with occupation forces.

He also noted that the way each side approaches the problem (for instance, the Jordanians are focused on economic development and free movement of both people and goods; the Israeli concentrate on sanitation; and the Palestinians stress the importance of access to water as well as the ending of occupation) also poses a great challenge for cooperation within the framework of the Good Water Neighbors initiative.

#### 4.4.3. Personal opinion

Once again similarly to his colleagues, Mohammed expressed optimism over the potential that the GWN might have for peacemaking, adding that it is a long-term process, which will require a lot of efforts before it starts having significant implications for the peace process in the Middle East.

### 4.5. The summary table of the interview results

As previously mentioned in the description to the chapter, the following table is provided in order to better illustrate the aforementioned results of the interviews.

	<b>Peacemaking impacts</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Personal opinion</b>
<b>Israeli side</b>	Loss of fear; discovery of common ground; successful work with authorities; environmental meetings often serving as the only platform where all three parties can convene	Complete lack of support or selective support from governments; travel restrictions; language and political priorities of the participants	Generally optimistic
<b>Jordanian side</b>	Fostering of trust; less “politicized” atmosphere; cooperation with governments; huge potential of the GWN’s work with the youth	Skepticism of cooperation; mutual hostility; need for reform in the water sector; limited resources	Generally optimistic while noting that this process calls for hard work
<b>Palestinian side</b>	Community trust building; stakeholder cooperation	Bringing people together different approaches	Generally optimistic, while noting that it is a long-term process

Table 2. The summary table of the results of the interviews (author’s own construction)

## 5. Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter the major findings from the previous chapter are evaluated against the research questions, outlined in the Introduction. The theory of environmental peacemaking that has been presented in Chapter 2, has provided the foundation for the analysis of the primary data which has been collected through interviews.

The present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- *What impact do NGOs that promote water cooperation have on facilitating the peacemaking process in the Middle East?*

Sub questions:

*Q 1: Does the depoliticized NGO initiative between Israel, Jordan and Palestine generate enough of spillover effects to resolve the political issues between the parties?*

*Q 2: What are the factors limiting NGO spillover effects?*

These questions will constitute a general guideline for this section, meaning that each of the following subchapters will analyze the results related to the respective research question of this study and verify the applicability of the theory of environmental peacemaking, which, according to Conca and Dabelko (2002, p.10-11), is supposed to be able to work on two different levels: 1) foster trust and habits of cooperation between adversaries by using environmental problems as opportunities; 2) transform state institutions, form a shared collective identity, within which violent conflicts become inconceivable (see Chapter 2).

### 5.1. The role of NGOs that promote water cooperation in facilitating the peacemaking process in the Middle East

Based on the results gained through the interviews, it is clear that the present work conducted through the means of Good Water Neighbors project in Israel, Jordan and Palestine aims primarily at education about the common environmental problems and trust building, which corresponds to the first level of the theory of environmental peacemaking (Conca and Dabelko, 2002).

As of now, the project, however, has failed to advance to the second level, which according to the theory (Conca and Dabelko, 2002), envisages fundamental changes at the political and social level making it possible to resolve the long-standing conflict (which was the primary interest of this research) and eliminate the possibility of any kind of conflicts in the future. That is not to say the project has no potential to grow and become a universal peacemaking tool within the future context of the peace process in the Middle East. Instead, it can be argued that a longer time frame is needed to see if water cooperation at the NGO level can indeed produce the necessary spillover effects which could facilitate the peacemaking process in the region. It can also be assumed that, provided that the trust building efforts of the GWN initiative continue to be implemented, they have a greater chance to eventually pay off and advance the initiative to the second level of environmental peacemaking by gradually replacing mutually exclusive and historically distrustful identities with an idea of common environmental community, which would be able to transcend the nationalistic perceptions of security. This in turn could give a better platform for traditional diplomacy enabling it to continue the peacemaking efforts through conventional means of dialogue, mediation and negotiations in a more efficient and effective way. Of course, this positivist scenario does not include all the possible hurdles that could [and most likely will] emerge on the scene, given the region's unpredictability, and, instead, assumes they are resolvable.

Unfortunately, the time constraints of this research, as well the relatively short period of time that has passed since the launch of the GWN initiative, made it hard to provide a more substantial analysis of the project's future potential, which could go beyond simplistic assumptions. As a result, this discussion shall remain a matter of concern of future studies.

Therefore, based on what has been said above, the answer to the first research question would be that at the moment the role of NGOs that promote water cooperation in facilitating the peace process in the Middle East is extremely small (close to non-existent) and is mostly limited to the most direct interpretation of the environmental peacemaking efforts – environmental conflict resolution (Table 1 in Chapter 2). But it should be noted, that according to the results of the interviews, even as the most basic form of the environmental peacemaking, it still cannot be argued with 100% certainty that it can resolve or completely eradicate the possibility of conflicts that could be induced by the potential water scarcity in the Middle East, given the region's highly hostile, militarized environment. Once again a relatively short period of time has passed since the launch of the GWN initiative to test the resilience of its successes against the possibility of the outbreak of environmental conflict. On the other hand, it is already good news that the latter does not foreclose the possibility of water [environmental] cooperation, which indicates a mutual will to resolve disputes with the help of non-violent means and dialogue (Rogers, 1997).

In the meantime, in line with the argument proposed by Haas (1990 cited in Ali, 2003, p.167), which has also been confirmed by the interviews, water management can be a good starting point to initiate negotiations or to unfreeze the negotiations that have reached the deadlock.

### 5.1.1. Does the depoliticized NGO initiative between Israel, Jordan and Palestine generate enough of spillover effects to resolve the political issues between the parties?

Despite being designed to work both bottom-up and top-down (Kramer, 2008), the water cooperation between Israel, Jordan and Palestine through the means of the GWN initiative has been quite successful only at the community level, failing to go further up than the level of Ministers of Environment or Finance, according to the information provided in the interviews. Unfortunately, there is no sufficient information to provide substantial analysis of the top-down track of the project; however, it can only be assumed from the interviews that its effectiveness in regards to the project largely depends on the personalities of the officials involved as well as the general atmosphere in the region.

At the moment, the joint water cooperation within the framework of the GWN is not enough to be able to overcome the much more deep-rooted political differences that exist between the three parties. However, this does not mean that water cooperation, despite being successful only at the community level, does not have the potential to generate enough spillover effects to resolve the political issues between Israel, Jordan and Palestine in the long-term. Once again, water itself represents a great resource that could either help make things better or worse (Wolf et al., 2005); however, the mere act of water cooperation does not magically and immediately translate itself into peacemaking. Instead, it largely depends on all the stakeholders involved (local communities, officials etc.) whether they choose to make the positive results from the water cooperation a contributing factor to the peace process and how they choose to do it.

In this respect, building of trust through activities of the GWN project, which constitute the first level of the theory of environmental peacemaking, plays an extremely important role. And so does the work with the young residents of the communities, which, according to the interviews, is central to the Good Water Neighbors initiative, as they represent the new generation of leaders that will emerge from this cooperation with the potential to use the benefits of the environmental cooperation to facilitate the peace process in the region. There is a greater chance that they might be more flexible on the political issues because they will have a shared experience of working together and a mutual understanding of how much more beneficial cooperative actions are for each side and all the stakeholders than conflicts, especially in the light of the looming threat of climate change. However, the span of 13 years since the start of the GWN is still not enough to determine whether these efforts will indeed pay off.

### 5.1.2. What are the factors limiting NGO spillover effects?

Based on the information provided in the interviews, the main hurdles that curb water cooperation from generating enough spillover effects to resolve the political issues between the parties at the moment stem from the fundamental lack of trust (for example, “do not cooperate with enemy”), which ironically, according to the theory of environmental peacemaking, is supposed to be an effect of the joint water cooperation, making the situation locked in the Catch -22 (Darst, 2002).

In essence, the water by itself is politically neutral (which constitutes its cooperation and peacemaking potential) and represents a perfect platform for constructive dialogue free from mutual accusations; however, at the same time, water issue can get easily politicized (Heidenreich, 2004). According to the interviews, it can be assumed that, paradoxically, as of now, the water issue is, on the contrary, [intentionally] kept distanced and separated from politics (this can be particularly visible in the case of Israel), thereby significantly limiting its spillover potential. Perhaps, this can be partially explained by the lack of political will, as well as the perception of environmental cooperation strictly as a prerogative of the low politics, i.e. as something which is not significant enough to be discussed along with important issues of security. However, this is not to say that the water issue cannot be used to serve the immediate political interests, should the political conjuncture in the region require so. The main concern is that this fundamental lack of trust (particularly, between Israel and Palestine) at the political level might end up negatively charging the neutrality of the water issue (see the concept of securitization in Chapter 2), thereby undermining all the positive results that have been/may be achieved at the community level of the GWN initiative. In other words, the neutrality of the water issue itself is not enough to overcome the “pervasive disinterest in peace” in the region – moreover, the latter has greater chances to present the former as a security problem, given the state of things in the region (not to mention, that there already has been a period in the Middle East history when water resources were serving the political ambitions of the Israeli politicians (see Introduction, p.12)).

There are also obstacles of more technical nature (which is rather an implication of the lack of trust and mutual exclusion at the political level, than a challenge of its own) such as, for example, logistical issues. The interviewees also mentioned cultural differences and language barrier that often prevent from communicating in an effective manner, thereby causing a major setback for the water cooperation process and significantly decreasing chances of it producing sufficient results that could be harnessed for peacemaking.

Finally, according to the interviews, the fact that the relationship in the water sector (and hence joint water management within the framework of GWN) mimics the political asymmetry in the region -with Israel having more water resources, more technologies and more power (both economic and political) than its counterparts - also undermines the possible positive effects from joint water cooperation through GWN.

## 5.2. Implications for the theory of environmental peacemaking

This thesis aims at exploring the potential role of cooperation over water resources between Israel, Jordan and Palestine in facilitating the peacemaking process in the region, thereby providing the foundation for further research in the field. While this study has failed to find substantial results to determine the effectiveness of environmental cooperation as a peacemaking tool for non-environmental conflicts, it did succeed in proving that the idea of cooperation over environment as a facilitator of the peace process is nevertheless feasible, as it has all the necessary prerequisites in order to be used as a tool for achieving peace in the long-term. Unfortunately, the time constraints and many variables that come into play in the Middle East complicated further analysis.

In line with similar previous studies, the research argues that as of now the theory of environmental peacemaking seems to be the most effective when it comes to dealing with environmental issues and, most probably, only at the local level. In other words, while it is capable of producing just enough amount of trust that would facilitate resolution of the environmental disputes between the communities, it is however unclear whether that amount of trust would be enough to reduce the possibility of environmental conflicts that could outbreak in the region due to the climate change. At the moment, the theory does not seem to be able to work at the top level mainly due to the lack of trust that it is supposed to facilitate. This paradox constitutes the major flaw of the environmental peacemaking theory.

## 6. Conclusion

Initially inspired by the discussion about conventional forms of peacemaking and their capacity to solve non-environmentally-induced conflicts that the world has inherited from the past as well as the conflicts that are most likely to arise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this thesis attempted to explore the peacemaking potential of environment through the analysis of the Good Water Neighbors project.

The fact that environmental degradation is often portrayed as a [possible] source of [further] conflict by the media and some prominent researchers provided an interesting dimension for this thesis. The research concluded that environment is as likely to be the sole factor leading to peace, as it is likely to be the sole reason for war.

The results of the study have also shown that water cooperation initiatives at the NGO level do not produce enough spillover effects to advance the peace process in the Middle East at the moment. However, in the long term, they certainly have a greater potential to be an instrument for facilitating the peace process in the region by creating trust, serving as a starting point for a constructive, less “politicized” cooperation and providing a brand new and objective platform for negotiations. At the same time it should be noted that success of the transition of the joint water management from simple cooperation to the peacemaking tool largely depends on the people [politicians] in the region and how they choose to use the positive effects from joint water cooperation in the peace process in the Middle East.

This finding will hopefully contribute to the general understanding of the potential role of environmental cooperation in facilitating peace process in various situations and promote knowledge accumulation in the field.

## 7. Recommendations for future research

This thesis should be seen as a useful precursor for more in-depth future research. Its purpose was to give just an introduction to the phenomenon of environmental peacemaking.

Further research can significantly benefit if it takes into account the limitations of the present study. Considering that a longer timeframe is needed for the spillover effects from joint water cooperation to manifest themselves, it is recommended to conduct the further research on the Good Water Neighbors project within a much longer timeframe in order to determine its effectiveness with greater accuracy and reliability. Same recommendation applies, should a researcher decide to take on a different environmental cooperation project or a number of projects from the Middle East or another region.

Another limitation of this research was that it was based on the data gathered from the group of experts involved in the implementation of the Good Water Neighbors project. Therefore, there is a possibility, for example, that these experts are more optimistic [biased] about the peacemaking potential of their project, than other stakeholders. In order to make the findings of the research more comprehensive, additional research from multiple perspectives (for example, politicians, local population) could be implemented.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I: Interview #1 with Elizabeth Ya'ari (Jordan River Projects Coordinator, Friends of the Earth Middle East)

**E**<sup>1</sup>: ...So my name is Elizabeth Ya'ari, and I ran all the programs for the Jordan River valley, which... it's a little bit [...] for the Good Water Neighbors but I've been managing [...] for almost eight years so I can surely speak about that progress. Do you wanna.. I mean would you like me to kind of talk in general or do you want to ask me some specific questions?

**A**<sup>2</sup>: Well I guess you can start off talking in general and then we can talk about how the Good Water Neighbors initiative has capitalized on the existence of shared interests, in order to transfer them into opportunities to promote peace?

**E**: Yeah, ok. I mean that is really basically the goal of all the projects of the Friends of the Middle East. We run environmental projects that have a very strong peacebuilding component. There are no projects that are strictly environmental. All of our projects have a transboundary element, you know, to encourage transboundary cooperation, building awareness about the state of water and environment in our neighboring country and always using environment as a catalyst for peacemaking in the region. Primarily we are working with water and that is because our water resources in this region, as you know, are shared, and water has a great effect on every day's lives of people so it is important area of cooperation, and the one that our governments do not really focus on in the transboundary plans. I apologize I am not in front of my computer so you're gonna have to repeat your questions for me.

**A**: Yeah absolutely... do you want me to repeat the first question or go on to the next one?

**E**: No, no please repeat the first one, I am sorry, I was driving...

**A**: Okay, so I would like to know how the GWN managed to use the shared interests that exist in the region to transform them into opportunities for peace?

**E**: Okay yes. So the issue of shared interests is totally essentially part of our work...I would say that there are a lot of initiatives in this region that focus on bringing people together for dialogue and that is an important part of building understanding about the other group, however our programs are entirely focused on increasing the shared benefits. So it is very-very important for us to survey the challenges that communities face and look at what their neighboring communities' challenges are and then identify solutions to those challenges that are transboundary and therefore those solutions have a strong element of shared benefits between the communities. So at several rounds in our programming we do that... so it kind of ongoing process where we kind of catalogue the needs of the community and then we work with them to identify solutions to those challenges that would have a very strong impact in a positive way also on their neighboring community so they can advance those ideas and projects together and...ok you can see this, I'll give you an example, in 2006 publication.. in 2006 in the GWN publication called shared challenges and shared solutions or something like that, you 'll see that mayors and other municipal staff and adults groups in the community kind of inventory challenges they face. And then their neighboring communities do it likewise. And then they identify the projects that they would like to advance together with their neighboring community that would provide strong benefits for both communities. Also I just wanted to note that the GWN community project, it works on various levels, that is also an essential part of the program. So we work with youth in schools, we work with teachers training for our education program and then we work with adults groups and municipal staff and mayors. For us over the years those are different points of leverage in a community that can be, that can serve this interest in the program as a catalyst for peace. I would say that the mayors component is quite an exceptionally successful program. The network of mayors that have been working together on these crossborder programs is very successful and there is long-term relationship building. It builds a sense of.. If a challenge arises in the community they have someone they can speak to, crossborder. These are problems that cannot be resolved in an emergency way, but in a...within the conditions of the relationship that has already been established. So things take on dimension that it is not a crisis and this is something we can work out together. And those kind of problems [...] on building [...] plant that would resolve sanitation issues in most communities, but their cooperation extends well beyond their cooperation in the Good Water Neighbors program. The program helps to encourage the relationship and shared solutions, but that relationship is then providing solutions beyond the framework of the specific program that they are doing within the Good water neighbors... Do you understand that?

**A**: Yeah, yeah, sure.

**E**: Okay...

**A**: I see that it is quite a successful project as far as it comes to communities or local level but do you think that. What I am really interested in that do you really think it can go beyond to another level, to another scale and

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth

<sup>2</sup> Anna

more political? Like create this spillover to you know... because when we talk about the Middle East we know that there are a lot of tensions in the region, so...

**E:** Sure, sure...I mean. All of the programs in the FoEME work both bottom up, through the community programs, much of which I just described, as well as top down, involving the highest level decision makers in all three riparian countries and putting political pressure to advance political will for these transboundary water projects. Okay, so that manifests itself in high level decision-making meetings...in many cases were convening... the transboundary partners... Israeli-Palestinian. or Israeli- Jordanian or all three. Those are often the only forums where they might meet. We also undertaking high level... programs in in the parliament of the three countries and this [...] the key ministers – ministers of environment, ministers of water, ministers of infrastructure and finance. Those are all [...] that we work with very –very dearly. And each of our officers, we have a specific staff that deals strictly with the government relations and encouraging cooperation. We just had meetings between the Israeli minister of environment and his counterparts in Jordan and Palestine.

**A:** Aha.. that is great!

**E:** We are also extremely involved in issues surrounding the current negotiations with regards to presenting issues of how political processes are holding environment and water hostage and you can see that a lot of our work on that issue in our water can't wait campaign which is on our home page right now, if you go to our website. So we have been running very... half-page ads in all of kind of newspapers in Israel and Palestine, for the last couple of weeks talking about how the issue of water should be included in the framework deal and if the framework does not advance then we believe that water cannot be resolved on its own without waiting for the comprehensive deal.

**A:** I see, do you think cooperation in the water sector can build enough trust and enough confidence for the partners in the region to collaborate in other areas?

**E:** Yes, it is our belief based on our experience that water can serve as a catalyst to peacemaking and we see this demonstrated through a variety of different reasons. You can see.. For example, we just did a couple of articles, that I think you might find interesting, on that subject...And for example [Thomas Freeman] wrote an article about work and water is a catalyst for peace and I would refer you to that one. We are basically encouraging water solutions that have a low political, low economic cost for Israel but are high political gain for peacebuilding. So for example, the water economy in Israel is now such that we have enough flexibility that we can supply additional water to our Palestinian neighbors with very little economic cost .Supplying additional water to our neighbors has an extremely high political value because you know if Palestinian community, they do not have access to water resources at a sustainable level. You know many Palestinian communities only get water delivered to their homes once a week or ...they pay higher [...] than we do. So supplying additional water to those communities is a way to directly affect the local supplies of thousands and thousands of Palestinians. There is a high political benefit at a low economic cost.

**A:** I see.

**E:** That is why we believe that water can continue to serve as the catalyst to peace in the region

**A:** That is interesting..

**E:** ... and there are quite a few articles that we recently put up on our website on that issue. Actually I think Global water governance SIWI publication is on that subject... We see, you know we try to see opportunities despite the current situation.

**A:** I see.

**E:** For example we propose to encourage Israeli supply of desalinated water to the neighbors in Gaza, Jordan, Palestine and the West Bank. Also in the future, the great solar energy potential in Jordan might support the energy demand elsewhere in the region ...[...]...We will need longer term energy solutions ...Our neighbors such as Jordan.....(the connection went bad)

**A:** Hello? (Calling again)

**E:** Sorry Anna I lost you when the call came in

**A:** It's okay. It's fine, it's fine.

**E:** I was just saying we really see the matching of resources in the region as a long - term vision where Israel and our neighbors will be [...] more support in the [...] trade-off energy and water and that nexus of water and energy resources is a long term vision for the region

**A:** I see. Speaking of any challenges, any particular challenges that you encounter when working with your partners? Also, are there any challenges within Israel, perhaps?

**E:** Listen, there are a lot of challenges like obviously. We have governments that do not support our work all the time, the governments in each country... There are a lot of deferent actors...Some of them support our work on the water issue, but are not supportive of our work on the political side of things....and in each of the three countries that we operate in there are things like which actors are supporting us or you know people change... personalities play a strong role ... all of that has a strong impact on our work. So currently in Israel we have the ministry of environment that is very supportive of our work that was not always the case. So things are very dynamic and they are changing all the time

**A:** I see. I was reading also about cultural challenges... (interrupted)

**E:** Sorry just wanted to add that challenges go beyond ...in terms of travel restrictions, getting our groups together is always a really BIG challenge, we have to get visas for all the Jordanians and Israelis cannot enter certain Palestinian communities – it is against the law – and of course permits for the Palestinians, so of course just the logistics of bringing all the different players together is always a very dominant part of our work and takes a lot of our staff time.. There is also a great deal of coordination among the parties to make sure that we are on the same page before they meet. You know what we try to do is identify a common vision between our staff and our directors and the three offices and then we advance this common vision through the series of activities, activities might vary from state to state. So what might be work for me in Israel might not be the effective means for people in Jordan or Palestine, so they might do it differently, but the point is that we have the same goal, the same timeline and that kind of thing. So yeah... there are a lot of challenges in that way and it is all about trying to understand the priorities of my neighbor... what are the most important issues for them and how we can match those priorities.

**A:** The reason I asked about is because I read somewhere that when the parties meet, for example the Palestinians would talk about politics, not about the water management etc. It was provided as an example of so-called cultural difference.

**E:** There are cultural issues but I would not say that the one that you just described is a cultural issue. That would be the dominant political priority issue... The political priority of the Palestinians in the water sector is to gain access and control of the water resources, so it would make a lot of sense that Palestinians participating in the cross border events which focus on access and access to the natural resources and control...whereas the Israelis, the priority is sanitation issues and, you know, reducing conflict

**A:** I see. I guess it was just was the way to describe that Palestinians are more in line with their government, less flexible, and that everyone has his agenda in the talks ,

**E:** For me, that is often the case. For me I definitely I do not see it as a cultural issue, but I see it as a reflection of political realities and power disparities between Israel and Palestine.

There are different cultural issues that come to play in terms of articulate...the use of words is very... our speech in Hebrew, in Arabic and in English, and the words that we use have cultural salient... that do not always interpret well for the other parties and there are also issues of culture and religion that come into play in water management. We right now have a focus on involving faith based groups in our programming, reaching out to religious leaders and religious communities to involve them in this effort to rehabilitate our shared resources and we highlight in those discussions the strong religious value of water saving that is something that is in all three Abrahamic traditions as well as issues about the Jordan river being Holy river to all the three Abrahamic traditions and the importance of rehabilitating that river through the religious communities.

**A:** And probably three last questions. I know that GWN started after second intifada

**E:** It started in 2001, while Intifada was still going on at that time

**A:** So it was probably a very difficult time to start a project like that. What were the steps? Was it very difficult?

**E:** Yes it was (laughing). The short answer is yes it was.

**A:** (laughing) probably it was a very silly question...

**E:** That was a time when there was a lot of fear and mistrust. It is still there but at that time it was the hype of violence and it was very-very difficult. The first meetings were as you can imagine very difficult but our programs have lasted through, began in the intifada, you know there was the Lebanon war, war in Gaza, there was a variety of other heightened conflict periods during the time of cooperation through the program, but what we do is we adapt to the situation on the ground as needed.

**A:** Have you noticed any kind of spillover from cooperation over water within the GWN onto other areas? I mean, has it facilitated in any way the talks or discussions or agreements over other critical issues in the region? Have you noticed whether environmental cooperation in the region is transforming into broader forms of political cooperation and initiating a social and political dialogue going beyond environmental aspects?

**E:** The short answer is YES. I believe we spoke about how partnerships that began in the framework of specific actions within the GWN program often have multiplier effects as cross border relationships are established, nurtured and often grow well beyond issues pertaining to GWN. Without a doubt on the sidelines of any of our regional workshops, conferences, activities, site tours etc. there is a great deal of discussion between the participants regarding other aspects of potential cooperation. Furthermore the low economic costs and high political benefits that often accompany transboundary cooperative water/ environmental efforts often serve as a catalyst for transboundary cooperative efforts in other spheres, political or otherwise. Hope that is sufficient - it is certainly the heart of our work.

**A:** I see. So I have the last question, what do u think would be the ideal situation for GWN to contribute to peacemaking? Should the political situation change? Because it is kind of like Catch 22...

**E:** No those issues are necessary to advance together.....Which is why we always do programs that are both bottom up which build the political will for higher decision makers to make those very difficult political changes so we really need both at the same time which is a challenge to do but this the aim of the program to do both – bottom down and top-down programming and In long term our goal is to see the resolution to make a more just and equitable water system and we have for example a model water accord and we advocate for its implementation (you can see it on our website) this is our position [...] more sustainable water agreement between

Israel and Palestine so all the time we are advocating for more fair just equitable distribution and access to the decision making process for our parties, and at the same time we are building the political will through the community program to allow the decision makers to make those changes...

**A:** Thank you very much for a very fruitful conversation. I hope I did not take much of your time.

**E:** No, it's no problem...Should you have any further question, please feel free to contact me.

**A:** Thank you! I sure will.

**E:** Bye!

**A:** Bye!

## Appendix II - Interview #2 with Yana Abu Taleb (the assistant director of Projects in the Amman office of FoEME)

**Y**<sup>3</sup>: ... and just looking at how much, I mean, the promises of development of peace was going to bring to our region, and this is why environmentalists from the region came together and... thought okay there is going to be peace, there is going to be a lot of development but who is going to look after the shared environment in the region and then we became more focused on the water resources, on the shared water resources because we are a region known for scarcity of water, to begin with, so this really became our focus – focusing on protecting of the shared water resources between Jordan, Israel and Palestine together. Our GWN has been going on and may be you know this...We started the GWN in 2001 with only a couple of communities, actually only 4 communities that share water resources. Through the GWN we work with different sectors in the communities – we work with local governments, meaning the municipalities, in the community we work with different residence, adult residence, that sustain their live through different livelihoods, like, mainly farming, so it's the agricultural sector, and we work with youth in the communities. What we do with all these different sectors and the different levels of people in the community is that we empower them with the information about their water realities so that they know where their water resources are coming from, what their water resources are used for, the different sectors, so that they know how scarce our water resources are. And then after they are empowered with the information about their own community, the country, on a national level, take them across the border so that they know the water realities of their neighbors in the other countries for them to realize that they need to work together to protect the shared water resources, because if they don't – everyone's going to be a loser

**A**<sup>4</sup>: I see.

**Y:** Okay, so peacebuilding, trust making is a big part of the program. Why? Because, I mean, when... it's a conflict area, the Arab-Israeli conflict is a very complicated conflict. People are always skeptical of each other, they look at each other of being an enemy. Okay? To find out when they are, when they come together and they realize the shared benefits they will gain after cooperating over issues like water, that they can trust each other. I give you an example, when we first started our Jordan River Rehabilitation program within the GWN communities, because in Jordan they are all communities that overlook the Jordan river, during any meeting with them, they would come to us and say – why are you talking to us, it is not us diverting water from the Jordan river, it is not us polluting the river, it is Israel. Okay? And to empower them with the information, to show them that okay, yes Israel is taking most of the water, Israel has the lion's share, is taking the lion's share, Israel is responsible for most of the pollution, but we are also there and we pollute and we do divert a percentage, a big percentage of the water from the Jordan river so that they can understand the big picture of things and then when they sit with the Israelis they come together and they discuss what's there on the Israeli side and what's happening on the Israeli side, they hear from their Israeli colleagues , the normal residence in the communities that overlook the Jordan river, that our government, yes... we don't have sanitation for most of the communities there, so our sewage water is dumped into the river there, yes, Israel diverts its national water carrier this much – it helps bring people together and they want to discuss how they can cooperate to solve this shared problems...

**A:** I see. It is very interesting. But when I was reading about the project, it felt a little bit like Catch 22: the water cooperation was supposed to build trust between the parties, but in order to go into these discussions they already have to have a certain amount of trust which they don't. The parties lose time arguing, instead of using it to start building trust.

**Y:** That is very true, Anna, but this is a political issue. Politicians do that, but it's different for us because what we do is we work...We are community-based, we work with the residence of these communities, we want to make their voices to be heard. Why do we empower them? Why do we do researches? Everything we do is backed up with researches ... so that we can empower these residences, so that they know the realities through this research and their voices can be heard to the government because we know that the government, our

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<sup>3</sup> Yana

<sup>4</sup> Anna

government in the region did not do anything. The peace talks between Israel and Palestine – it's always held with either the big fight issue or nothing will be solved. They do not look at the real needs on ground. They don't look at the fact that our water sectors in the region need reform. Before we can agree on any management plan we need to work nationally into reforming our water sectors. And this is the difference between us and the government. What we are trying to work on is to push the governments nationally in the three countries, you know separately, to reform the water sector. And we have done studies that we use when we go to the governments and the local residents that live in the valley are very aware of these studies and they can explain well what is going on in their water realities, they can explain and for us in the Jordan valley, on the Jordanian side of the Jordan valley, now every resident in the valley is calling for the need of sanitation. Because they know that without sanitation in the valley we will not be able to move any forward, let's say, water project or water reform in the valley.

**A:** I see. Can u please elaborate on the interaction with the governments? I mean are they helpful? Are they cooperative? Are they taking the information that you give them into account? Does it create enough push for them?

**Y:** It is different; I mean our region is very different from any other place in the world. Our governments, I told you, are skeptical of each other, although there is peace agreement signed and water agreements that they work together with but still they are skeptical of each other. I am going talk for the Jordanian side for now. For many years if a water minister comes to office if he doesn't see or does not agree with the need of cooperation with the Israeli side nothing will move forward. Okay. But for about three years now we have someone that we...we have a minister that is very understanding of the need to cooperate, very understanding that if we don't work together to solve our water problems especially with the limited resources we have, we will not be able to move forward. And we have another wonderful person in the Jordan valley authority, which is the authority that is responsible for the entire Jordan valley on the Jordanian side, who now actually believes in everything that we are calling for in all the studies that we present they see how they were able to move forward with the Israeli side through what we are asking them to do. For the Jordan river, it's one of the big programs that we have – the Jordan river rehabilitation – we manage to convince the Jordanian government to look at the rehabilitation of the river and consider it a national priority and it has been done. They have formed a national committee from the different governmental sectors who are in charge to look into the rehabilitation. This national committee is now cooperating with the Israeli rehabilitation committee. They are working together. The Jordanian side is always calling for us as an NGO, the only NGO looking at the rehabilitation of the Jordan river, so they are including us in all their meetings and they are also looking at seriously adopting our master plan, the master plan that we are creating to rehabilitate the Jordan river, and they are pushing the Israeli side that we should be included as an NGO working on this important issue.

**A:** I see, this is interesting, but as I understand the project on the local level is very successful, but for it to create a spillover into political side, into the political part of the problem, there has to be a favorable condition that is understanding politicians.. So without them it does not really go further. Do I understand that correctly?

**Y:** Of course. I mean what we do - we are an NGO, we are environmentalists that want to protect our environment, who want to protect our shared water resources, but without them, without legislation we will not be able to move forward, so we work with different sectors, ...with the parliament level who is charge of legislation , we work with every different sector that you can imagine. And a couple of years back in the Jordan office we changed our strategy - so how can you get the government to see the value of what your are doing – what we did is we changed our strategy so instead of being the environmentalists that are extremists and do not want any kind of development and are seen as rigid and strict in any decision we make we took approach of working with the governments and showing them how we are working to implement the water strategy that they put for the water sector in Jordan. So anything we do, any researches, any studies ...we say listen - what you guys are doing – is wonderful, still more needs to be done and what we are doing is to help you to implement the water strategy because we see it as a perfect one, it only lacks implementation.

So that is on the national level. If you want to go regionally, if you manage to convince one side, they will have to have talks with the Israeli side and Palestinian side they will convince, like what's happening with us, in our Jordan rehabilitation program.

**A:** I see, any other challenges that hinder cooperation for the GWN?

**Y:** Challenges are many. All this years it has been going on ... The main challenge is, I told you, people being skeptical and looking at Israel being the enemy here in Jordan. In Israel our organization is looked as being the enemy of state in Israel ... because we are dealing with the Palestinians. This is the major challenge we face. We always called normalizers, we are always called collaborators with the enemies even on the Jordanian side, on the Israeli side or on the Palestinian side, so our work is not easy at all... You find people who are always screaming or condemning our work. Our employees are always condemned, some of them are threatened but we reach a stage where we are able to defend, we have our mission that we are working towards. And in the three countries we convince people that we are doing ...for our country first that if we don't do this if we don't have this dialogue with the Israelis or Palestinians we'll never get a fair share of our water resources. So this is one main challenge and then you go into .. many other challenges from the water sector that needs reform, to

the scarcity of water , to the limited resources in terms of finances, to limitations in capacity people that are ... of the officials...so I mean.. many challenges that we have.

**A:** You have a lot of success as well...from where it started to where it is now I am sure it's been a very successful project overall as opposed to many other projects that are in the region...so what qualities make GWN so different from other similar initiatives in the region?

**Y:** From my personal opinion it's because it's community based, it's because our communities especially in Jordan and Palestine are very poor communities and deprived from their main human rights, especially water, so they look at us and they feel that we are working closely with them to trying to change their realities so that is I feel one of our main successes, that we are there in each community working with them closely, working with the different levels of the communities, helping leverage funds through the donor money to these poor communities was also success factor for us because people were able to see that yes we are there and we want to help them to change things... empowering these residents and building their capacities in terms of finding better livelihoods, changing their livelihoods of only delimited farming because of the scarcity of water and introducing them and building their capacities to ecotourism, establishing our ecological parks in the valley and helping the residents in the area to understand that there other possibilities that they can look into instead of just only focusing on the agricultural sector. You know all these factors ...working closely with the communities...was [...] ..successfully over the years. Working closely with governments as well. Understanding them and supporting our work with research and studies that through these studies we are able to convince the governments that this needs to be done. And here is the proof, the study is the proof of what needs to happen, showing them the economic return as well, working with different sectors, and governments as I said, understanding the different mentalities of the officials and working different ways with these officials ...bringing the information to the officials about water information in the other countries also helped because even the officials did not know what was going on on the other side...and for region and status, and working together in the three countries we were able to collect this information and show facts... also helped..

**A:** I see...I understand that one of the goals of the GWN is ultimately to contribute to the peacemaking in the Middle East. Do you think that water really has what it takes? In theory it does... But what about its peacemaking potential in practice?

**Y:** Of course... I mean I have to think that it's a peacebuilding tool because that is what we do, Anna, and it is very obvious from our work in the valley... how much trust has been built among these residents in the different countries that live in different communities. So it is. It might not be the only, but it is definitely a big factor.

**A:** I did not mean it as way to undermine the GWN, but the government is probably the key obstacle, governments change, this time u have an understanding politician then someone comes in his place and the work has to be done all over again...

**Y:** That was before, but not now... because as I said we are working with different levels of politicians and officials in the country and parliamentarians – we are trying to change policy...you know when you change policy it is harder to... for another...if a politician changes and someone else comes as a minister to change it all...So this is why we are working with the different levels and trying to change policy including parliamentarians in all our work . Over the years of course we learned so much and it is not...The GWN is every year evaluated... to what the major success were , , how to maintain, what the setbacks were, how we can change, how we can empower, our goals so ...according to the situation on ground...what works best ...

**A:** I see. I have great admiration for GWN. The initiative started in a quite difficult time, during second intifada

**Y:** Yeah when we were planning for it, it was right in the midst of Intifada...and we kept going

**A:** And that is what I find interesting to start such kind of initiative amidst turmoil and trying to build trust when actually no trust is likely to be built and still succeed and come this long way!

**Y:** And I give you an example...we had a tragic incident, one of the Jordanian judges when he was travelling to Palestine he was shot dead on the border by Israeli army and of course people went crazy in Jordan and they wanted to stop the peace agreement, they wanted to kick out the Israeli ambassador from Jordan and we had about three activities planned and it was hard to make that decision whether to go on with the regional activities or postpone... to find out that people from the valley who were participating said listen this is a tragic accident and it should not happen and there should be an investigation but we cannot stop our work. So you can have a feeling of... that people are sick and tired of stop everything and politicians coming over....No the people want to move on their own, they want to understand everything, they want to put together the memorandums of understanding or studies or whatever and they can go push the government to make it happen and nothing is stopping them

**A:** It is great. And it all comes together – that people are tired of closing doors on the opportunities...

**Y:**... and I personally believe that we people, the public, are the driver behind the change. Even in Jordan people are not seeing the water agreement with Israel, between us and Israel, as fair one but nobody spoke about it, even the government was just applying it... It was signed in 1994, no amendments to it, nothing...I personally stood in the Israeli Knesset during an environment day when we had about 40 people from Israel, Jordan and Palestine visiting the Knesset that day... I raised the issue with the head of the Knesset ...that we,

public, do not see the agreement as a fair one anymore. There are no amendments to it and it should be reopened and negotiated...

Of course he was shocked, when I said that, but it was the first step towards things. After I said that in Knesset the Jordan valley secretary general attended the conference in Israel and he was able to speak about the issue...other people spoke about it...the Jordan, the joint committee between Israel and Jordan now are speaking about it . so if you know what you are doing and what you are saying – anything is possible and people are the driving force behind it.

**A:** That's a very empowering message

**Y:** and it does not come over as a short period of time, Our work is to always lay the first step and then move slowly forward and that is the right way to do it after all these years of experience... we are now 20 years in the region and just now were we able to see the real tangible progress on ground for the Jordan river...Just last year when Israel agreed to release a small amount of money from lake Tiberias into the Jordan river when we managed to convince our government to form a national committee that should be cooperating with the regional committee.. Before 3-4 years ago we submitted the proposal to EU asking for a big fund for the regional master plan to rehabilitate the Jordan river, and we were heavily condemned by our governments, both Jordanian and Israeli government, they were screaming and shouting at the EU – why are you giving an NGO this big amount of money – it is not their business to do it but EU insisted you know. And they gave the money. From 3 years ago them not wanting to cooperate and give any information to them now attending every activity and every public hearing we hold and them saying it's their master plan as well so it's not an easy task...it takes years and years

**A:** But you also work with young generations, which I think is another factor that makes GWN so successful. These young people have less mistrust towards their peers than let's say people of older generation

**Y:** Definitely. We do work heavily with youth. And I have never heard of a program in the world that managed to bring youth together in the conflict area like ours.

**A:** I think it is great and it facilitates the work of your organization in future because they will grow up to take over the initiative in the future. They have no problem mingling with each other etc.

**Y:** It is great but it is not easy because you can find youth that...where let's say their families and...

It is not easy but it is always possible. Like you said they do not have that big mistrust when they see their counterparts they can come together and discuss water issues together and ...how they can eliminate pollution, how they talk to their government. Everything is possible.

**A:** That is a very empowering message! Thank you very much for this interview.

**Y:** My pleasure Anna, Should you have any further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me!

**A:** Thank you very much! I will! Have a nice day!

**Y:** Bye!

**A:** Bye! Thank you!