Environmental Cooperation and Israel-Palestinian Relations

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Guiding Questions
(and Methodology)

Questions:

How do Israeli transboundary water and cooperation practitioners discursively practice water/peace?

Are they constrained by the dominant, Israeli relational discourse of 'hydrohegemony'?

Methodology: Interpretive Practice (Holstein and Gubrium, 2005)

Discourse Analysis, Ethnography, Narrative Analysis

Upper Jordan River at Capernaum
Photo: Eric Abitbol

Contextual Analysis:
The Israel-Palestinian Conflict

➢ Violent Conflict (Galtung)

➢ Protracted Social Conflict (Azar)

➢ Asymmetric Conflict

  • Comparative (Suleiman)

  • Relational (Foucault, K.Boulding)

    • Hard/Threat Power

    • Ideational Power

Dead Sea at Occupied West Bank
Photo: Eric Abitbol

Domain Specific Analysis: Water and the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

➢ Ideationally (Appadurai)
- Zionism, PLO

➢ Materially (Burton)
- Human needs (increasing quantities)

➢ Power Struggle (Zeitoun)
- Hydrohegemony

Mekorot Headquarters in Tel Aviv

Photo: Eric Abitbol

Hydrohegemony of Israel-Palestinian Peacemaking

- ➢ Oslo Agreements
  - Hydrohegemony - Natural Water
    - Quantitatively - Recharge vs Use
    - Institutionally - JWC and Civil Administration
    - Rights - Jordan River
- ➢ Post-Oslo Planning
  - Hydrohegemony - Unconventional Water
    - Wastewater Recycling
    - Seawater Desalination - Producer/Client Relations

Securing Water Governance: Ideational Power

➢ Regimes of Power, Regimes of Truth and the Justificatory Narrative

- Victimisation
- Redeeming Biblical Zion
- Historical Use
- Hydropolitical Imperative
- Strategic Integration
- Israeli Sustainability
- Benevolence
- Palestinian Threat

Photo: Eric Abitbol

Transboundary Water Community of Practice

➢ **Emergence and Establishment**
- Formal
  - Multilateral Working Group on Water Resources
- Informal
  - Academic and Scientific Cooperation
  - Organisations
    - Friends of the Earth Middle East (FOEME)
    - Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI)
    - Arava Institute for Environmental Studies (AIES)

➢ Expansion
- International Community Support
- Inter-Generational Training

Photo: Eric Abitbol

Positive Hydropolitical Peace

- **Framework of Positive Peace:**
  - Equality
  - Partnership
  - Equity
  - Shared Environmental Sustainability
- **Berlin Rules on Water Resources (2004)**
  - Rights of access
  - Human needs
  - Iinter-generational sustainability and ecological integrity
  - Shared, integrated water resources management
  - Reasonable and equitable use
  - Impact assessments
  - Public participation
  - Information and transparency
  - Peaceful resolution of water disputes

Interpretive Practice: Water/ Peace (I)

➢ One Transboundary Water Community…
➢ …Multiple Discursive Communities

- Israeli (Diverse) vs. Palestinian (Hydropolitical Self-Determination)

- Israelis are discursively differentiated

  - Government (Hydrohegemeony) vs Civil Society (Diverse)

    - Civil Society: Technically (Hydrohegemonic Residue)
      vs. Politically Oriented Practitioners (Hydropolitical Peacebuilding)

      - **The 'Narrow Group':**
        Israeli, Civil Society, Politically-Oriented Practitioners

Interpretive Practice (II)

The 'Narrow Group'

> **e.g. Practitioners with FOEME**
>
> **Constrained by wider conflict, but…**

1) <u>Critique</u>
   1) Israel's hydrohegemonic relations
   2) Unwillingness to (re-)produce such violent relations
2) <u>Resistance to Regime of Power/Truth: Justificatory Narrative</u>
   1) Israel no longer victim - grappling with power
   2) West Bank occupation as violence not redemption
   3) Historical rights are limited wrt shared water resources
   4) Israeli AND Palestinian un/sustainability
   5) Benevolence is self-deceptive, notably by the others terms
   6) Recognising Palestinian diversity - building peace iteratively and constructively rather than totalising a Palestinian threat

Interpretive Practice (III)

- ➤ Equality
  - Israel and the Palestinians:
    - Technical *and* political discursive practice
      - FOEME/Geneva Initiative Draft Proposal I
    - Producing relational and project-based symmetries
      - Transboundary Stream Restoration
    - Relational Zionism and normalisation of Israeli life
      - Consistently
  - Israelis and Palestinians
    - Professional, people-to-people discourse of equality and empathy
    - Culture of dialogue - AIES
    - Eliminating/reducing prejudice - Transboundary Stream Restoration
  - Institution Building
    - Democratic and participatory - Joint Basin Management
    - Building Interdependence - RSDSC

Interpretive Practice (IV)

➤ Partnership
- A relational narrative of partnership
  - Relationship-building - IPCRI Conferences
  - Training - University of Oklahoma
  - Research - AIES, FOEME
  - Projects - Transboundary Stream Restoration
  - Advocacy - FOEME and US Senate/Jordan River
- Sharing Power
  - Information-sharing and decision-making: FOEME
  - Building shared methodologies: Transboundary Stream Restoration
  - Problem-solving: FOEME, AIES
- Building shared/layered identity through joint practice
  - Bioregional Identities - FOEME
  - Cultivating the shared 'we' - AIES
  - Building shared memories - Transboundary Stream Restoration
  - Cultivating transboundary community - FOEME, AIES
- Intergenerationality
  - AIES - Training in Peace and Environmental Leadership

Interpretive Practice (V)

- Equity
  - Critiquing and circumventing Oslo-era institutions
    - Transboundary Stream Restoration; Kidron Valley +
  - Discourse of needs *and* rights to water *ahead of* water production and trade regime
    - Equitable and reasonable use; FOEME Economic Analysis
  - Project-based benefit-sharing
    - Tulkaren-Emek Hefer Wastewater Treatment - FOEME
    - Ecotourism - AIES, FOEME
    - Transboundary Stream Restoration
  - Reconciliation/Making inequities visible and engaging with them
    - FOEME: Neighbours Paths and 'Water Realities'

Interpretive Practice (VI)

➢ Shared Sustainability
- Transparent discourse of un/sustainability and responsibility
  - Wastewater management: Settlements and Palestinians
- Environmental sustainabilitty as constitutive of self-determination
- Sustainable environment as constitutive of peace discourse
  - FOEME: Environmental Peacemaking
- Building shared environmental, social and political resilience
  - AIES: Cultivation of Transboundary Network/Community of Water/Peace Practitioners
- Putting transboundary water resource rehabilitation on the government agenda
  - AIES, FOEME, RSDSC
- Building a track record of success defined as improved environment through WWTP, infrastructure
  - FOEME, AIES, RSDSC
- Creating favourable conditions for water agreement as key pillar of wider peace agreement, rooted in discursive practice of hydropolitical peacebuilding
  - Building an environmentally-sustainable Palestine

Concluding Thoughts

Conflict (Transformation) and (Peaceful / Equitable / Sustainable) Water Governance Entwined

- Water Governance in Israel-Palestinian Conflict as Hydrohegemonic - becoming more visible to all (esp. transboundary water practitioners)
- Israel's Hydrohegemony as Reproducing Violent, Protracted and Asymmetric Conflict
- Israel's Hydrohegemony as Unilateral Security
- Hydrohegemony as Flawed and Asymmetric Peacemaking
- Hydrohegemony as Environmental 'Sustainability' with Violence

Theory of Transformation-Water Cooperation and Positive Peace

- Countering Hydrohegemony
- Critical Engagement with Justificatory Narrative
- Hydropolitical Peacebuilding (Equality, Partnership, Equity, Shared Environmental Sustainability)
- Supporting Desistance and Alternatives: Mindful of Hydrohegemonic Residues