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Environmental Groups In Jordan: Cooperating to Avoid Disaster

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Environmental Groups In Jordan: Cooperating to Avoid Disaster

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Research Abstract:

The purpose of this study will be to examine the relationships of cooperation between organizations and the government that seek to remedy some of the many environmental dilemmas that Jordan faces. How do environmental organizations in Jordan cooperate with the government and other non-governmental entities in order to achieve their goals? Furthermore, what goals can and have been reached by these organizations and what methods did they use to these ends? Through interviews with some of the individuals and organizations driving this change, this research project attempts to demonstrate what steps have been successful and where there is more room for improvement in terms of environmental cooperation and action in Jordan. Because of the relatively recent nature of the environmental movement in Jordan, it is important to thoroughly examine these primary steps towards a more sustainable future for such a key state in the Middle East.

Topic codes: Development studies 502, Management 509, Environmental Sciences 624

Introduction

The yearly meeting of the parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change this year will be held for the first time in an Arab country. Qatar is hosting the convention, at a time when the environment of the Middle East is reaching crisis. Water shortages plague most Middle Eastern and North African countries, and food shortages because of drought and desertification have contributed to social unrest and increasing economic concern for future food security.¹ The importance of the context of this conference is overshadowed by its failure to achieve any real change concerning climate change.² In light of the failures of global treaties, many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) have filled the void and pressured states and their governments to cooperate and pro-actively seek change.

The Middle East may be a region that is leading the trend towards organizations as the alternative to treaties and antiquated strategies of environmental regulation, and Jordan provides an interesting case study. As a student of environmental cooperation and international environmental regimes (defined in the theory section of this paper), Jordan is an ideal candidate for an example of a small-scale application of the idea that the balance of power between states and non-governmental institutions is shifting. The growing number of environmental groups, especially within the past 10 years, attests to the quickly multiplying environmental problems that Jordan is facing with its booming population.

¹ "Climate Change - Middle East & North Africa." *The World Bank*, Web. 11 Sept. 2012.
<<http://climatechange.worldbank.org/node/5786/content/middle-east-north-africa>>.

² "Summary of the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12 (22 Dec. 2009) Linkages. International Institute for Sustainable Development, 22 Dec. 2009. Web. 1 Nov. 2012.
<<http://www.iisd.ca/vol12/enb12459e.html>>.

Jordan has a distinctly arid climate, with only a tiny amount of arable land, increasing desertification, and increasing stresses on its very limited natural resources, and is one of the fourth most water poor countries in the world. Surrounded by oil-rich countries, Jordan has no known oil reserves, and as a result imports 98% of its energy needs, a cost that consumes 25% of the national GDP.³ Despite poor natural resources and limited developable space, Jordan has an enormous population of refugees and an exponentially growing population. The stresses on the resources of the country will continue to multiply as this growth increases, and it is yet unclear what path Jordan will follow to deal with these issues.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding these problems, there have been promising steps concerning environmental management and activism. The recent establishment of the Ministry of the Environment (2003) was a step in the right direction, but its proposed dissolution by the recently elected Prime Minister is very disheartening⁴. In recent years, there has been an encouraging increase of foreign aid and investment related to increased sustainability efforts.⁵ In addition, Jordan is beginning to experience an increase in the number of environmental groups that address a variety of important issues such as establishing nature reserves and guiding policy of the government concerning environmental issues. From projects on the health of the Jordan River to recycling in Amman, these groups are increasing in importance in Jordan.

In this study, I conducted interviews with different members of environmental organizations in Jordan concerning their methodology, history, and successes in terms of cooperative projects. In addition, interviews were conducted at the Ministry of the Environment

³ Balbo, Lauri (A). "Jordan Gets REEL About Renewables." *Green Prophet*. 4 June 2012. Web. 11 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.greenprophet.com/2012/06/jordan-renewable-energy/>>.

⁴ Namrouqa, Hana. "Activists Advise against Merging Environment, Municipal Affairs Ministries." *The Jordan Times* [Amman] 24 Nov. 2012: Print.

⁵ "Climate Change - Middle East & North Africa." *The World Bank*, Web. 11 Sept. 2012. <<http://climatechange.worldbank.org/node/5786/content/middle-east-north-africa>>.

to gain a more complete picture of how the process of environmental cooperation and policy making is achieved. I seek to address the questions: How do environmental NGOs and related groups within Jordan cooperate, and does their cooperation conform to any norms or models of international environmental cooperation? I postulate that the non-governmental organizations in Jordan are growing and filling the conservation and policy gaps left by relatively weak governmental policy concerning the environment. Despite this, however, there is still not enough cooperation and communication between these groups to maximize efficiency and impact on pressing environmental issues.

The early stages of a movement can help define its effectiveness and later success; the Kyoto protocol is a distressing example in which early laxity towards adherence to the treaty resulted in its ultimate inability to affect lasting change. The problems that Jordan faces today regarding its water and food security are undeniable, and will only increase with the population boom, along with an increase in social unrest as seen in the Arab Spring (Mohtadi, "Climate Change"; Balbo, "Water Resources").⁶ Without comprehensive change and action, Jordan will not be able to manage its shortages. Cooperation between all actors on environmental issues is thus of utmost importance, and cannot proceed unless the processes of cooperation are well understood and documented to serve as building blocks for further action. Jordan's issues are an important symbol of the global environmental problems that every nation faces, and the nation is poised to either become an environmental leader, or ignore the obvious and head strait into crisis.

⁶ Balbo, Laurie (B). "Jordan's Crippled Water Resources Protected by Security." *Green Prophet*. N.p., 6 Aug. 2012. Web. 11 Sept. 2012.

Mohtadi, Shahrzad. "Climate Change and the Syrian uprising." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. N.p., 19 Aug. 2012. Web. 11 Sept. 2012. <<http://thebulletin.org/web-edition/features/climate-change-and-the-syrian-uprising>>.

Literature review

International environmental cooperation is a subject that has been widely studied since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment's agreements were signed at Stockholm in 1972, declaring the fundamental principles concerning the environment and development.⁷ There are many theories of environmental cooperation, sustainable development, and the formation of international environmental law, yet the realm of environmental cooperation with a state is still an under-developed field. Especially in Jordan, with the activities by a small number of environmental groups just barely documented in academia within the past decade or so, information on the interactions between these groups is slim.

International theories, then, are as close as the literature gets concerning cooperation and the special role of NGOs in the environmental movement. This survey covers some of the major theories of international environmental relations along with several critiques of these theories. Regime theory is by far the most important theory for international environmental relations, describing how actors create norms of cooperation. Regime theory loosely fits under the constructivist school of international politics, focusing on things like socialization, education, persuasion, and discourse to explain governance.⁸ Other theories, such as game theory, seek more market-based explanations of how to achieve cooperation. These theories are summarized below, with the sections most relevant to this study highlighted.

A. Institutions

The most common and accepted definition of an environmental regime is “a mutually interdependent sets of norms, rules, principles, values, and policy-making procedures that governments of states come to agree upon and abide by in managing a particular issue-area

⁷ <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=97>

⁸ Haas, Peter M. "UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment." *Global Governance* 8.1 (2002): 74. Print.

affecting world affairs, in this case, the quality of the Earth's environment."⁹ While these regimes are always changing, there have been some defining shifts since regime formation first started in the 1970s. In the 1990s, there was a shift towards voluntary, collaborative, and market based instruments for cooperation (eco-labels, legal positions for access to information), which eventually led to a greater inclusion of non-governmental organizations in the negotiations processes.¹⁰

The democratic legitimacy of intergovernmental rule making relies partially on the assumption that governments, who are often neither democratically authorized nor accountable, represent their citizens. The case for involving civil society organizations such as NGOs in inter-governmental relations rests largely on the assumption that through the participation of these private actors, the voice of a wider affected public may be brought to bear on the global decision-making processes. In this way, environmental NGOs make it possible for local communities to 'upstream' their grievances to international institutions.¹¹

NGOs, however, are not replacing government's roles in this process. Internationally, NGOs have taken over some traditional roles of political parties in lobbying. They seek efficient and effective management in pursuit of a goal, instead of a trying to promote a long-term ideology.¹² NGOs can actually help governments tackle new environmental issues by producing research and highlighting important issues. They also provide countries with independent

⁹ Joyner, Christopher C. "Rethinking International Environmental Regimes." *Journal of International Law & International Relations* 1.2 (2005): 90. Dec. 2005. Web. 5 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.jilir.org/volume1.html>>.

Downie, David L. "Global Environmental Policy: Governance through Regimes." *Global Environmental Policy: Concepts, Principles, and Practice*. By Charles H. Eccleston. Boca Raton, FL: CRC, 2011. 70. Print.

¹⁰ Haas, Peter M. "UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment." *Global Governance* 8.1 (2002): 73. Print.

¹¹ Dombrowski, Kathrin. *Filling The Gap? An Analysis Of Non-Governmental Organizations Responses To Participation And Representation Deficits In Global Climate Governance*. International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law & Economics 10.4 (2010): 397-416. Environment Complete. Web. 27 Nov. 2012

¹² Van Der Heijden, H.-A. "Political Parties and Ngos in Global Environmental Politics." *International Political Science Review* 23.2 (2002): 187-201. Print.

assessment of compliance with international treaties and can help governments gauge public support for certain issues. Ultimately, however, only governments possess key powers like taxation that force environmental compliance.¹³ Good implementation of an international environmental agreement requires participation and leadership from a strong state, as exemplified in most arctic and oceanic treaties.¹⁴ The reverse is also true: a distinct lack of leadership leads to failure or weak implementation, as with the case of the Kyoto protocol. In addition, states can help facilitate horizontal diffusion.

There are many other barriers to international environmental cooperation besides just the issue of leadership. Cooperation tends to happen at the lowest common denominator on the international scale. In order for states to cooperate effectively, they must possess the technology and capacity to implement the results of cooperation.¹⁵ For the process of partnerships to function cooperatively, considerable support must be forthcoming from governments, non-governmental organizations, and the international community.¹⁶ Other limitations of regime theory are that most non-governmental organizations are western organizations, and small businesses—which are more familiar with local development and environmental issues—are noticeably absent from leadership roles.

These economic linkages between international regimes and development, an issue often raised by developing countries (such as Jordan), are not new in the field of international environmental cooperation, but have not interacted sufficiently to produce a stronger theory that

¹³ Raustiala, Kal. "States, NGOs, and International Environmental Institutions." *International Studies Quarterly* 41.4 (1997): 719-40. Print.

¹⁴ Joyner, Christopher C. "Rethinking International Environmental Regimes." *Journal of International Law & International Relations* 1.2 (2005): 92. Dec. 2005. Web. 5 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.jilir.org/volume1.html>>.

¹⁵ Downie, David L. "Global Environmental Policy: Governance through Regimes." *Global Environmental Policy: Concepts, Principles, and Practice*. By Charles H. Eccleston. Boca Raton, FL: CRC, 2011. 80. Print.

¹⁶ Joyner, Christopher C. "Rethinking International Environmental Regimes." *Journal of International Law & International Relations* 1.2 (2005): 90. Dec. 2005. Web. 5 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.jilir.org/volume1.html>>.

takes elements of both regime theories and economic cooperation theories. The question remains whether mutual learning is possible at all, although important steps have been made in examining regime theory and game theory in conjunction.¹⁷

B. Economics

The older ideas about environmental relations and the economy concluded that conservation was at odds with development. In the 1970s, this led to the creation of many 'nature reserves' that were created to entirely remove human interaction with the ecosystem. Two decades later, in the 1990s, environmental movement started to shift towards decentralization and market-based strategies became prevalent. In addition, one author notes that top down approaches to rural development contribute little to poverty reduction. Information exchanges have always been the heart of power and thus are key to development.¹⁸

One key theory in international relations is game theory, which "analyzes the interaction between agents, formulates hypotheses about their behavior, and predicts the final outcome."¹⁹ To simplify, with given variables, Game Theory seeks to know if these variables will make both parties want to cooperate, neither party want to cooperate, or some other combination. In international environmental relations, game theory seeks to predict: under which conditions will an international environmental agreement (abbreviated IEA) be signed and ratified? On which

¹⁷ Neumayer, Eric. "How Regime Theory and the Economic Theory of International Environmental Cooperation Can Learn from Each Other." *Global Environmental Politics* 1.1 (2001): 141. Print.

¹⁸ Romero, Claudia, Simone Athayde, Jean-Gael E. Collomb, Maria DiGiano, Marianne Schmink, Sam Schramski, and Lisa Seales. "Conservation and Development in Latin America and Southern Africa: Setting the Stage." *Ecology and Society* 17.2 (2012): Print.

¹⁹ Finus, Michael. *Game Theory and International Environmental Cooperation: Any Practical Application?* Rep. Hagen, Germany: University of Hagen, 2000. 1. Print.

reduction targets will the negotiators agree? How many and which countries will sign an IEA? Will the agreement be stable? Which measures may be used to stabilize an IEA?²⁰

While this theory is still highly abstract, it has produced several interesting findings. Finus finds that “the quality of the monitoring system is important for the stability of an agreement”²¹ and that “Promising measures are regular meetings of politicians of different member states, the implementation of international treaty obligations into national law and the delegation of enforcement responsibility to national environmental agencies which are less dependent on short-term success than politicians.”²² There are, however, important limitations of game theory. One of the most important is that it ‘black-boxes’ countries and is not yet sophisticated enough to take into account the incredibly important internal politics of each country.

Another economic linkage to environmental politics is the relationship between development and degradation. In developing countries, policy responses to environmental issues include regulation, local actions (village level concerning soil erosion), resource management policies (managing forests), and infrastructure development (urban congestion).²³ The high costs associated with degradation and pollution (decreased agricultural output, disease) *should* give environmental concerns a higher priority in developing countries agendas. While pollution problems are often more visible and accorded higher policy priority, degradation problems and pollution problems interact with development very differently. Environmental costs are not internalized in government strategies, thus becoming unforeseen external costs.

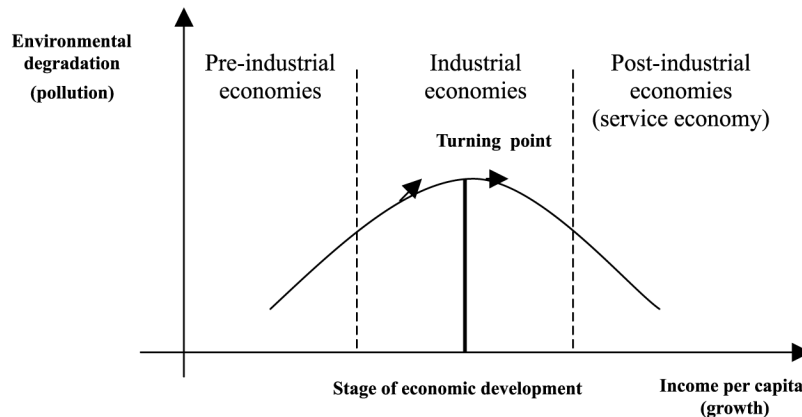
²⁰ Ibid. 3

²¹ Ibid 31

²² Ibid 34

²³ Jha, Raghendra, and John Whalley. "The Environmental Regime in Developing Countries." *Behavioral and Distributional Effects of Environmental Policy*. By Carlo Carraro and Gilbert E. Metcalf. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001. 219. Print.

Environmental Kuznets Curve talks about the relationship between environmental degradation and development.²⁴ As seen in Figure 1 below, the theory postulates that as developing countries develop into industrial economies, environmental degradation rises, but as they approach service economies of fully developed nations, environmental degradation begins to fall with increases in technology, capital, and awareness.



Source: Panayotou (1993)

Figure 1. Environmental Kuznets Curve source: www.environmentaleconomics.com

One problem with this economic theory, however, is that its research has been inconsistent and does not apply equally to all environmental problems. For instance, although it is applicable to problems such as water sanitation, which has been proven to rise with development, there is an inverse relationship when it comes to issues of degradation (i.e. river quality). While developing countries work hard towards putting environmental issues on the agenda, and are party to most international environmental treaties, outside shocks to societies

²⁴ Ibid 228

may disrupt or delay internalizing or addressing environmental costs.²⁵ Thus many developing countries follow the Kuznets Curve model and advocate rapid development hoping that environmental concerns will easily be addressed once the country has enough wealth. In addition, while this theory assumes that developing countries will directly follow the path of their predecessors, it is important to note that many factors, such as technology and the international community, make this experience very different for each developing country.

Methodology

In order to survey the cooperation techniques and mechanisms of environmental groups in Jordan, a combination of literature review and interviews was needed to assess the reality of the situation. Observations, interviews, and data collection in the form of organization-produced literature allowed me to compare and contrast the experiences and achievements of the different organizations. A broad sample of environmental organizations in Jordan (ranging from its oldest environmental NGO to some of the newest, along with government officials and independent activists) allowed me to gain a unique perspective on the diversity of groups and their works within the country. In addition, I reviewed some of the recent publications by some of these organizations that seek to address environmental issues like desertification or water supply.

One of the most exciting and beneficial aspects of environmental organizations is their lack of bureaucracy and red tape, meaning that I was able to access many higher-level professionals without much difficulty. When deciding which organizations to interview, I wanted to include a broad variety of different organizations, from some of the oldest and most

²⁵ Jha, Raghbendra, and John Whalley. "The Environmental Regime in Developing Countries." *Behavioral and Distributional Effects of Environmental Policy*. By Carlo Carraro and Gilbert E. Metcalf. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001. 234. Print.

established to newer, smaller organizations that have only come about within the past few years. In addition, I wanted to interview some organizations that work on very specific issues (such as conservation) and others that had much broader objectives (such as increasing environmental awareness), along with purely local organizations and those that were part of a much larger international network. These interviews were relatively easy to obtain and all subjects interviewed were happy to share their perspectives and experiences. Please see the Primary Sources section of the bibliography for a full list of the names of those interviewed and a brief description of the organization that they represent. I was also given access to environmental reports or publications by the organizations that I interviewed, as well as government reports on conducted projects.

I chose to interview as many individuals as possible from the most important NGOs and environmental entities in Jordan. Oftentimes I contacted the organization by telephone or email and was directed to the appropriate employee to interview. By having a very broad survey of a variety of organizations, I was able to collect very different opinions on similar topics.

Interviews generally lasted about 1 hour. Many of the interviews were held in the offices of the group that I was interviewing, and thus I was able to gain a distinct sense of the size of the organization, how well structured it was, the working environment, and other factors that may affect the organizations.

In order to be able to compare and contrast results and make conclusions based on the collected data, I included many of the same questions in all of my interviews. Many of these questions were broad and theoretical. I asked each interviewee about their education, work experience, and how they became interested in the environment. I also asked very broad questions such as: Are the environmental problems in Jordan more institutional or directly

environmental? Is your organization more focused on grassroots organization or affecting policy? Have you cooperated with other environmental organizations and if so were these projects successful? The answers to these questions helped me to identify the differences and similarities between organizations, and assess whether they were active in the environmental community here in Jordan or more independent. All interviews were conducted in English, and most participants were very comfortable in this language. I followed up two of the interviews with questions by email that added to my understanding of the projects and experiences of the organization. Please refer to the Appendix for a sample of interview questions.

Results

The environment is an important issue in Jordan, but it is not necessarily a sensitive one. All participants were more than willing to share their experiences and the difficulties of working in the field, even when it came to frustrations with other groups. These inter-group miscommunications are very important to my findings, but it was important not to be a party to NGO politics and power-dynamics, so I was careful not to share what may have been sensitive information (the way a certain group felt about another's work, or the weaknesses in their relationships), which may have led to different reactions to my questions and unnecessary provocation.

Although most of my questions were fairly open-ended, many of the answers were quite similar and followed common themes. The first idea that was expressed by many interviewees in response to a broad question about the most important obstacles to environmental change was that weak institutions are the reason behind slow change. Of seven interviewees who responded the question directly, all mentioned weak institutions, with three specifically mentioning bad

land management, two mentioning excessive bureaucracy, two mentioning enforcement, and one mentioning a lack of innovation.

The second idea is that in Jordan, international organizations act primarily as a financial bridge between the international community and local groups who implement funds. Of six interviewees who responded directly, four associated with local organizations said that their partnerships with their international donor agencies were very positive or strong. All said that international agencies provided the bulk of the funding, with government or local organizations pitching in what they could, including donating local services and housing.

The third finding is that the environmental movement here in Jordan, especially the government, lacks accountability, monitoring, and transparency. Said one interviewee, “Oftentimes grant money is used by government agencies or other organizations merely to strengthen these organizations’ infrastructure and not to pursue complete and effective projects.” Others cited corruption, lack of readily available information or sometimes correct information, or the system of personal connections known in Jordan as ‘*wasta*’.²⁶ One interviewee said that it was not only the government but also the private sector and organizations that were oftentimes not honest about their progress, achievements, and failures.

On the issue of leadership, three separate themes arose. The first was a mixed result concerning on whom addressing the burden of environment change should fall. Of five who answered the question, all were in favor of a mixed approach environmental change. Many expressed the opinion that despite the failings of the government to make real progress so far, they were still the appropriate body to carry out solid policies and legislation, and that NGOs should play a supporting role and provided the movement with most of its passion and

²⁶ Loewe, Markus, Jonas Blume, and Johanna Speer. "How Favoritism Affects the Business Climate: Empirical Evidence from Jordan." *Middle East Journal* 62.2 (2008): 259-76. Print.

innovation. One interviewee (coming from a private sector organization) cited the role of the private sector, saying that they could play an equally important part.

The second is that the Ministry of the Environment thus far has not been able to effectively address real environmental problems. Of six interviewees who expressed this sentiment, three said that the flexibility they experienced working elsewhere after the ministry was incredibly helpful to create and implement strong projects. Two said that bureaucracy stifled new and innovative ideas. One mentioned the lack of support within government outside of the ministry made broad programs very difficult, and another interviewee mentioned that the revolving door of political appointees to the Ministry made lasting partnerships and vision difficult, and it was becoming increasingly factional and disunited. Indeed, if coordination with a university was started by one Minister, it was often forgotten about or disregarded by the next minister and the project would progress no further.

The final leadership theme is that of the lack of environmental leadership in the region. One interviewee who has worked with both the governmental and non-governmental sides of the environmental movement in Jordan elaborates:

“ Since this region is so oriented around charismatic leaders, very little has been done in terms of leadership on the environment. If the King announced today that solar energy was going to be a big part of the national policy tomorrow, you would witness a big jump in interest there. No one has emerged however, since the late king’s patronage of the RSCN. Individuals lead in this country, not institutions. This is partially due to the fact that our government changes every few months—there is very little vision.”

Of five who answered the question, three responded that the relationship between the late King Hussein and the RSCN had been a pioneering and strong relationship that had given the organization its strength and independence. The two others interviewed expressed the opinion that a 'champion' of environmental causes was needed, but not necessarily from the Royal Hashemite family. They cited a strong organization ramping-up its efforts or a strong private sector advocate as possible alternatives.

A seventh theme is that of raising awareness. All interviewees cited a lack of awareness and need to increase awareness as priorities, and most said that their organization was working on some sort of awareness project. Despite this consensus, there was relatively little consensus on how to go about the issue. Two interviewees from small, young organizations want to focus on youth education, through both school projects and extra-curricular activities. Three respondents whose organizations work on solid waste management or awareness said that changing people's behavior is incredibly difficult in Jordan. Another interviewee said that people are aware of some of the issues that Jordan faces, but don't know about environmentalism or the options available to them to address this issue.

An eighth theme is the need for both grassroots and top-down approaches in order to change the status quo. Of the four who answered this question thoroughly, all replied that their organization was working on both top-down and grassroots approaches, trying to change policy through lobbying and information sharing, and raising awareness through workshops, publications, and other activities (like marches, protests, days of awareness). The respondents came from very different organizations but all expressed the desire to combine approaches in order to maximize effectiveness.

Another theme that arose was that each environmental organization will be most effective if they try to fill a different niche. Of five who answered this question, all agreed that organizations that focused on just one environmental issue were most effective. Many gave the examples of the GEF small grants fund (providing funds for small scale projects), the RSCN (focusing on biodiversity and conservation) and JREDS (focusing on marine conservation) as organizations that are particularly effective. One interviewee said that changing attitudes regarding lifestyle was so difficult that to try and take on any new tasks would be useless.

Finally, organizations had many different approaches to cooperation with other organizations and the government. Of all eleven interviewees, every one had significant amounts of cooperation with multi-lateral or bi-lateral environmental donor agencies such as the UNDP, USAID, EU, or the IUCN. These donor groups have quarterly meetings to discuss projects and minimize overlap. The Global Environment Facility, UNDP, USAID, Greenpeace, and Friends of the Earth have local agents and projects here in Jordan, which makes them part of a broader international movement that shares information and resources. The JES has most recently collaborated on a EU funded project for scholarships.

Local organizations such as the RSCN and JES both have had projects in coordination with the government and projects funded by international institutions, although the RSCN's cooperation with the government has been much more complex, close, and extensive, including joint reports, monitoring, and enforcement. In addition, the RSCN makes its scientific information available at no cost to whomever asks. The RSCN has also adopted the participatory approach to environmental governance,

involving the local community in socio-economic and conservation projects, and tries to conduct full stakeholder consultations before and after implementing a project.

Friends of the Earth Middle East has worked with a wide variety of partners, but has struggled to partner with local groups because of their work with Israelis. Their coordination between local communities with their 'Good Water Neighbors' project has been very successful at changing dialogues through cooperation. During the regional conference in 2011, Jordanian, Israeli, and Palestinian mayors shared a discussion about how to improve their communities. The language changed from blame to discussion of roles for saving the river.

The small grants fund of the Global Environment Facility has funded projects of most major environmental groups in Jordan, and is itself housed by a local environmental organization (JREDS). Other smaller organizations like the newly established Greenpeace Jordan are hosted by other larger NGOs if they require a space for meetings. However, many interviewees noted that there was not a common forum for sharing information or meeting in large groups, which they saw as a large barrier to effective communication between groups.

Private sector groups have similar approaches, collaborating on projects with international donor agencies as well as local groups. The DFZC has a memorandum of understanding with the RSCN and has turned to them for advice on small-scale socio-economic development. There has also been consultation with the JGBC to review the infrastructure guidelines for the Dead Sea with the ultimate goal of complying with international LEED standards. This information is shared with investors in the hopes that it will increase their awareness of the benefits of sustainable development.

BE's work has found that embassies and cooperation with organizations in Jordan whose home countries have high environmental standards has led to strong partnerships. International hotels have also been eager to get more environmental services. An attempted cooperation project with the government ended in failure and broke trust between the private and government sectors.

Finally, the Ministry of the Environment, like all other groups, has a strong relationship with international donors, both in terms of information sharing and funds. They view their role as more supervisory, and the conservation branch of the Ministry collaborates on scientific research with the RSCN and RSS. Sometimes cooperation with other Ministries has at times been difficult and there is not always optimal information sharing and coordination.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this study illuminate the most successful cooperation attempts and those that have failed within the environmental movement in Jordan. In addition, there are some parallels to the trends of international environmental cooperation that cannot be ignored. First and foremost amongst the results is the idea that government has not been effective at addressing environmental problems in Jordan. The failed or non-existent partnerships with other institutions that could strengthen environmental projects have many explanations, some of them explained by international theories of environmental cooperation, and some specific to the country and climate of civil society.

One problem of environmental cooperation in Jordan is transparency and accountability. The idea of building up trust between the different sectors that have to cooperate has not yet been implemented or institutionalized and has been cited as a huge barrier to collaboration between

sectors. This is precisely the role that environmental NGOs seek to fill in international institutions, holding governments accountable for their actions and being the watchdogs of the environment. Unfortunately, the results of this study show that watchdog institutions are not strong enough to hold the government responsible for its lack of enforcement.

The lack of innovation and challenges to the status quo are also cited as examples of why the complacency of the government has continued this long. The government and its agencies have often settled for projects that do not disrupt the status quo. This parallels some issues of international environmental relations in which cooperation tends to happen at lowest common denominator so as to include as many state participants. On the private sector side, there needs to be incentives for innovation. In order for innovation to take place, it was noted that flexibility was a key ingredient, and government bureaucracy needed to be cut in order to speed along projects with real momentum.

Despite this, there is agreement, across actors, that the government is still the appropriate body to drive environmental change in Jordan. Although the role of NGOs was frequently highlighted in the results of this section, and partnership was cited as an ideal solution, all groups recognize the mandate that the government has for implementing laws. This reflects the academic literature on the role of states in international environmental cooperation. Successful relationships have included cooperation on scientific research with organizations like the RSCN and RSS. However, problems related to sustainable development and coordinating the interests of multiple actors have not been sufficiently addressed, and therefore issues like land degradation, pollution, and waste have not yet been dealt with.

One of the findings indicated that the Ministry of the Environment is less of an implementation body (because of its small human and capital resources) and more of a

supervisory body in its current state. This, too, is reminiscent of the weak powers of international environmental agreements when it comes to enforcement. If there is no mechanism to hold those who break the agreement accountable, then the agreement will remain weak. As of the dissolution of the Ministry of the Environment, it is even less clear which body of government will enforce and implement the existing laws. If international environmental relations are any guide, there will be even less compliance and enforcement than there is currently without an institution to carry out policies. Related to this is the problem that Jordan's environmental movement has no 'champions' in government or the Royal family who are willing to take up a cause and really promote it, much in a way that an environmental treaty is often weak if there is no strong leader pushing for change.

In general terms of cooperation, there is a very severe lack of coordination between groups. Almost all of the respondents said that their organization, either formally or informally, was working on awareness. However, there did not seem to be a common definition of what awareness would look like, who needed to be made aware (although two interviewees mentioned youth), or what information should be prioritized. It seems likely, therefore, that there is at the same time overlap and disconnect on the issue of awareness especially, and that since this is cited as such a key issue by all interviewees, there should be a way to coordinate a national plan for awareness. Indeed, the definition of roles of different organizations arose again and again when discussion coordination, and the need for each group to find a niche was a popular idea.

Stemming from this is an urgent need for more information sharing. When information is readily shared, it makes it easier for action to take place quickly and in an informed manner. For instance, the presence of BirdLife International in Jordan has been successful at implementing monitoring of bird species in the Jordan valley (one of the most important bird migration routes

in the world) in coordination with the RSCN, using technology systems such as GIS and bird ringing. This project has been successful because there is no overlap with other organizations, there has been good follow through and implantation by the organization, and information sharing was successful.

An issue that cannot simply be addressed by one organization, however, is the lack of a common forum for sharing resources and information between groups. Several interviewees mentioned this as a significant barrier to successful cooperation. If overlap is a problem in many fields of environmental activism in Jordan, a forum where upcoming projects could be discussed, and successful projects examined, would help define roles and clarify the purpose of different organizations.

The results also show that full stakeholder consultation was a fixture of the large, successful organizations such as the RSCN, FoEME and the DFZC. This demonstrates that coordinating the interests of many actors is not impossible, and indeed should be implemented for long-term success. A final observation about cooperation is that all organizations cited a dual strategy to addressing environmental issues: both top-down and grassroots. It is unclear how this has affected efficiency or effectiveness in terms of implemented projects, but all groups seemed to find it important that both techniques were used. Similarly, in international environmental relations, NGOs often play two roles at once, trying to increase awareness through local projects, and also lobbying officials at international agreements.

The issue of leadership is one that epitomizes many of the frustrations of environmental groups in Jordan. Without coordination behind a strong leader, factions have developed and effective cooperation is seldom achieved. The need for, as some interviewees put it, a 'champion' of environmental issues is pressing, although it is yet unclear where this kind of

champion will come from. One interviewee mentioned a private sector company or individual who could be a bridge between the private sector and NGOs, building trust and changing private sector mindsets. One champion of conservation was the late King Hussein of Jordan, and two interviewees mentioned that the Royal Hashemite family could play a big part in mobilizing broad support for the movement. Even strengthening the ministry of the environment might be enough to produce leadership, as in the early years of the ministry when Mr. Khaled Irani was the Minister of the Environment, which many regard as the ministry's years of vision.²⁷ As in international environmental relations, the lack of a strong leader to mobilize hesitant or untrusting actors is key to moving plans forward and going beyond the 'lowest common denominator' in cooperation. Jordan has yet to find its champion.

A final issue is that development and sustainability have yet to find a stable partnership in Jordan. While the sustainability initiatives of DFZC and BE are important steps in the right direction, these ideas are not yet widespread. The DFZC has implemented full stakeholder assessments, but this should be more common if real sustainable economic development is to take place. Similarly, Finus notes that promising measures that indicate a shift towards cooperation in international theories include frequent stakeholder meetings. Clearly, the relationship between stakeholder consultation and assessment and positive sustainable development is important and should be pursued further.

The government has so far used a system of penalties to discourage bad environmental practices, but has done little to encourage good ones. A shift in policy here might fulfill the innovation gap mentioned in the results section. The use of game theory principles to assess what kinds of cooperation between private sector and NGOs, or private sector and government could

²⁷ Wardam, Batir. Personal communication. Nov. 5th, 2012

take place given certain incentives could be an important step in getting actors to cooperate. Initiatives like the Jordan Green Building Council are also important in demonstrating that the status quo is not sufficient for development, since technology and innovation concerning building practices have already been long established in developed countries, and their models are applicable to developing countries. However, the same issue of black-boxing that occurs in international game theory models has dangers here in Jordan as well. There is the distinct issue of black-boxing institutions (like countries) who have very complex internal politics and cannot always be predicted based on rational interests alone.

The international community has already been quite active in Jordan, with all organizations part of a larger international organization, or using donor money for projects. This economic partnership has so far been one of the most stable in Jordan's environmental community. With all interviewees responding that some of their best relationships were with these donor agencies (such as USAID, the GEF small grants programme, the UNDP) it is clear that this relationship of cooperation is one of the few that really works in Jordan. There are still issues of accountability, but the major institutionalization of this relationship has created an environment of easy cooperation between local and international groups.

In the results of this study, few organizations mentioned partnerships with the private sector. This illuminates yet another disconnect between development and sustainability. Jordan seems to be following the Kuznets curve model of development, in which a country tries to develop quickly, assuming that environmental issues will be resolved with wealth. This has perhaps been an instigator in the seeming lack of interest and trust between the private sector and environmental movement, with the organizations in the previous paragraph being important exceptions.

It would be neglectful, however, to overlook some projects that have sought to bring about sustainability and development at once, such as the RSCN's socio-economic programs for the rural residents in their nature reserves, the work of the Badia Research and Development Center in improving agricultural techniques, and other organizations that try to bridge that gap. However, it is clear that partnerships between the two sectors have been severely neglected. Traditional practices in Jordan has not always been degrading to the environment, but the now concrete borders that Jordan shares with its neighbors have significantly impacted a nomadic way of life both culturally and in terms of the landscape.²⁸ Development and sustainability in Jordan do not have to be at odds, and the increasing participation of the private sector mirrors the global shift towards market-based initiatives for some environmental issues.

Conclusions

It is evident from this study that the government has failed at implementing strong environmental policies, and that NGOs are trying to pick up the slack by implementing projects and initiatives. The recent decision to dissolve of the Ministry of the Environment is hugely symbolic of the government's lack of commitment to environmental issues in Jordan, and, as one interviewee put it "instead of moving forward on exciting innovations and new ideas, Jordan is moving back in time, 10 years back, actually, to when we didn't have a Ministry of the Environment. It's very sad."²⁹ Therefore, the first part of my hypothesis, that the government has not created any tangible environmental progress, is proved.

²⁸ Al-Tabini, Raed, Khalid Al-Khalidi, and Mustafa Al-Shudiefat. "Livestock, Medicinal Plants and Rangeland Viability in Jordan's Badia, through the Lens of Traditional and Local Knowledge." *Pastoralism: Research, Policy, and Practice* 2.4 (2012): Print.

²⁹ Sultan, Abdelrahman. Personal communication. Nov 21, 2012.

The second portion of my hypothesis postulated that NGOs are growing to fill this void but yet uncoordinated and not able to be truly effective. The dissatisfaction shown by environmental groups for the existing condition of the environment and environmental institutions is very telling that there is still much progress yet to be made. Despite this, new groups are being created every year to tackle Jordan's many environmental issues. Theories of international environmental cooperation have demonstrated in part why cooperation has not yet been successful, including the lack of a leader, a disconnect between environment and development, a lack of transparency and accountability, and inadequate information sharing, all of which are problems experienced as well on the international level. Perhaps if these key problems mimic those of the international community, international solutions that have worked could provide good lessons for Jordan.

Jordan has not yet created its own strong regime for environmental cooperation. There are a few elements that have worked so far, such as institutionalizing relations between international donor agencies and local groups and the strong relationship between the government and the RSCN. However, there are few norms or procedures for cooperation between different entities such as the private sector or smaller NGOs. Thus vertical cooperation so far has been successful in Jordan, but horizontal cooperation and coordination between similar groups who could learn and gain from one another has been one of the major weaknesses in creating a strong environmental regime.

This study highlights the main issues of cooperation in Jordan and what some of their root causes are. In doing so, it suggests how to improve the environmental cooperation climate in the country through addressing some of the most pressing problems of cooperation like information sharing, transparency and accountability, leadership, and specification of roles.

Despite the recent set backs on the side of the government, it is my hope that environmental groups will rise to the challenge and continue to push Jordan towards a more sustainable approach to development.

Limitations of the study

The main difficulty encountered during the length of my research was obtaining the contact information of employees of the various institutions. Many websites are incomplete or outdated, and do not have up-to-date contacts. Often times, it was difficult to locate the actual location of the organization or the proper individual to contact. However, once an initial contact was made with one well-connected individual, it was easy to obtain names and phone numbers for other individuals within the environmental community. In addition, in some interviews certain questions were not answered completely, which often seemed to stem from a lack of information or knowledge about the specific answers I needed. Although I was able to get many interviews, there are many more organizations active in the field of environmental activism that I did not have the time to interview.

Despite the broad scope of my research, there were several factors that could have benefitted from a longer-term project with more depth-oriented research. While I was able to contact a wide variety of sources, it would have been beneficial to interview more than one member of every organization in order to decrease the risk of getting a biased opinion regarding the work and success of the organization. In addition, I was unable to contact or find time to interview several key institutions that would have been beneficial to my project: including (but not limited to) the Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan (JREDS), the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Mercy Corps

Jordan, and the wide variety of other USAID projects that operate in Jordan. Because of the short amount of time allocated for the project along with the difficulty I experienced scheduling interviews, it would have been difficult to reach out to all of these organizations.

Given the length limitations of this paper, it would be difficult to address all organizations interviewed on a deeper level, especially if I had taken intra-governmental cooperation into account. This also applies to the private sector. It would have been beneficial to interview more private-sector actors that claim to focus on the environment or are addressing environmental issues, however, it would be difficult to address these groups adequately without detracting from a thorough analysis of any of the other groups within the scope of this paper.

A final limitation or challenge of this study was the recent decision by the Jordanian prime minister to dissolve the ministry of the environment. While this decision did not take immediate effect, it did significantly change the opinions and feelings of many organizations (including the Ministry of the Environment) concerning cooperation with the government on environmental issues.

Recommendations for further study:

In light of the limitations of my study, I have several recommendations for further research in the field of environmental cooperation in Jordan. Because of the optimism surrounding the linkages between development and environmental issues, it would be interesting to study the efforts of the private sector in Jordan to address environmental issues. Considering the increasing number of environmental consulting firms and development-based initiatives in Jordan, it seems that future cooperation between NGOs and the private sector will emerge as a powerful force for affecting environmental change.

Another important further topic of study would be intra-governmental cooperation and communication. There are many ministries that seek to address Jordan's environmental problems besides the Ministry of the Environment—the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Energy, among others. It would be beneficial to see how these government entities cooperate and communicate to address environmental problems, and to assess the areas in which improvements could be made. Further study of the recent decision to dissolve the Ministry of the Environment would also help to illuminate the attitudes of politicians and the government in Jordan towards the environment, and what future directions the government will take in relation to environmental issues.

Appendices

A. List of acronyms and descriptions of organizations

BE Environmental Services (BE)—Formerly known as Entity Green, BE offers recycling services for many of the major hotels throughout Jordan, as well as for large supermarkets and companies that want to maintain their commitment to sustainability in Jordan since no other recycling options are available.

Development and Free Zones Commission (DFZC)—The Development & Free Zones Commission (DFZC) is the financially and administratively autonomous entity responsible for creating, regulating, facilitating and monitoring the Development Zones in Jordan established in 2008.

Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME)—An organization of Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli environmentalists whose primary objective is the promotion of cooperative efforts to protect the region’s shared environmental heritage. FoEME has offices in Amman, Bethlehem, and Tel-Aviv. FoEME is a member of Friends of the Earth International, the largest grassroots environmental organization in the world.

Global Environment Facility Small Grants Fund (GEF SGF)— Established in 1992, the year of the Rio Earth Summit, the GEF Small Grants Programme provides grants of up to \$50,000 directly to local communities including indigenous people, community-based organizations and other non-governmental groups for projects in Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, Land Degradation and Sustainable Forest Management, International Waters and Chemicals.

Green Echo—the environmental component of the Jordanian youth empowerment organization Masar

Greenpeace—Greenpeace (started in 1971) is an independent global campaigning organization that acts to change attitudes and behavior, to protect and conserve the environment and to promote peace. A Jordan branch has only been established within the past couple of years.

Jordan Environment Society (JES)—Jordan Environment Society (JES) was established in 1988 as a non-profit non-governmental organization.

Jordan Green Building Council (JGBC)—The world Green Building Council, in coordination with the individuals who started the movement in the country, establish the Jordan GBC in May 2009. The Council was officially launched in March 2010 and was granted “Emerging Status” in November 2010 making it the second Arab Council to achieve this status.

Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN)—The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature is an independent non-profit, non-government organization devoted to the conservation of Jordan's natural resources. Established in 1966 under the patronage of His Majesty the late

King Hussein, RSCN has been given the responsibility by the Government of Jordan to protect the Kingdom's natural heritage.

Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan (JREDS)—This organization was founded in 1993, aspiring to protect Aqaba's marine life from further degradation. In 1995, JREDS registered under the Ministry of Interior as the first and only Jordanian non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to preserving and protecting marine ecosystems.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)—UNDP has more than 30 years of experience in Jordan, providing financial & technical assistance since 1976. It also seeks to implement the Millennium Development Goals agreed to by the UN in 2000.

USAID Public Action for Water Energy and the Environment (PAP)—USAID's Public Action for Water, Energy and Environment project is a nation-wide education and behavior change 5 year communication program. The program seeks to promote positive conservation behaviors in water and energy use as well as encourage better solid waste management.

Government ministries most involved in environmental issues:

Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)

Ministry of Energy (MoE)

Ministry of the Environment (MoEnv)

Ministry of Rural and Municipal Affairs (MRMA)

Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MWI)

B. Sample interview questions

- What are the most immediate environmental problems that Jordan is currently facing?
- Is your organization more focused on grassroots organization or affecting policy?
- What are the goals of your organization concerning cooperation on environmental issues?
- Which of your projects have involved cooperation between your organization and other NGOs or governmental organizations? Have these projects been successful?
- Have you collaborated on projects with international organizations? If yes, how successful have these projects been?
- Have you received funding from international organizations, national organizations (including government) or both?
- On whom does the burden of addressing environmental change fall—the government or the people and their organizations? In other words, is the government responsible for initiating environmental change or should the pressure to change existing attitudes and practices be a grassroots movement?
- Which have been more successful at addressing environmental problems in Jordan: environmental (national or international) groups or the government?

C. Sample Release Form

Cooperation Between Environmental NGOs and Government Institutions in Jordan

Laurel V. Wolf, Connecticut College, New London, Connecticut, United States

School for International Training—Jordan: Modernization and Social Change

Instructions:

Please read the following statements carefully and mark your preferences where indicated. Signing below indicates your agreement with all statements and your voluntary participation in the study. Signing below while failing to mark a preference where indicated will be interpreted as an affirmative preference. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions regarding this consent form.

I am aware that this interview is conducted by an independent undergraduate researcher with the goal of producing a descriptive case study on environmental cooperation in Jordan.

I am aware that the information I provide is for research purposes only. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study.

I am aware that I have the right to full anonymity upon request, and that upon request the researcher will omit all identifying information from both notes and drafts.

I am aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any question and to terminate my participation at any time, and that the researcher will answer any questions I have about the study.

I am aware of and take full responsibility for any risk, physical, psychological, legal, or social, associated with participation in this study.

I am aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for participation in this study, but a copy of the final study will be made available to me upon request.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my name and position in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my organizational affiliation in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use data collected in this interview in a later study.

Date:

Participant's Signature:

Participant's Printed Name:

Researcher's Signature:

Thank you for participating!

Questions, comments, complaints, and requests for the final written study can be directed to:

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Development Section Head; Mr. Ehab Eid, Acting Head of the Research and Survey
Section

Friends of the Earth Middle East—Abdel Rahman Sultan, Assistant Director and Technical
Ecopark Director

Global Environment Facility Small Grants Fund—Mr. Munir Adgham, Senior Project Manager

Jordan Environment Society—Mr. Peter Allen, Intern

United Nations Development Programme—Mr. Batir Wardam, Freelance consultant

USAID Public Action for Water Energy and the Environment—Mr. Ghassan Naji, Program
Manager (Energy)

BE Environmental Services—Mr. Ala'a Al Madanat, Project Manager

Greenpeace—Ms. Safa Jayoussi

Development and Free Zones Commission—Ms. Ruba Al-Zu'bi, Director of Business
Development, Communication & Local Development, Acting Director of Environmental
Sustainability

Green Echo—Ms. Sawsan Issa

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