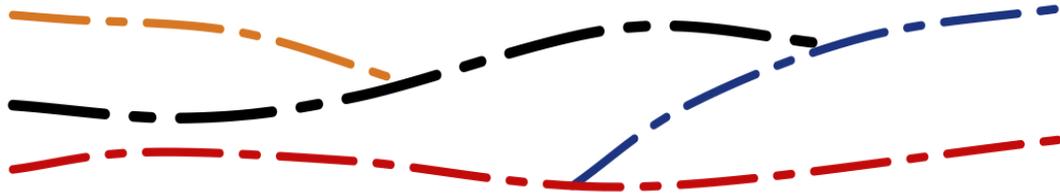


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Municipal Cooperation across Securitized Borders in the Post-Conflict Environment: The Gulf of Aqaba

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Abstract

Cross-border interaction at the municipal level is central to processes of rescaling of social, economic and political systems to new regional levels. This article analyzes processes of rescaling in the post-conflict environment, adding the focus on securitization and local-national power relations to the regional rescaling discourse.

Twenty years after the signing of the Israel-Jordan peace treaty, the Gulf of Aqaba serves as a case study for evaluating the stages, mechanisms and barriers of cross-border municipal cooperation between the cities of Aqaba and Eilat. The evolution of structures of cooperation between these municipal authorities demonstrates the potential of cross-border cooperation while continuous deference to national governments serves as a constant reminder of the post-conflict state of relations. Given these political circumstances, it is surprising to discover not the uniqueness of post-conflict cross-border cities but rather how these cities demonstrate compliance with patterns of behavior of peaceful regions in developing municipal cooperation and realizing opportunities of interdependence.

Introduction

Scholarship of borders has been transformed to the study of "borderlands" as a social construct, reflecting the pronounced phenomena of economic, social and cultural globalization. Thus, rather than passive recipients of policy, border communities are analyzed as active actors potentially affecting wider political systems (GILLES et al., 2013).

In this vein, cross-border cooperation (CBC) is viewed as a positive force which contributes to stable cross-border relations by penetrating cultural and psychological barriers through self-initiated and self-serving cross-border interaction. Although national borders serve to divide, globalization forces emphasize the cross-border mobility of people, ideas, goods and capital. Yet borders in conflict environments are generally not perceived to be included in this gradual increase in cross-border movement due to the centrality of securitization overshadowing cross-border mobility.

Municipal CBC in this case study is analyzed through evolving municipal structures and their dependence on non-local factors such as national government agencies. Both local and national interests design municipal CBC even in normalized-peaceful circumstances, yet the axis of coordination versus conflict between them is especially relevant to understanding municipal CBC in post-conflict environments.

Israeli-Jordanian relations can be classified as post-conflict in light of their 1994 peace treaty. Yet these relations are continuously challenged by the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian and regional conflict which are significant in preventing the implementation of the treaty's vision at both political and societal levels. While both Israel and Jordan remain committed to the treaty, they do not maintain regular political dialogue and face increasing crises in their relations. In this context, municipal cooperation has developed between the neighboring Jordanian and Israeli cities of Aqaba and Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba.

The analysis of this case study is based on documentary study and qualitative field research, mapping and evaluating cross-border interactions conducted during the years 2008-2014. Local civilian interactions were studied using three tools: interviews, non-participant observations and a sector-based analysis of original and secondary sources. In the course of the research key actors were interviewed: entrepreneurs, local residents, local and national government officials, security personnel, and representatives of non-governmental organizations. As Cohen and Arieli noted regarding post-conflict research environments, snowball sampling was found to be most effective in identifying,

accessing and engaging interviewees and in overcoming occasional sensitivities (2011).

The prospects of CBC in the Aqaba-Eilat context were analyzed early on 2001 by Gradus, based on Ehler's concept of the bi-national city (2001). Krakover (2011) further developed this analysis, relying on models of trans-border theory and a decade more of local CBC experience. This paper, based on extended field work in the region, presents and evaluates the evolution of municipal CBC as a delicate, almost underground act of rescaling, and analyzes the mechanisms and promoting and limiting CBC in light of the post-conflict environment in which this case study has evolved.

The article begins with a short overview of literature regarding border regions, CBC and border-crossing cities in reference to regional rescaling and to the post-conflict environment. It goes on to outline Israel-Jordan relations, the centrality of securitization and evolving vehicles and patterns of municipal CBC between the cities of Aqaba and Eilat. The facilitating and limiting factors of municipal CBC are then analyzed. The article concludes with an evaluation and a model of the main mechanisms of municipal CBC in the post-conflict context.

Post-Conflict Border Regions

The post-conflict period can be characterized by cold peace with somewhat stabilized but not quite normalized relations. Galtung (1969) differentiated between negative and positive peace. While negative peace is simply the absence of war, positive peace implies the elimination of structures of domination underlying war. This differentiation correlates to some degree to general concepts of 'warm' and 'cold' peace. Warm peace points to the existence of highly developed transnational ties (PRESS-BARNATHAN, 2006). Under conditions of a cold peace, despite the initial resolution of the primary disputed issues, there is the actual possibility of a return to conflict (MILLER, 2005).

This has significant implications for post-conflict realities and challenges, significantly regarding the expectation for a linear advance towards full normalization between former enemies. The post-conflict challenge entails the development of political, social and economic institutions (KRAUSE and JÜTERSONKE, 2005). With regard to border regions, this often involves re-orientating existing institutions to enhance regional capacity-building, good-governance, environmental management and economic opportunity.

Borders, as the interface between countries and societies, reflect the state of international conflict and accommodation ranging from confrontation and exclusion to cooperation and integration (NEWMAN, 2003). Minghi (1991)

claims that cross-border transactions are virtually nonexistent along a border threatened by conflict. In this vein, Martinez's typology of borderlands evaluates degrees of cross-border interaction in the border region as a reflection of the state of relations between neighboring countries, from alienation, through co-existence and interdependence to integration (MARTINEZ, 1994). Cross-border initiatives are thus a manifestation of local ability to respond to a new post-conflict political reality, to harness relative advantages of location and overcome potential drawbacks of remote areas characteristic of border regions. Yet, border regions in post-conflict environments characterized by negative or cold peace, often remain dominated by national security perspectives and lingering negative mutual impressions which inhibit local cross-border communication and interaction.

Cross-Border Interaction in the Post-conflict Environment

In classic perceptions of borders, the state is the main actor and the border is a periphery, both geographically and politically (HOUSE, 1980). Yet, through interplay of bottom-up initiatives of local border regions and top-down governmental policies, cross-border regions worldwide have progressed from political and economic marginalization as passive recipients of policies to become active strategic initiators in national and bilateral policy (CLEMENT, GANSTER and SWEEDLER, 1999). Thus local cross-border initiatives in European and in North American border communities both contribute to the establishment of perceptions of interdependence and are a direct consequence of them. European and North American CBC initiatives have been widely analyzed but the phenomenon of CBC develops also in circumstances of post-conflict and even conflict regions.

Soffer (1994) analyzes CBC in the Israel–Lebanese, Israel–Jordan and Israel–Syrian border regions during the years 1985–1993. He claims that even under conditions of hostility, continuous cross-border human movements can be expected to lead to some degree of governmental communication. Thus, Henrikson (2000) recognizes the value of cross-border interaction and cooperation as ‘trans-boundary diplomacy’ which filters from border regions into the political center of states, positively affecting the nature of inter-state political relations towards increased stability. As a bottom-up phenomenon this process is led by border region populations when they are not marginalized by national policies. Yet this “diplomacy” is challenged by the very essence of the post-conflict period. The lingering distrust and insecurity which retains the border region as a symbol of national authority and a central focus of security agencies often intimidate civilian initiatives common to periods of normalization.

In analyzing non-European or North American circumstances, where political regimes and circumstances are often far beyond local influence, the motivations and mechanisms for the establishment of CBC are not always clear. Klieman notes, in reference to Israeli-Palestinian economic relations, that precisely because it is so eminently rational, the logic of interconnectedness is strongly resisted by the ongoing hold of "parochial and even xenophobic nationalism" over people, discouraging cross-border cooperation in favor of trade barriers and tariffs. The tendency to assume rational decision-making coupled with economic utopianism underestimates the centrality of national emotions. These "soft" variables render game theory models of rational economic actors inapplicable to peace calculations (KLIEMAN, 2000 pp.125-129). Such resistance to economic logic has been a dominant factor deterring the realization of potential cooperative development in post-conflict border regions. What may appear to be rational in the economic sense, can be very irrational in the national and local political arenas. Thus under certain circumstances and border regimes, there is clear and rational logic for political actors in upholding a post-conflict stalemate, resisting the development of CBC despite economic potential as well as local environmental or other interests.

Yet conflicting perceptions of CBC are not unique to post-conflict border regions. In the European context, Scott (1999) identifies the different motivations, opportunities and strategic concerns at the base of CBC. Parallel to the national security focus on borders and their symbolic essence, the phenomena of CBC illustrates that borders embody a more functional reference for local border region communities. By engaging in CBC, border region communities enjoy increased representation and power through various combinations of supranational, national, regional and local levels of government and projects. Euroregions, as institutionalized cross-border cooperative structures, have become role models for CBC as they challenge national sovereignties through increased cross-border initiatives (O'DOWD and MOORE, 1995; SCOTT, 2000).

Indeed, the European experience demonstrates the evolution (rather than disappearance) of classic functions and perceptions of borders in regional integration processes. Regionalism is manifested in strategies of cooperative action which reflect local problems and development needs such as environmental protection measures, infrastructure, transportation and tourism, but also demonstrates opportunistic behaviors in securing support from European and national funds promoting CBC (SCOTT, 1999: 608-609). Despite generous funding, the pace at which cross-border cooperation and integration develop, and the ongoing involvement of national governments in monitoring cross-border regional initiatives, point to the continued significance of traditional, classic aspects of borders even within the European Union.

National sovereignty remains the underlying dominant force in deciding the scope and depth of regional cooperation. While states are generally eager to take advantage of EU funding to stimulate economic development in border regions, they are generally opposed to relinquish authority or sovereignty to regional institutions (VAN HOUTUM, 2000). “The vast majority of border region initiatives came into existence because of EU and intergovernmental funding but were then hampered by the very political and administrative system which encouraged them in the first place” (O’DOWD, CORRIGAN and MOORE, 1995, pp. 278-79).

The need for a degree of coordination between the national and regional interests remains consistent and inevitable even in peaceful border regions. Gilles et al (2013) challenge the underlying assumption that border communities share cultural ties which can serve as a resource for economic and ultimately political integration by crossing "artificial" political boundaries. Their call for "bringing the state back in" – recognizes multi-level power relations which design, inhibit and ultimately control the inevitability, circumstance and social-political effectivity of any cross-border interaction.

Given the differences in political circumstance, it is therefore surprising to discover not how unique post-conflict border regions are in terms of CBC performance, but rather how these regions demonstrate degrees of compliance with patterns of behavior of peaceful regions in developing cross-border cooperation.

Local CBC: Border-Crossing Cities in the Post Conflict Environment

CBC involves multiple level interests and actors. Yet, in varied political and cultural contexts, local level communication and cooperation between political cross-border counterparts and power structures serves as the prism for analysis and understanding the dynamics of developing CBC or its absence (KOFF, 2007). The municipal level is thus central to understanding processes of regional rescaling, which as defined by Keating refers to the migration of social, economic and political systems to new spatial levels, above, below and across states (KEATING, 2014). In the municipal context, rescaling may be expressed in functional, institutional or social-cultural patterns of communication and organization in the dynamics of neighboring cross-border cities.

A central question regarding rescaling as a process of regionalism is that of the power relations between local and national levels of government. Thus the "paradox of regions" refers to the underlying authority and power of national institutions to articulate social and economic interests over any developing

regional institution or social-economic trend. This question of authority and resources which tend to remain national-centered with regard to relations with any cross-border entity is especially relevant to local and municipal initiatives of CBC in the post-conflict environment.

Processes of municipal integration between neighboring cross-border cities are central to prospects of rescaling. Buursink classifies degrees of communication and cooperative behavior in the processes of municipal integration. He identifies four stages of physical, behavioral, organizational and politico-administrative integration, each indicate levels of emotional and mental 'togetherness' of neighboring urban communities; on the side of their politicians and administrators, as well as their inhabitants (BUURSINK,1996).

Yet, Buursink is cautious in postulating 'twin' city characteristics in every case of two cities that are situated close to each other. Neighboring cities are often characterized by differences, rivalry and even disdain rather than the cordiality which the term "twin" may suggest. Their adjacent location, however, often involves common interests and problems which could be the basis for cooperation. "Border-crossing cities" is Buursink's preferred term to describe a pair of cities where representatives of public and semi-public bodies initiate border-crossing contacts, irrespective of mutual difference, but inspired by common interests and attractive opportunities (BUURSINK, 2001).

Border-crossing cities in the European Union display cooperation and even integration of some municipal functions while benefiting from sources of institutional support and incentives. In non-European border-crossing cities cultural and/or economic gaps are often more distinct and cooperation is driven by economic and environmental factors rather than trust, friendship, or ideology of a borderless region. Thus border-crossing cities along the U.S.-Mexico border, although not a post-conflict setting, are characterized by strong political-economic polarities which hinder the formation of formal bilateral border policy-making mechanisms (HERZOG, 1991). These cities have no aspirations of administrative integration, and cooperation along this border is in mainly in areas of resource management and public safety (SPARROW, 2001).

Leaving European and North American arenas, border-crossing cities in post-conflict regions are especially interesting phenomena due to the many local and national clashing interests focused on their regional ties (ARIELI, 2009, 2012). While national authorities continue to focus on securitization of these regions, due to their proximity locals often identify potential for immediate and long term economic and/or environmental benefits to be realized through CBC. Thus, in terms of rescaling, the outcome of municipal CBC may take very varied forms depending on the specifics of local circumstances, resources, political

entrepreneurship and inter-personal relations (KEATING 2014; ARIELI and COHEN, 2013).

In political terms, CBC in these regions can potentially promote a degree of normalized relations by facilitating local civilian contact which may spillover to non-border related interaction. This potential for expansion of CBC can be evaluated through Scott's criteria: (SCOTT, 1999, p. 613).

1. Do cross-border networks represent new dimensions of governance, surmounting administrative, cognitive, cultural and physical barriers of cooperation and producing tangible policy results?
2. Are genuine transnational communities of interest emerging, reflecting local situations and needs? Or is transnational regionalism a promotional exercise, a symbolic gesture of regional identity, or an opportunistic strategy for obtaining public subsidies?

These criteria will be the basis for the analysis of municipal CBC between Aqaba and Eilat, which has slowly evolved since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Jordan.

The Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty

The vision of the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace treaty for peaceful and neighborly relations focuses mainly on the shared border. King Hussein, in his speech at the signing ceremony, referred to the border as a "Valley of Peace," space for shared infrastructure and economic projects based on cross-border collaboration. Article 11 of the agreement sees neighborly relations and collaboration as the basis for security, mentioning environment, water, energy development, and economic activity as shared interests (Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace, 1994).

While post-conflict development often involves reconstruction of sustainable infrastructure previously damaged by war, the Israeli-Jordanian case is one where functional but parallel infrastructure systems exist side by side. The post-conflict development challenge is to maximize the infrastructure efficiency by creating communication, sharing experiences and facilitating cooperative planning to face shared challenges. In light of separate but proximate economic and infrastructure systems, CBC was perceived early on as the vehicle for increasing efficiency and maximizing effectiveness through creating liaisons between Israeli and Jordanian administrators to insure coordinated development, and joint problem solving (GRADUS, 2001).

In this vein, Shimon Peres promoted the idea of a "peace corridor" – 520 kilometers of joint initiatives¹. These initiatives are based on the expectation for open and deep multi-system collaboration between Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority.

Shamir outlines several reasons for the slow and inhibited development of Israeli-Jordanian cooperation; the fact that Jordanian's middle class is largely of Palestinian origin and therefore reluctant to normalize relations before conflict is entirely resolved, fear of Israeli dominance due to significant gaps between Israeli and Jordanian economic capacities (the dependency paradigm), Israel's western economic and cultural orientation, and bureaucratic obstacles of both countries (SHAMIR, 2004). With the perspective of twenty years since the peace treaty was signed, we can currently differentiate between two levels of cooperation between Israel and Jordan: state-centered and civilian. State-centered dialogue regarding cooperation in the realm of security, water and energy has been ongoing since the signing of the peace treaty, with significant development parallel to the growing unrest in the Middle East and the events and aftershocks of the Egyptian and Syrian uprisings. This dialogue and cooperation, serving state-central needs of security, water and energy, is carried out at highest political echelons, yet far from the public eye, with only minimal and partial media coverage.

Initiatives for civilian projects of cooperation follow an opposite trend. Usually of small local scale, these reflect clear and immediate needs mainly in the realm of environmental and resource management (ARIELI, 2012) and limited interests and ties between business people (COHEN and BEN-PORAT, 2008). Local civilian initiatives have developed slowly since the 1994 peace treaty but are sadly diminishing during the last decade of growing expressions of political and regional unrest.

These contrasting trends result from national-level interests in both Israel and Jordan. In Israel there is widespread perception of threat focused on borders and "strategic helplessness" –deep deference of the public and governmental agencies to the security apparatus's knowledge infrastructure and expertise (MICHAEL, 2007a, 2007b). Lacking a clear governmental dictate, the security establishment prefers to minimize exposure to perceived risks by heavy monitoring of civilian cross-border activity. Jordanian national agencies, sensitive to the above mentioned widespread anti-normalization sentiments, have minimized public awareness towards civilian CBC. Thus national agendas of both countries are manifested in border-related policies which contradict the original intentions of the political echelon as expressed in the peace treaty.

¹ Mr. Erez Ron, personal communication, April 2007.

The gap between proposed initiatives, and those actually implemented had negative tones in Jordan where an atmosphere of disappointment from the regional peace process and the "fruits of peace" had spread early on. This critique has since developed into broad Jordanian opposition to normalization of relations with Israel, and is a central deterrent for Jordanian businesspeople and professionals to engage in interactions with Israelis (COHEN and BEN-PORAT, 2008). This is the complex context for the development of semi-formal cross-border municipal relations.

Aqaba-Eilat Municipal Cooperation

Aqaba and Eilat are both situated on the Gulf of Aqaba, with only seven kilometers between them. Due to historic circumstance, the cities have unilaterally developed infrastructure, creating a mirror image of proximate urban centers. Thus the cities have parallel sea ports, airports, hospitals, emergency forces, environmental agencies and highways.

Neither city is an industrial center nor is there industrial cooperation between them. Both have developed port service sectors but their economies depend most heavily on Gulf of Aqaba based tourism, catering to both local and foreign clientele.

Aqaba enjoys rapid growth and development. Its population of 122,000 (2013)² is more than twice that of Eilat³. The city is the focal point of ASEZ, Jordan's special economic zone, designed to attract investment and development through tax exemptions. This institutionalized development policy has drawn visible investment in infrastructure and construction of high end residential and vacation projects. The port of Aqaba is Jordan's only seaport and is developing as an Arab regional transport and logistics hub with the construction of new terminals and development of advanced services. In comparison, the development of Eilat is somewhat stagnated, due to limited space for expansion, few investments and competing national ports of Ashdod and Haifa.

The logic of Aqaba-Eilat municipal CBC is therefore based on a basic perception of interdependence of local agencies of health, emergency and environment, which has developed due to the relative distance from respective national-political centers. Another contributing factor to local perceptions of interdependence is the narrow economic basis of both cities which rely heavily on tourism. The potential for cooperation is in two clear areas: environmental

² Jordan Department of Statistics, 2013 Report.

³ Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013 Report

cooperation (preserving the Gulf environment) and joint marketing of regional tourism packages.

While environmental cooperation is quite developed, there is little actual cooperation in regional tourism planning and marketing, despite the economic potential. The cities' tourism market is significantly differentiated with little competition between them. Both cater mainly to their national domestic populations, Aqaba supplements with tourists from the Arab world and Eilat with Jewish tourists from USA and Europe. Competition is currently minimal and focuses mainly on non-Jewish European tourists. Cooperation in marketing a cross-border Gulf experience could significantly lengthen tourists' stay in the region, and increase each city's exposure and income.

Focusing on future development, it is interesting to note two mega projects along the border of the neighboring cities, both centered on leisure and tourism. The Jordanian Ayla mega-project (\$10 billion) is under construction since 2006 (Ayla website) and the Israeli proposed \$500 million Aquaria project (so far not approved by planning committees). Krakover (2011) notes that these projects, although not developed cooperatively (and ultimately likely to compete), were unthinkable prior to the signature of the peace treaty. Thus this level of border-adjacent development, although not integrative or even cooperative, reflects basic local awareness towards the interdependence of both cities regarding their dependence on regional stability.

This selective CBC which clearly falls below economic potential is especially striking in light of Article 23 of the peace treaty which outlines a vision of joint development for the cities of Aqaba and Eilat:

The Parties agree to enter into negotiations...not later than one month ... of ratification of this Treaty, on arrangements that would enable the joint development of the towns of Aqaba and Eilat with regard to such matters, inter alia, joint tourism development, joint customs, free trade zone, co-operation in aviation, prevention of pollution, maritime matters, police, customs and health...

Despite the inherent logic and this specific and detailed outline there were few major efforts of CBC for the first ten years (!) after the signing of the peace treaty.

Developmental Stages

The earliest cross-border initiative was a 1996 social-educational project for Jordanian and Israeli high school students, involving somewhat regular computer communication and occasional reciprocal visits (Sherf and Katzir,

personal communications, 2011). This was a local initiative, funded by local businesses and small municipal grants. Activity was challenged by the need to secure visas for Jordanian students and by irregular funding. Lengthy intervals and turnover of participants were detrimental to the establishment of significant relationships.⁴

Another early initiative was the Red Sea Marine Peace Park Cooperative Research, Monitoring and Management Program, established in 1999 to foster sustainable use of the coral reef ecosystem resources.⁵ This U.S. funded project facilitated the formation of a team of Israeli and Jordanian scientists to create a high-resolution map of the Red Sea Gulf reef ecosystem (Dr. Ortal, personal communication).

The first official cooperative initiative was mosquito extermination (October 2004). Coordination took only a few days to install encountered no opposition and has since expanded to many areas of pest monitoring (Samorai, personal communication). This was followed by an official visit of the mayor of Eilat to Aqaba (December 2004), ten years (!) after the signing of the peace treaty. The mayor of Aqaba visited Eilat soon after (January 2005). These visits were very intensive, lasting a full day and including tours, meetings between local officials of the two cities and exchanges of gifts and contact details.

The fruit of these initial visits was the mutual recognition of the need for a vehicle of regular communication regarding local interests, such as the threat of earthquakes, environmental challenges, fire-fighting needs, infrastructure, and tourism development. Communication between the two cities gradually widened to include officials of various municipal departments and the ASEZA (Authority of Special Economic Zone of Aqaba) officials. A list of issues to be addressed was conceived. Seven joint sub-committees and a steering committee were formed in 2005 to address these needs and interests (Al-Moghrabi and Samorai, personal communications).

The various committees were active until 2010 although not all to the same degree. The most active were the environmental and emergency forces committees, the least were those which focused on social and cultural

⁴ These problems were solved only in 2007 when the project was adopted by the Instituto per la Cooperazione Universitaria (ICU) and became AETP: Aqaba-Eilat: One More Step Toward Peace. Project coordinators were hired and regular activities have resumed. See project website, retrieved March 8, 2009 from <http://www.aetp-project.org/activities.html>.

⁵ Further details available on the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs site. Retrieved October 9, 2012, from <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Archive/Communiqués/1997/BINATIONAL%20RED%20SEA%20MARINE%20PEACE%20PARK%20-%20Oct-97>

interaction. This reflects the post-conflict context of the committees' work, where economic and social cross-border interaction often lacks social legitimacy in light of the ongoing regional conflict. Thus shared cultural events were episodic and cross-border educational projects were stalled until extensive foreign organizational and financial support was guaranteed.

Coordination and cooperation efforts focused on solving immediate problems and improving the quality of life for local communities rather than on politics and normalization. This loaned legitimacy to CBC on the Jordanian side, allowing it to develop despite many regional crises and political setbacks in Israel-Jordan relations (Abu Rashid, personal communication).

Since 2010, the committees have not been active although they have never been formally dispersed. This is clearly a result of growing opposition in Jordan towards the peace treaty and criticism towards all formal cooperation with Israel. Despite the inactivity of the committees, regular communication and cooperation is ongoing although through less visible channels. Municipal actors continue to address local needs through ongoing communication and border crossing, involving various authorities/experts/business people as the need arouses (Samorai, personal communication).

Municipal Structures of CBC

Aqaba is, by Jordanian law, the heart of ASEZA - Authority of Special Economic Zone of Aqaba.⁶ There is, therefore, significant imbalance between the Eilat and Aqaba local governmental regimes. While Eilat is a municipality, subordinate to the Israeli Ministry of Interior, ASEZA is a unique autonomous governmental authority in Jordan, allowing relative governmental independence. This is significant in understanding the depth and scope of local CBC as compared to other Israel-Jordan border regions.

To coordinate the committees, Eilat has established a Department of Regional Cooperation, a unique and unparalleled development in Israeli municipalities. While often challenged to coordination cross-border activities with relevant Israeli governmental ministries, it is supported by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Israeli, personal communication).

Despite the imbalance in their governmental structures, the scope and depth of CBC between the cities of Eilat and Aqaba are unprecedented in any other Israeli-Jordanian border region. The formal expression of this cooperation is the structure of the above mentioned municipal committees, institutionalized in

3. <http://www.aqabazone.com>.

2005. The committees' agendas were established through meetings, alternately on each side of the border. Their mandate was to identify mutual fields of interest and operational methods for realization of the peace treaty. Israeli committee participants were municipal figures, national governmental officials of the relevant ministries, professionals, private individuals and volunteers, representing local interests. Jordanian participants were officials of ASEZA. In addition to problem solving, these municipal committees were part of a local vision of peace between the two countries. As stated in the 2006 Eilat municipal progress report:

The recognition that cooperation in areas that know no boundaries, these sub- committees constitute the means to deepening peaceful relationships in the area and trickle them down to everyday life.

Many, but not all, of the committees' suggestions have been carried out. Yet the scope of ideas reflects logic of cooperation and visionary level neighborly relations. The suggestions, documented in the Aqaba-Eilat Coordination Committee Reports, cover a wide range of interests and needs of the two cities.

The actual immediate benefits of municipal cooperation are, understandably, fewer than those suggested. Yet the established cooperation is especially significant to the region due to its environmental uniqueness, climatic challenges and remoteness from the national centers of both countries. It implies a local perception of interdependence with respect to a variety of interests and needs as outlined:

Emergency	Ongoing communication and early development of warning systems regarding floods, earthquakes and water pollution. Expanded potential emergency force composed of medical and fire-fighting teams and equipment of both cities. Enhanced capabilities of forces due to joint training
Pest control	Regular cooperation resulting in increased effectiveness of mosquito, fly and house-crow control
Science, Education and Culture	Joint multi-level programs of study and research. ⁷ Sports and cultural programs such as concerts and underwater photography. ⁸ Accessibility to international grants earmarked for cross-border cooperative projects (Baranes, personal communication).
Economy and infrastructure	Increased commercial capacity for both Israel and Jordan due to regular coordination and cooperation between the two ports Regular employment of over two hundred Jordanians in hotels in Eilat
Tourism	Initial stages of cooperation in training and marketing and development of cross-border tourism options
Marine Environment	Increased environmental security of the Gulf through joint research and monitoring of water pollution

⁷For example the 'Beam of Light' Israeli-Jordanian-United States cooperative project aimed at measuring air quality supported with American funds through US AID MERC (Middle East Regional Cooperative). Retrieved October 9, 2012, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/11/071108102241.htm>.

⁸ For example, cross-border swimming events - Ron, Saar, Swimming for Peace, April 12 2007, Eilati (local Eilat newspaper, Hebrew)

Marine Monitoring

Marine monitoring is the most regular yet complex and comprehensive expression of Eilat–Aqaba municipal CBC. It involves ongoing governmental, municipal and interpersonal communication and cooperation regarding shared interests in the Red Sea Gulf environment as outlined in Article 18 of the peace treaty.

Israel-Jordan oil spill control exercises have been conducted annually since 1998 and continue until today. Early installation of joint local action procedures in the event of a major oil spill in the Upper Gulf of Aqaba was based on awareness of the fragile and diverse natural landscape, the collision-prone narrow southern entrance to the Gulf, intense development and proximity of the coastlines of Aqaba and Eilat and significant economic dependence of both cities on tourism. Procedures include testing decision-making processes, and activating resources, equipment, and institutions in both Israel and Jordan. Exercises are ongoing, coordinated by the municipal environmental authorities of both cities with hundreds of participants and onlookers. Yet these unprecedented expressions of local interdependence are not publicized in the media of either country.

Exposure

The preference for cooperation without publicity is clearly expressed by Jordanians. Although ASEZA enjoys governmental autonomy in its decision to participate in CBC, officials prefer to avoid public criticism (Al-Moghrabi, personal communication). Thus the ASEZA Annual Report publication celebrates opportunities for investing and vacationing in Aqaba and outlines investment potential. Yet ongoing cooperation with Eilat is never mentioned, nor the unique regional cross-border tourism and business opportunities.

Despite the lack of publicity, or probably even due to it, regular cross-border activity between the cities of Eilat and Aqaba has proven to be durable, surviving many diplomatic crises between Israel and Jordan. Municipal cooperation has even been instrumental in involving national government agencies in local initiatives. Despite the general boycott of Jordanian labor unions regarding communication and cooperation with Israelis in central cities of Jordan, anti-normalization campaigns hardly target the Aqaba-Eilat municipal cooperation or local initiatives, such as regular employment of hundreds of Jordanians in Eilat.

Communication and Logistics

Channels of communication between cooperating agents in the two cities are varied and include email, fax, telephone and face-to-face meetings. Two central agents of coordination were the head of the Department of Regional Cooperation of the Eilat municipality, Mr. Samo Samorai and the former head of Environment Studies, Permitting & Monitoring Division of ASEZA, Dr. Salim Al-Moghrabi. Their personal involvement in all aspects of coordination elevated cooperative efforts from bureaucratic levels and helped to overcome different hurdles that could have potentially terminated the complex municipal interactions.

Central to regional CBC is the freedom of movement through border-crossing points. While Israelis acquire visas to Jordan at the Jordanian border crossing terminal, Jordanians must apply for a visa at the Israeli Embassy in Amman, a process which can entail many difficulties and delays. This lack of mutuality in cross-border regulations, especially regarding high ranking officials and individuals, causes great frustration and delay for Jordanians involved in cross-border activities. The difficulty of acquiring a visa has been detrimental for the municipal joint committees' work, and on the regularity and atmosphere of local CBC initiatives.

In addressing this problem, an agreement was signed in 2008, according to which Israel approved a list naming 150 functionaries, recommended by the Jordanian government, to be given multiple entry visas and qualify for V.I.P status during border crossing. This list includes central figures of public and private sectors such as directors of air and sea ports, health agencies, educational institutions, business people, government officials, all recognized as potential 'peacemakers', potentially active in initiating varied cross-border interaction. While problems and delays still occur, this agreement has significantly improved the regularity and ease of cross-border activity and demonstrates national governmental involvement in local initiatives.

Evaluation

Despite their proximity, similarities in size and economic activities and developing cooperation, it is doubtful whether Aqaba and Eilat can be defined as double\ twin or companion cities which involves, besides adjacency, a feeling of belonging which is not evident so far. Recalling Scott's above outlined criteria for analyzing CBC (new dimensions of governance, overcoming barriers, policy results, transnational communities of interest versus opportunistic strategies), the Israel-Jordan cross-border region as a peaceful border in a region of conflict has so far displayed only limited degrees of developing interaction and perceived shared interests and interdependence yet is

far advanced from the level of a symbolic gesture or opportunistic or promotional exercise.

Facilitating factors:

The Aqaba-Eilat region has several unique attributes which facilitate regular CBC. The cities are distinctly peripheral and share a unique topographical and ecological environment. Given distance from their relative political/economic centers, the desert conditions and environmental sensitivity of the Gulf, both municipalities rely on careful development policies to generate economic opportunities and quality of life for their local populations.

Both municipalities also enjoy relative autonomy in pursuing cross-border ties due to their location and unique needs. This is reflected in local municipal structures: the Department of Regional Cooperation in Eilat and ASEZA of Aqaba, which as an autonomic local authority, can decide upon and proceed with cross-border cooperative efforts with relatively less national political involvement which could have hindered the realization of local benefits of CBC for the city and region (Al Moghrabi, personal communication).

Municipal cooperation provides a structured framework for identification and addressing of local needs. This emphasis on local needs rather than on foreign NGO agendas or national politics serves to guarantee more local support or at least less opposition at times of stress between the political centers of Israel and Jordan. The interactions also involve local personnel of various sectors such as municipal, business, tourism, ports, border crossings, infrastructure, and education. This involvement of people local rather than foreign to the region facilitates regular communication, friendship and the development of trust.

The scale of joint projects is another central factor. Local, small-scale initiatives of coordination between various municipal agencies are relatively simple to implement and immediately mutually beneficial. Cooperative efforts in fighting pests, monitoring the Gulf, and educational and cultural projects are not the intimidating mega-projects of foreign investors which were suggested but never implemented after the signing of the Israel-Jordan peace treaty.

Limiting Factors:

The underlying factor inhibiting normalization of Israel- Jordan relations and legitimization of cross-border relations is the ongoing regional conflict. The political climate in Jordan is hostile towards all cooperative initiatives with Israel. The anti-Israel climate in Jordan has expanded to include Aqaba, challenging the legitimacy of CBC, despite its local benefits. As a result, the depth and scope of active cross-order interactions have little or no exposure of

in the media of both countries, limiting the development of legitimization or spillover to wider circles of society.

Thus, despite ongoing cooperation between local emergency and health agencies, there has been little development in tourism-related CBC. There is an obvious shared interest in joint planning and marketing of regional tourism but this would entail higher levels of trust and cooperation between sectors of both cities and countries and significantly higher visibility of cooperation and normalized relations to which much of Jordanian society is still opposed.

The post-conflict and ongoing regional conflict environment is also apparent in Israeli securitization policies of border crossings and visa administration. Israel's visa policy has limited regular and reciprocal cross-border interaction, contributing to Jordanian disillusionment regarding the potential of regional relations. Security-based border-management policies discourage both Israelis and Jordanians from long term commitment to interaction. Thus, CBC between school students is based more on computer communication than on the few, far apart and asymmetric face-to face interaction experiences. Computer-based communication, while common between school children of distant countries but does not realize the social contact potential of neighboring cities.

The logistics of crossing the border are another factor inhibiting of CBC. Commissions for crossing the border are approximately \$34 in addition to transportation costs. Bus service from the border crossing to Aqaba and Eilat was established in 1996 to serve the wider population but cancelled by mutual agreement after a year and a half due to little use. Officials and high level business people involved in CBC use private cars and taxis in crossing the border but the cost of crossing the border and transportation is significant for people of lower and even middle class incomes in both cities. These costs deter casual initiatives of cross-border touring and shopping which could have generated a degree of economic and even social interaction.

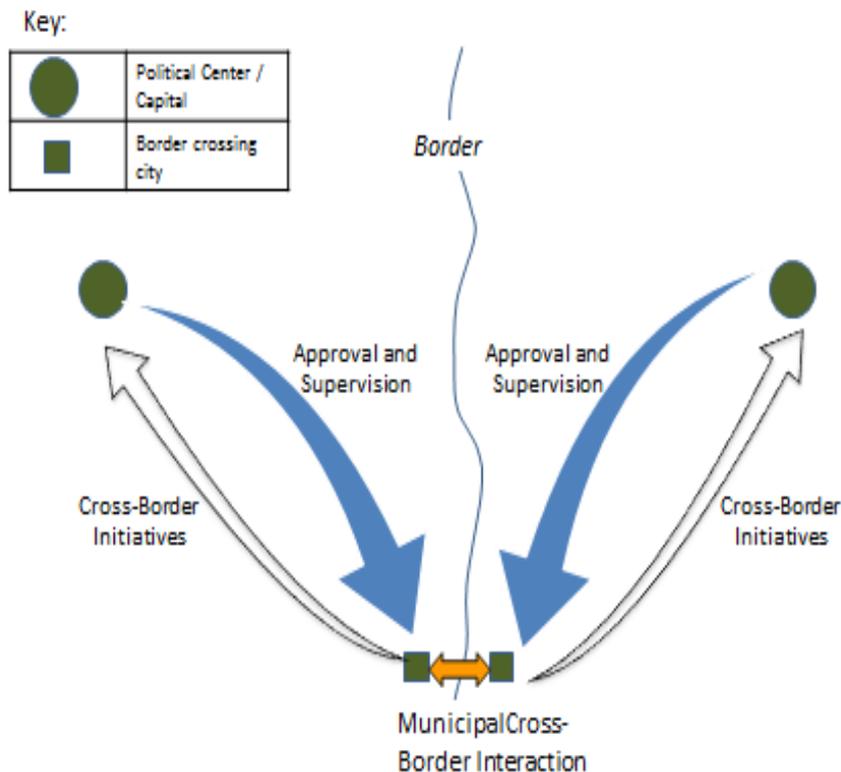
Conceptualization

Municipal cross-border communication and cooperation which has evolved between Aqaba and Eilat has indeed demonstrated a new dimension of governance. Taking place, as it does, in a post-conflict setting, municipal CBC has shown itself to be limited in scope and dominated by continuous monitoring of national governments. Yet CBC is ongoing, resilient and flexible in maintaining channels of cross-border relations and addressing local needs through the ups and downs of Israel-Jordan relations.

An early evaluation of the potential of Eilat and Aqaba as a bi-national city, classified the cross-border region as co-existent rather than interdependent, with

potential for only limited interaction geared towards achieving a degree of rationality regarding infrastructure (GRADUS, 2001). Thus, the establishment of municipal cooperation, despite its irregularity, is a significant advance from a state of co-existence towards a local perception of interdependence characteristic of border-crossing cities. CBC in the Eilat-Aqaba municipal region is impressive, especially in comparison both to other regions of the Israel-Jordan border and to the communication and cooperation between the Israeli and Jordanian national and local and national governments, societies and business communities.

The post-conflict environment in which CBC has developed illustrates the almost clear separation of interests between local and national levels of government regarding issues of autonomy, security and development policies. As shown in the diagram below, the mechanisms of local CBC in the post-conflict environment can be theorized to include two axes of cooperation versus conflict. In addition to the commonly recognized axis between neighboring cities which represents shared and conflicting interests, double parallel vertical axes extend between local and national authorities on each side of the border. These vertical axes extend from the border city to the political center and back, representing the process of local initiative and national approval and supervision regarding CBC.



The analysis of these vertical axes of cooperation versus conflict is as illuminating as that of the horizontal axis. Neighboring border-crossing cities are situated at the convergence point of vertical and horizontal axes, and the municipal structures they develop are critical in balancing the sometimes contradicting national and local concerns and interests. Urban, as opposed to rural border-located centers have more power and local clout to forward local interests and balance competing national border-related agendas. Local initiatives and national level approval is therefore the mechanism which heavily design CBC in this region.

Conclusion

Post-conflict settings are characterized by only minimal levels of trust between cross-border neighbors, both at the national and the local levels. Recognizing the dominance of the national-level security apparatus and political actors is therefore central to understanding both border management policies and prospects of rescaling at the municipal level.

Securitization and national dominance do not contradict the development of local perceptions of shared interests between cross-border cities. Securitization, an extreme expression of distinct national-level interest in border management, can accommodate official, semi-official and non-official local municipal cross-border interaction. Therefore, although it may seem that securitization would act to inhibit the creation of local regional initiatives, it may actually serve as a pre-condition of guaranteeing stability for their development and implementation.

Theoretically, CBC has the potential to serve as a “positive” force of neighborly communication which can maximize the potential of markets, infrastructure and environmental management. Yet local initiatives of CBC may interfere with government policies regarding diplomacy, economics and security. While national governments rarely outwardly oppose CBC, the actual support they provide may be minimal. This duality can complicate the identification and analysis of evolving mechanisms of regional rescaling.

Municipal structures in the Aqaba-Eilat context are therefore theoretically insightful. Cooperation between them has developed despite a distinct imbalance in local government agencies, Aqaba being part of a semi-autonomous region, whereas the Eilat municipality subject to government ministries. Neither city experienced major conflict with its national government despite the element of foreign policy involved in these interactions. Municipal structures, although constantly challenged by national level authorities, have proven to be effective in facilitating direct CBC with a local problem-solving focus.

In reference to the phenomena of border-crossing cities it is clear that this case-study presents limited institutionalized CBC which especially lacks spill-over to social realms of life of the two cities. The post-conflict environment rooted in the politics of this region is the main explaining factor, which adds to socio-economic, religious, cultural differences as well as economic competition which are often evident even in regions of politically normalized relations.

Borders have shown themselves to be highly persistent both in their physical and psychological presentations. This understanding of the pervasiveness of borders even in peaceful environments allows a better appreciation of the accomplishments of Aqaba and Eilat as border-crossing cities. It offers criteria to assess the challenges these cities face in expanding cooperation to address shared interests and the potential to maintain ongoing channels of cross-border communication.

Despite limitations of exposure and government monitoring, Aqaba-Eilat municipal cooperation demonstrates some degree of ‘trans-boundary diplomacy’ (HENRIKSON, 2000). This bottom-up influence filters from local cross-border relations to the political centers of states as demonstrated by the awareness and involvement of higher political echelons of Israel and Jordan in municipal institutionalized cooperation.

Referring to the model presented above, municipal CBC is a highly sensitive balancing act where the main actors who initiate cross-border activity and balance local and national interests are the border-crossing cities. This is especially delicate in the post-conflict setting, where there is little legitimacy for increasing levels of cross-border communication but where local interests in areas of development or environmental needs may be pressing. Analysis of specific municipal structures involved in CBC reveals both the level and depth of local awareness towards shared cross-border interests in neighboring cities and mechanisms of national supervision. This is the basis for evaluating the challenge of regional rescaling at the cross-border municipal level with the post-conflict environment serving as an extreme example.

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